

In Memoriam  
Right Rev. Lord Arthur Hervey.

*President, 1873, 1888.*

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IN the summer of this year the diocese lost its honoured and venerable chief pastor.

Fitting and heart-felt expression has been given on every occasion, and by all classes, to the general appreciation of the noble character and valued work of the bishop.

This Society has special cause for regret in the loss of one of its chief members, pre-eminent, not only by position, but in the support given to the Society during a long episcopate.

Twice President, in 1873, and again in 1888, Lord Arthur Hervey threw himself with increasing interest into subjects of archæological research in the spirit of the student and the scholar of varied culture, who saw a human interest in the origins of forms of language, in names and words of places and things, in all fragments of antiquity which tell of the history of past ages.

The Society has recorded in the *Proceedings* his opening words, as President, in 1873 :

“I confess to a genuine delight in archæological pursuits. I confess to a deep interest in the scientific investigation of facts buried under the dust and rubbish of centuries. I think I could pursue any enquiry into the past for which I had material at my command, and shout *εὐρηκα* if that inquiry were successful, in the midst of the civil or ecclesiastical battle that might be going on ; for such pursuits form a world of their own, above and independent of the world of politics and polemics.”

He made his presidency memorable by the stimulus he then gave to the investigation of original documents, "as giving the best reflection of the mind and sentiments of the age and a faithful picture of the events and circumstances of the times:" and in his second presidential address, in 1888, he had the happy opportunity of being able to quote his own words, and to shew that in the interval of fifteen years they had borne good fruit in the publication of the volumes of the Somerset Record Society, of documents belonging to the Dean and Chapter, and of other valuable materials for the history of the county.

In the restoration of the undercroft of the palace at Wells, Lord Arthur has left to the archæological world an example of a noble building of the thirteenth century, which on many occasions has been made the scene of princely hospitality to the members of our own and other archæological societies, as well as to the clergy and laity on meetings of diocesan importance.

His interest was very great in the progress of the excavations at Wells during the last spring, in the burial ground east of the Cloister walk, along which he was wont to pass every day that he went to the church.

The parallel and the contrast between his life and the career of the prelate of the 15th century, whose memorial tomb there has now been excavated, may perhaps not inappropriately close, in this volume of the *Proceedings* of the Society, the obituary notice of one of its most distinguished presidents.

Robert Stillington, was bishop four hundred years ago, from 1466 to 1491, and held the see for twenty-five years.

On May 15th, 1491, the Suffragan Bishop Thomas Cornish, Prior of St. John's Hospital, in Wells, sometime vicar of St. Cuthbert's, and bearing the title of Bishop of Tenos, obtained leave of the Dean and Chapter to bury Bishop Robert Stillington in the tomb which he had prepared for himself.

Stillington had been a man high in the service of Edward IV, as Lord Privy Seal and Chancellor. He was also an instrument in the domestic and political intrigues of the evil times of Edward IV and Richard III. At the accession of Henry VII he was kept in ward at Windsor Castle, as a political schemer, until the day of his death.

He was conspicuous by his absence from the diocese during the whole of his episcopate; but with the natural ambition of perpetuating his memory in the diocese, he had, during his life, raised for himself in this ancient graveyard a sepulchral memorial in the large and sumptuous chapel of which the foundations and the fragments of the carved stone work have been brought to light during the last three months. Here he was buried with the pomp and awful solemnities of the older ritual, in a more magnificent tomb than any of his predecessors. But he had left no remembrance in the hearts and affections of men, and after the spoilers in the next generation had broken down all the carved work thereof with axes and hammers, his memory had well-nigh perished from the earth until these last days.

On the same ground on Thursday, June 14th, 1894, the latest bishop of the see was laid to his rest, the years of whose tenure of office, also of twenty-five years, ran in almost the like figures at the close of this our century, 1869-1894.

So far the parallel—but how great the contrast of the life and of the burial!

Lord Arthur Hervey, born in high estate, with the talents and amidst the opportunities for taking a high place in public affairs, and with all the temptations to worldly ambition, turned aside in early years to serious studies, and the homely life of the Christian ministry in lowly places.

Called to the episcopate, he gave himself wholly to his diocese, and was scarcely ever absent from it: faithful in all the duties of his high office, his heart and his home were in Wells.

Here, known of all men, most respected and best beloved where best known, he has lived through a quarter of the century, until, with eye undimmed, and with growth in spiritual and intellectual force continued up to the last, he fell asleep, and died among his own people. Then we saw him borne to his grave and laid to his rest in the turf of that southern burial ground, midway between the church and the palace home, under the shade of the cathedral church, and just in line with the throne and stall where he so reverently worshipped, with the simple burial office of the prayer-book and the hymns he loved, amid the silent and tearful regrets and affection of mourning friends and of a whole diocese represented by the hundreds of its clergy and chief laity of all ranks, each with soothing memories and sure and certain hopes, gathered round the grave of their common Father in God.

The bright warm sunshine of a singularly beautiful day gilded the calm sunset of a healthy and noble life. The only memorial tomb he had prepared for himself was in the hearts of his people.

“His body is buried in peace, but his name liveth ever more.”

C. M. C.