

The Presidential Address.

Sir THOMAS ACLAND then gave his Presidential address. He said :—

It is impossible for any one so completely ignorant as I am both of archæology and of natural history, standing as I do before an audience whose very presence in this room is an evidence of a keen interest and, at least, of some knowledge of one or the other of these subjects, not to feel how much he owes to the kind feeling of those who have conferred upon him the honour which you have on this occasion conferred upon me in asking me to become President of your Society for the ensuing year.

I believe the best return that I can attempt to make for your kindness is that I should endeavour briefly to indicate some of the interesting associations which cluster round the beautiful district in which we are met, and to suggest some considerations and ideas in connexion with the places which you propose to visit.

But before beginning to do this, I should like to say one word of testimony to the value of societies such as this, and to your wisdom in combining within your ken two subjects which might seem to some persons so widely dissociated as Archæology and Natural History.

I am convinced that as the spread of education goes on, and we are increasingly able to foster and develop the powers of observation of the young people in our rural schools, the most successful way in which we can achieve the result, so beneficial to themselves as well as so desirable from other points of view, of attaching them to their rural homes and enabling them to lead lives there full of interest and stimulus, is that we should cultivate to the utmost in them, and, therefore, in order to be able to do so, *first* in our own selves, the power and the habit of taking an intelligent interest in the beauties and the wonders of the world around us and close to us. You, the members of this Society, have for your object the study of facts and the recording of them concerning in archæology, some of the most permanent and interesting of the works of man, and concerning in natural history, what since the days of the Psalmist have been commonly called the Works of God, which are all alike, *wonderful*, and all alike, *good*.

And I think the spirit of gratitude and respect to our forefathers, inculcated by the one study, and the spirit of reverence, wonder, and love of truth inculcated by the other, are each of them well worth cultivating, both for ourselves, and in the interest of those among whom we have to live.

To return to the object with which I set out, I wonder whether it has ever struck you that the two great moorland

districts of the West, are to some extent in shape, the converse of each other. Dartmoor may be compared to your hand, palm downwards, the valleys and ridges diverging from the centre, and Exmoor to your hand palm upwards, all the water collected by Exe and Barle, and issuing where those two rivers join, two miles below us.

People tell us, and no doubt truly, that the old name of Exe was Isca—and far be it from me to dispute it. But that does not forbid my seeing some connection between the first syllable of Exton, Exford, Exebridge and Exwick, and the first part of the names Aix la Chapelle and Aix les Bains. But I am not a philologist, and the only thing I know to be a maxim among etymologists is that “vowels matter nothing and consonants very little” when you are considering the derivation and meaning of words.

I can give you from my own experience a somewhat curious illustration of the well-known coldness of the valley of the Exe, which may be, I imagine, partly a consequence of the coldness of its winter. Some years ago, two of my cousins, Col. Troyte, whom many of you may remember, of Huntsham, and his brother, who served in the ranks, and became in about two years an officer of his regiment, who were both expert signallers, arranged to heliograph from the top of Dunkerry to Bampton Down, and though the day was bright and cloudless and the air still, we found it absolutely impossible, though each saw the flash of the other, to signal at that height across the cold current of air going down the valley of the Exe, so great was the vibration caused by refraction due to the difference of temperature. I think these valleys must have been in old days exceedingly damp, if we consider the position of all the churches along the valleys, perched either, as at Winsford on the top of a knoll, or as at Exford and Exton, Dulverton, a long way up the hill. The canons at Barlynch, of course, kept close to the water for the sake of the trout and the eels to supply them with food on fast days. Besides, the bottom

must have been very soft, or the great road from Tiverton northwards would have gone along the straight valley instead of up and down over all those hills between Baronsdown and Minehead, going, as it does, east of Exton and Cutcombe.

I mentioned just now Barlynch Priory. It may interest you to hear what Collinson says about it:—

KING'S BROMPTON, BARLYNCH.

“In the time of Henry II this manor became the possession of William de Say, a descendant of Picot de Say, living in the time of William the Conqueror, who upon the little river Barle, on a spot called from it Barlinch, two miles southward from the church, founded a small priory of Black Canons to the honour of St. Nicholas, which Maud de Say, his daughter, endowed with the rectory of Brompton Regis. This donation, with various others by different benefactors, was ratified and confirmed by Henry III in the fourth year of his reign, and Edward III in the thirteenth year of his reign: and the possessions of the prior and convent in 1444 were valued at £31 6s. 8d., and in 1534 at £98 14s. 9½d. per annum.

“John Norman, canon of this house, was elected Dec. 7th, 1524, by Dr. Thomas Benet, commissary to Cardinal Wolsey, nine canons in the convent having by compromise devolved the election of a prior to him. In 1553 there remained in charge to pensioners of this monastery £3 in annuities.

“30 Hen. VIII, the site of this priory, with the manors of Brompton-Bury and Warley, was granted to Sir John Wallop, ancestor of the present Earl of Portsmouth, whose descendant sold it to the family of Ball, of Devonshire, of whom it was purchased by Mr. Lucas, of Taunton. And now the manors of Brompton-Regis and Brompton-Bury belong to Lady Acland.

“On a brass plate in the wall of the chancel of Kingsbrompton church, among other memorials to several of the family of Dyke, is one of Joan Dyke, who died of the dropsy at the age of nineteen years, which you may find worth reading.”

I am told that the name means "enclosure" on the Barle, but it is on the banks of Exe (not of Barle). Of course we recognise the word Lynch as common enough in this part of England. But, indeed, the names of places, and their connotation, afford one of the widest fields for guess work which is open to human ingenuity. For instance, Winsford. In imagination it is delightful to picture to oneself Burrough Wood, replaced by vineyards, and the feet of the Winsford peasants as red with the juice of the grape as the chins of the children are now with the whortleberry juice. But he would be a sanguine man, who knowing the climate of Winsford, started a wine business of any description in that neighbourhood. I believe that on the south coast of Wales grapes will ripen, but the climate of the higher valleys of the Exe is not that of South Wales.

More reasonable, I think, by way of derivation, is it to believe that Brushford means Bridgeford—and that Room Hill, in Exford parish, may be some trace of Roman invasion as was Stratford in my home parish of Selworthy.

If I may venture to offer a word of advice to any who may not know the district, it would be to urge them not to miss the splendid drive over Winsford Hill and down to Tarr Steps, and if it should be a clear day they will not think they have wasted time or strength if they take Wambarrows, the highest point of Winsford Hill, on their return. The view from it is hardly to be surpassed in the West of England. Probably on the way you may catch glimpses of some of the herd of Exmoor ponies. Mr. Hancock, in his book on "Selworthy," tells some stories about that herd, for the correctness of which I can vouch, as having heard them first hand. But there is one rather interesting bit of experience about them which you may like to hear. For the last thirty years we have been in the habit of taking about twenty of the best mares, with their foals, down to the better climate and grass at Killerton, where the young ones spend a year or so. And the result has been

two-fold. First of all "emollit mores nec sinit esse ferus," and secondly the chests are widened, and as a direct result the shoulder rendered more sloping and the humerus more upright, and the action improved. But the quarters are entirely another matter, and I am afraid many of the tails come out as low down in 1900 as they did in 1870. Experience has taught us that the original strain of blood is as good as any cross we can devise, and that no cross will combine good qualities through two generations with any certainty.

It is to be hoped, though hardly to be expected, that you may, also on your way, catch some glimpses of the most characteristic of our West Somerset institutions, the wild red deer. Professor Rolleston, of Oxford, assured me that the normal condition of the Exmoor deer, as indicated by bone and fibre, is far superior to that of the finest Scotch stags or hinds. It may interest you to hear that that grand old man, Mr. Bisset, to whom this district owes more, I believe, than it is the least aware of, told me that when he first took up the hounds he killed eight stags and twenty hinds, and, *in his last year* I think it was, nearer twenty stags and eighty hinds. But probably the master or secretary of the hunt has accurate statistics and may be able to correct what is only my recollection of what Mr. Bisset told me.

But speaking in this place, I cannot sit down without specially drawing your attention to the family of Sydenham, whose interesting seat, Combe, you are to visit this afternoon. According to Collinson, they spring from the lord of the manor of that name, originally called Sideham, from its position on the side of the river Parret, near Bridgwater, held by Robert de Sydenham, in the time of King John. Collinson traces their connexion with various well-known families, such as Hillary of Bathealton, John de Peekstone of Pixton, John Carru, Thomas Perceval, Sir Amias Paulet; and places such as Combe Sydenham near Stogumber, Orchard Wyndham, Merton Collumpton. The Sanfords of Mynehead, the Wal-

ronds of Bradfield, the Williams's of Herringston in Dorset, Floyers of Dorset, and many others can claim connexion with them.

I have been asked by Mr. Chadwyck-Healey to bring before you the following suggestion in connexion with the identification of Place-names, viz.: "That whenever anyone comes across an obsolete form of place-name in a charter or plea roll, or other ancient document, and the context supplies a clue to the locality, the name should be noted, with the reference to the document, and a concise statement of the contents, and that the whole should be sent to the Secretary of the Society at Taunton, with a view to publication in the journal. Mr. Chadwyck-Healey remarks that we shall never succeed in mastering the full meaning of Domesday until we can identify the places, and that generally our study of Early English history would be much facilitated if we knew more than we do of Place-names."

I think you will agree with me that this is a valuable suggestion, and I hope that some measure may be adopted that may bring it about.

I will now conclude by asking you to excuse the desultoriness and incompleteness of these few remarks. I believe you will have very interesting excursions, and I am sure you will have the chance of acquiring from those who will in the different places address you, on their own special topics, such accurate and interesting information as will make you feel that your time has been well spent, and give them the satisfaction of knowing that their time and trouble has not been thrown away.

The beauty and variety of the woods, and the interlacing of the hills as you lose the valleys among them, the luxuriance of the foliage, and the refreshing murmur of the streams, the sparkling stickles, and the deep reflections in the pools, and above all the glorious combination of heather and gorse, the plentiful variety of wild flowers and birds and animals which

will attract your attention, will, I am sure, combine to give you full compensation for perhaps a slight dearth of objects of antiquarian interest.

And I hope that when you leave this district the older members will look back upon their visit here with delight, and the younger ones will look forward to the next.

Prebendary BULLER proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Sir Thomas Acland for his acceptance of the office of President, and the interesting address he had given.

Mr. G. F. SYDENHAM, Local Secretary, seconded the proposition, which was heartily carried.

The PRESIDENT, in returning thanks, said he very much regretted that owing to arrangements which he could not alter, he would not be able to stay to the evening meeting, but he trusted their gathering would be a very pleasant one.

The President subsequently entertained the members to luncheon at the "Red Lion Hotel."

At the conclusion of the repast, the PRESIDENT gave the loyal toasts, and expressed the hope that the end of her Majesty's reign might not come until the conclusion of the South African War.

The Rev. F. W. WEAVER said it had been the custom to thank the President at the end of the meetings. But through an unforeseen circumstance, over which Sir Thomas had no control, he would be obliged to leave them that afternoon. It was very good of him to have driven twenty miles that morning to give them that interesting address; he then proposed the health of the President.

The toast was heartily received, and the PRESIDENT briefly responded, and said he was very glad to have had the opportunity of entertaining them, which he should like to have done in his own house had not distance prevented.