

Report of the Curator of Taunton Castle Museum
for thirteen months, ending December 31st,
1905.

STEADY progress has been maintained in the re-arrangement of the contents of the Museum as far as is possible in a building of ancient architecture. The old conception of a Museum as a mere depository for curiosities and moth-eaten birds is nearly dead; and it is now recognised even by uneducated persons that by scientific arrangement and classification all the exhibits in any one series are intended to serve a definite purpose, and to be compared one with another.

Although the Society has plenty of room for the growth of its natural history collections, and will have for many years, the present available space for archæological, art, and ethnographical specimens (local, British and foreign), coins and local portraits and other illustrations, is quite inadequate, and not only are several of the series becoming overcrowded, but many objects of importance are stored away in drawers and cupboards until a time arrives when they will serve their proper purpose, viz., of illustrating certain of the material arts of mankind during successive periods. Several series of objects are growing considerably, but they are usually those which are shown to best advantage. Take for instance the Key series; they have become quadruplicated in four years, and only a few weeks ago a member of the Society observing that they were separately ticketed and grouped according to their dates, presented his entire collection of 34. Thus it is seen that in many directions the Society is exposed to loss of large and valuable collections which might otherwise find a home in the

County Museum. The educational value of the ethnological material (local, British and foreign) already contained in Taunton Castle (without considering the Walter collection), is very great, and the only available space at the Curator's disposal at present is a portion of the circular tower-room upstairs, a room totally unfitted for the purpose both by reason of its shape and the insufficient and antiquated cases it contains. As an additional book-room and a "silence-room" for members it would serve a useful and desirable purpose: a step has recently been made in this direction, a portion of the wall-space being furnished with two large book-cases, containing the Calendars and Memorials published by Government. The lower circular room is used as a Committee, Reception, Members' and Curator's room; so that with an increasing number of reading-members, the want of a quiet room for the purposes of literally research is greatly felt. The Museum cases in the upper tower-room are therefore regarded merely as store-cupboards, and as long as they remain they can fulfil no better purpose. Space for coins, tokens, medals and bank-notes, is so limited that hundreds of them are hidden from sight. A department of numismatics is as urgently wanted as a department of ethnology. For the expansion of both these subjects there is ample room in Taunton Castle, but the present annual income of the Society is insufficient to cope with the additional expenditure it would entail.

The cataloguing, ticketing and cleaning of the "Norris Collection" in the early months of the year, occupied much of the Curator's time. After it had been arranged in the Walter room in a specially-constructed case, it was formally opened to the public, on April 6th, by Mr. T. H. M. Bailward, President of the Society, when the Curator read a paper on its chief features and objects of interest. (See Part II. pp. 136—159).

The usual attention has been given to the describing and ticketing of the new additions to the Museum; so that no trouble may be found hereafter in referring to all the available

particulars of the finding or the history of the various exhibits. All coins and other small objects are ticketed in oil-paint in very small type giving the initials of the donor and the date of acquisition, and thus affording a key to fuller details given in the catalogue.

In the Great Hall another incongruity has been added owing to want of space elsewhere, viz., the fine collection of Indian swords collected and presented to the Society by Mr. O. W. Malet in 1891. In this room, the portion of the Charles Moore collection of fossils, etc., presented by the Rev. H. H. Winwood, F.G.S., has been temporarily arranged. Some of the animal cases have been cleaned out and purified, and the cabinets of British butterflies and moths representing the collections of Messrs. Walter, Bidgood and Rawlinson, have received some attention; but much work is still required in respect to the cleaning of the specimens and cases.

In the Norman Keep much re-labelling has been done, and several more specimens in the pottery series have been ticketed in oil-paint. The relics from the Glastonbury Lake Village already presented to the Society by the Excavation Committee have been ticketed and temporarily arranged.

In the upper round room, the contents of one of the cases of ethnological specimens have been cleaned, mended and labelled; temporarily they are being stored in the same case. As was the case last year the Walter Collection has been largely added to by Mr. Hensleigh Walter, M.B.

The general appearance of the Entrance Hall and the Staircase has been greatly improved by their decoration and painting last spring, renovations which were very badly needed. This work entailed a temporary removal of all the pictures, stags' horns, and other exhibits. The contents of these portions of the Castle have now been entirely re-arranged and the portraits of Somerset worthies have been brought together in the Entrance Hall.

Four weeks of the Curator's time have been expended, in

association with Mr. Bulleid, in conducting the Glastonbury Lake Village excavations, and it is anticipated that the remaining area to be explored will occupy at least two months. (See Part II, pp. 75-104).

On December 14th, the Curator delivered a lecture in the Great Hall on the Glastonbury Lake Village, the Rev. Preb. C. Grant, President of the Glastonbury Antiquarian Society, occupying the chair. It was attended by about 195 members and others, and was the largest gathering held in the Castle since the late Earl of Cork and Orrery re-opened the Great Hall three-and-a-half years ago. The lecture was illustrated by a large collection of lantern slides. (See *Somerset County Gazette*, Dec. 16th, 1905).

In the Library Department this year an exceptional amount of the Curator's time has been bestowed on the re-organization of the Library. The Rev. E. H. Bates, Hon. Sec., having completed his MS. catalogue of all the books,—some 13,000 volumes—it has been necessary for himself and the Curator to give a new position to nearly every book in the Library, a work covering many days—nay, weeks. Shelf numbers have now been affixed to all the bookshelves in the building, and the difficulty of finding small books and books seldom used is now a thing of the past. The collection of books bequeathed to the Society by the late Mr. E. Sloper has been catalogued and a special book-plate has been inserted in each volume. As in former years many periodicals and other volumes have been bound, including six volumes of the *English Dialect Dictionary*, now complete.

An endeavour to complete the Society's sets of *Archæologia* and *Notes and Queries* has received special attention, and at the present time only vols. 2-10 of *Archæologia* are required, and the following volumes of *Notes and Queries*: Series III, vols. 1 and 2, and Index; Series VIII, vols. 4-7, 9-12, and Index; and Series IX, vols. 1-4, 7-12, and Index.

In the Report for 1904, the desirability of purchasing a

typewriter was urged. A "Remington" has now been procured and has been found to be of great service for temporary tickets, correspondence, reports, etc., and in the preparation of this volume of *Proceedings*.

Early in the year the town fire-main was extended from Castle Green into the Courtyard of the Castle, where two hydrants are placed in convenient positions to command the whole Castle in case of fire. In this connection it should be reported that the fire insurance of the Society's property has been re-arranged, and that whereas the Castle and contents were insured for £9,750 at a premium of £10 1s., the property is now covered for £11,280 at £9 19s. 6d. per annum.

The attendance of visitors to the Museum and Library for the last thirteen months has been as follows:—Dec., 1904, 441 (including 91 Members); Jan., 1905, 451 (Members, 116); Feb., 396 (Members, 104); March, 455 (Members, 127); April, 823 (Members, 148); May, 596 (Members, 106); June, 693 (Members, 104); July, 570 (Members, 92); Aug., 1,272 (Members, 111); Sept., 894 (Members, 110); Oct., 473 (Members, 92); Nov., 413 (Members, 136); Dec., 587 (Members, 140). Total number of visitors during 1905, including 1,386 visits from Members, 7,623. This shows an increase of $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. on 1904 (when the total reached 7,421), and 51 per cent. more than the total reached four years ago (1901). See Table, *Proceedings*, Vol. L, i, 59). A greater number of Members of the Society have visited Taunton Castle during 1905 than in any previous year.

H. ST. GEORGE GRAY.

December 30th, 1905.