

“LANCASHIRE, OLD AND NEW.” THE PRESIDENTIAL  
ADDRESS TO THE LANCASTER MEETING OF THE  
INSTITUTE.<sup>1</sup>

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I have to begin with two apologies—one for myself and one for my address. It is a great disappointment to me, as I know it must be to you, that Lord Derby cannot be here to-day to speak to you on behalf of this great county, of which he is the feudal chief, and to bid you welcome. Our purpose and aim as a Society is to investigate history in all its departments, but more especially the local and provincial history of England, and, in coming to Lancashire, you visit a county almost every byeway of whose history, especially in dramatic times, is intertwined with the name of Stanley. Surely there is a romantic flavour about every personal name which occurs in the pages of *Shakespeare*; and I shall never forget a conversation I once had with my old friend and neighbour, John Bright—who knew his *Shakespeare* from end to end—when he enlarged to me on that famous scene which preceded the Battle of Bosworth—the scene when Richmond and Richard the Third were about to join issue and to decide the fate of modern England, and when Stanley with his men took up his position on the hill to watch which way the tide would flow, and eventually decided the fight in favour of Richmond—John Bright told me he thought it perhaps the most dramatic scene in all English history. It was certainly the beginning of modern England, and Stanley was there as a chief actor. Two centuries later and we have another famous drama enacted in English history—the great Rebellion; and who will ever forget the stirring story impossible to fitly describe in prose—the defence of Lathom House by Charlotte de la Tremouille, Countess of Derby, and the execution of the heroic and chivalrous Earl in the market-

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place of Bolton? Two centuries again pass by; and who has not heard of the Scorpion Stanley, the Rupert of debate, the brilliant orator and statesman, whose keen eye and eagle face impressed me as a boy as the *ne plus ultra* of a manly, high-bred Englishman? He was the father of my noble friend who, with his gentle wife, dispenses the hospitalities of his house so generously, and represents so well, the dignity and courtesy of his historic family. We are pleased to think that his son, my friend and colleague, Lord Stanley, who represents an important division of Lancashire, has all the promise of following the difficult example of so many famous forefathers with conspicuous ability and urbanity.

These phrases will explain to you why we are disappointed that the Earl of Derby could not be with us to-day and why I have to apologise for having to perform vicarious services which no efforts of another can make equivalent to what they might have been.

Still, there might have been some compensation if this chair had been filled by my predecessor as President, Lord Dillon. Who is there here who has not a kind word and a gentle thought for him? He will be here, we hope, before the week is over. Meanwhile, I am echoing your thoughts, I know, in speaking of one who has presided over you so long and so ably, and who combines in our eyes all the qualities of a learned antiquary, with the rarer ones of a handsome presence, a witty tongue, and a flavour of old world courtesy. We are very sorry he has resigned his position, and we hope that the skies will always be blue over him and his gentle wife, and that the old knights who lie encased in armour on many a lordly tomb will continue to have his keen eye and unparalleled knowledge devoted to their elucidation and history.

I have further to apologise, my friends, for my address. No one in this room, I feel sure, has more burdens on his back than I have; and no one feels a greater sympathy with Martha, who was troubled about many things, than I do. I have had a very hard Session in the Committee Rooms of the House of Commons, and manifold engagements of other kinds, and have literally not had time or opportunity to do justice to my subject, to yourselves, or to my own

scanty reputation. You will therefore have to put up with the aimless scribbling of a worn-out quill and the casual and disintegrated thoughts of a discursive and multifarious antiquary.

Those of you who have visited Lancashire for the first time must have been immensely struck by the proofs you have seen on all sides of extraordinary wealth and prosperity, the thick population, the almost continuous towns, the vigour and energy of its people, and the industrial and commercial enterprise of its capitalists. One tall chimney sentinels another tall chimney from one end of the county to the other, and there are only short and transient breaks between its factories, its collieries, &c., &c.

It is hard to believe that, only one hundred and fifty years ago, Lancashire was one of the poorest of English counties, with a somewhat cold and austere climate, with long stretches of barren moors and uplands, with an altogether not too fruitful soil, a backward agriculture, bad roads, a rough, unpolished, uncouth people. It was the fashion, we are told, for the stranger who crossed its borders to make his will. For the most part, Lancashire had an isolated life behind its rampart of hills, and had not much to do with the general course of English history.

You will naturally repeat a question which has been often asked, and which I well remember being asked in a history paper when I was a schoolboy at Rossall why, and how, did this change come about? Why was it that Norfolk and Suffolk, and Gloucester and Somerset, which in the early and late middle ages were the great homes of English industry and English commerce, should have lost the supremacy they once held and should largely have fallen back into mere agricultural communities, while Lancashire and Yorkshire have in so short a time sprung from a position of comparative obscurity into the very forefront among the energetic and prosperous communities of the world? The answer is simple, and it is plain: it has been due to the substitution, in the great struggle for life, of the man with the iron hand for the man of flesh and blood; of steam for human strength alone, and of the supreme advantages possessed by the northern counties over those of eastern and southern

England in this new struggle. It is the coal and the iron under our soil, the damp climate, the good harbours, and perhaps, more than all, the strong, rough virtues of our peasants and our handicraftsmen, fed for generations on oatmeal and milk, and possessing the grit and endurance, which they derive from their northern blood, which enabled them to take advantage of their surroundings when the industrial revolution came round.

This is an object-lesson on a large scale—a good proof of how empire and its consequences are eventually based upon physical facts, as much, if not more, than upon personal qualities. We are too apt, as historians, to speak of the decay of nations: it would be a truer phrase to speak of the stagnation of nations. Those who fall out of the race do not necessarily fall back, nor travel at a slower pace; they are merely outstripped by those who have greater advantages and greater vigour. We have no reason to think that contemporary Spaniards and Swedes and Italians are less gifted than their ancestors, or that their resources are more paralysed; but the Englishman, the American, and the German, armed with the gifts of the nineteenth century, are more than a match for men who are merely armed with the weapons of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Presently we may have to give way to others less handicapped, may be, by poverty in their lower ranks, by Imperial and municipal debts, by the moral and physical diseases which prevail in towns, and possibly by the exhaustion of energy and initiative which always overtake the traveller when he runs too fast. It is not the future, however, nor the present, which you have mainly come here to study, but the past; and you will pardon my leading your thoughts thither. When we turn our lantern back upon the beginning of our history when men used only stone and bronze for their weapons and their tools, we shall find little to distinguish Lancashire from the rest of England. The valleys were no doubt largely uninhabitable, undrained, and occupied by forest and marsh; and people lived, as is shewn by their grave-mounds, and other remains, on the uplands and the hills—a pastoral and semi-nomadic race, planting occasional patches of oats, and diversifying their shepherd lives by hunting and fishing.

The next chapter in our history coincides with the introduction of iron, and a vast advance in metallurgic and artistic skill. The period is one of the deepest interest—an interest concealed at present behind a mysterious veil. Whence the culture came, which has been so illustrated and illuminated by the researches of Sir Augustus Franks, Miss Margaret Stokes, and Mr. Arthur Evans, is still a puzzle. The beautiful so-called trumpet scrolls, forming the chastest and soundest of ornamental styles; the marvellous skill shewn in casting and chasing metals; the odd, queer shapes of the objects, the purpose of many of which we cannot discover; the use of chariots, of enamel, of glass beads of a peculiar kind—all mark off this period as most interesting, and worthy of closer study. May I make an appeal from this chair to the authorities of the British Museum to display the part of their treasures illustrating this period in a worthier manner? for the collection is a unique one, and was the especial delight of “our father Anchises” Franks. His successor, our accomplished friend Mr. Charles Reid, would soon put this right if the accommodation was furnished him.

The perspective about these times, it seems to me, has been distorted by taking too literally Cæsar’s words, or rather applying them too directly to a period a century later when Claudius began the actual conquest of the country. A great change had taken place meanwhile; and the race which we call Neo-Celtic, and which Cæsar calls Belgic, must have occupied in the time of Claudius the greater part of this country. Nowhere have more interesting remains of it been found than in far-off Dorsetshire, among whose hill-forts its beautiful remains are discovered mixed with the coins of Claudius and Vespasian. From the English Channel to the Grampians, with the exception perhaps of parts of Wales, the whole country had been overrun by them and the earlier Celts been driven away. Behind the Grampians, in the broughs, the vitrified forts, &c., &c., we get an entirely different story; so, may be we do, among the black-haired south Welsh, but otherwise there must have been great homogeneity throughout the British tribes notwithstanding their local divisions. The great roads which were afterwards

occupied and used by the Romans, such as the Watling Street, the Ikniel Way, &c., traverse the whole land, and must have been made by a people who had a great *solidarité* among them. Caractacus, you will remember, who fought against the Romans in South Britain, ended his career in Shropshire. The whole country was much more a united community than we have been led to suppose in our popular histories. One priesthood largely dominated it all, and no doubt also one "Imperator" in the genuine sense of that word.

I have no doubt that Cæsar's conquest of Gaul caused one of the greatest race movements that ever took place in Western Europe, and led to a vast migration of the Gallic tribes hither and to a great afflatus in art and culture. I feel also sure that when the mystery surrounding this Neo-Celtic period is explained, the key to the puzzle will be largely found among the Brigantes, who occupied Lancashire and Yorkshire when the Romans came here. They were probably the most powerful of all the British tribes; they had apparently large colonies in Ireland, and must have been a vagabond and wandering race, for their name is probably still preserved at Breganz in Switzerland, in more than one classical name in Spain, and possibly in our word "brigand." One of the most interesting relics of this period that is extant—a beaded bronze torc, of fine style—was found in the parish of Rochdale, and is now in the possession of my friend Mr. James G. Dearden.

We now reach Roman times, and in Roman times Lancashire must have been a prosperous and wealthy part of the empire. Manchester and Lancaster mark two of its military stations, and, with Chester, no doubt formed a bulwark against aggressions not only from the mountains of Wales and Cumberland, but from the Isle of Man and from Ireland, where many British fugitives must have gone, and whence many piratical attacks no doubt came, long before the invasion of the Picts and Scots.

The Roman sites in Lancashire, although none of them have been systematically examined, have furnished a remarkable number of objects of fine artistic taste, a proof perhaps that they were violently destroyed and rapidly abandoned, and did not gradually decay away.

Ribchester is especially remarkable in this behalf, and I wish we could at this meeting initiate a plan for the systematic exploration of Ribchester. There is a certain Fox whom we all love, and of whose bite some of us are a little afraid, who I wish would make his burrow at Ribchester for a year or two. We should all feel that the digging would then be done in a scientific way.

However the Roman domination in other parts of Britain came to an end, it seems very certain that in Lancashire its end was a violent and rapid one. Lancashire was directly in the track of those invaders from Ireland and the Isle of Man who swept over the north-west of England when the Roman legionaries were largely withdrawn, who are called Picts and Scots by the classical writers, and who in some way or other, which we cannot yet understand, revived the Celtic communities of Britain under a new form. We are apt to look upon them as pirates and scourges, who brought nothing with them but the sword and the torch; but it becomes increasingly evident that they were the heirs and partners of that Neo-Celtic culture to which we have already referred, and whose perhaps most attractive remains are to be found in the illuminations of the earliest extant MSS. written by Irish scribes and in the lovely very early crosses, of which remains are so often found in Lancashire.

The invaders were not all of the Gaelic branch. We have still to learn whence the Welsh Celts came from; who wrote the heroic poems of Taliesin and the other bards, edited by Skene, who are said to have been led by Cunedda and his sons, and who came from the mysterious land of Manan. It may have been the Isle of Man: it may have been Southern Scotland, as Skene has argued; but I am not at all sure it was not partly from Ulster and the country of the Irish Picts. It seems impossible to believe that the peculiar art and the peculiar mythology and ideas that pervade the earliest Welsh poetry is consistent with the race and its culture having lived on under the shadow of the Roman domination in greater Britain, and the absence from the earliest Welsh of larger traces of Latin points the same moral. They would rather seem to me to have come from Ireland, where traces of

Roman influence are so slight and where vast numbers of British fugitives must have settled.

What is plain is that these invaders founded a new kingdom on this side of St. George's Channel. It was known to the Gaelic Scots of Argyll as Strathclyde from the great Strath or valley of the Clyde which formed its notable feature, while its indigenous name was Cumbria. The latter still survives in Cumberland and the islands of the greater and lesser Cumbrae. Of Cumbria Lancashire formed an integral part, and Lancashire remained Celtic probably longer than any other part of England. We know historically how late it was conquered by the Anglian race, but we have evidence of another kind pointing to the long survival of Celtic elements here. The physical characteristics of our peasants, especially in the remoter valleys in the south; the considerable element of Celtic in our southern dialect, to which attention was long ago called by Garnett; the same element in our place-names, not merely in the primitive names of hill and river, but of such place-names as Eccles, &c., &c., and the dedication of at least one Lancashire church—the old church at Heysham—to St. Patrick, whose name, as Miss Grafton has pointed out to me, also occurs elsewhere. Other traces perhaps remain also in the humour and mental dexterity of our Lancashire folk.

As I have said, Lancashire was a late conquest of the Anglian race, and it was so conquered from two different sides and by two entirely different branches of that race, a fact which is stamped most clearly into its history at all points. Lancashire north of the Ribble and Lancashire south of the Ribble are two very different communities speaking two different English dialects. North of the Ribble Lancashire was in every way a part of Northumbria. Ecclesiastically it belonged to the Northumbrian archdiocese of York and the archdeaconry of Richmond, while its language is virtually that of Yorkshire and the Dales, and it must have been conquered and colonised by Northumbrians, as we in fact are told it was in the Chronicle.

South of the Ribble things are entirely different. That part of the county is essentially Mercian. It belonged

ecclesiastically to the Mercian diocese of Lichfield and afterwards of Chester, and its language is pure Mercian like that of Derbyshire and Staffordshire; and it must have been colonised from Mercia, and was probably Christianised by St. Chad, to whom very early churches at Whalley and Rochdale are dedicated. The fact I want to emphasise most strongly is that under the name Lancashire we include two entirely different communities with a different origin and history. The very late occupation of Lancashire by the Anglian race explains the absence from the county of remains belonging to pagan Saxondom. We have no Saxon graveyards, and in fact I know of no remains that have occurred here from the pagan English period. The earliest Anglian remains which have occurred are the sculptured crosses and other traces of the early missionaries of which, as I have said, we have very remarkable examples in the county at Whalley, Heysham, and Winwick, and elsewhere, which deserve to be treated in a monograph. We also have a site which divides, with Oswestry, the claim to be the battlefield of Makersfield.

The early Christianity of Lancashire was apparently a transient phase. It was largely stamped out by a new set of pagan invaders from the sea, who in the ninth and tenth centuries found its broken shore and its creeks a very congenial trysting-place. Few parts of England have more traces in their topography of the Danish invasion than North Lancashire. The hundreds have Danish names, so have many of the villages and the headlands. There is more than one Tynwald in the county marking the place where the Danish inhabitants had their courts. The northern part of the county is divided into wards—a Danish division; and when the great Survey was made nearly all the landowners in the county, as in Yorkshire, had Danish names. The Norse language has also left a large infusion in the dialect, and the tall, red-haired quarrymen, and others of the Lancashire dales who lived on oatmeal cakes and griddle-bread, are the unmixed grand-children of the old sea-rovers.

The mention of Domesday-book reminds me that the use of the word "Lancashire" in the preceding pages is an anachronism. No such thing as Lancashire existed until

long after the Conquest. We must always remember that, with the doubtful exception of Rutland, Lancashire was the last of the English counties to be so constituted. When Domesday-book was compiled Lancashire north of the Ribble was an integral part of Yorkshire, and was so treated. Its manors are all enumerated under Yorkshire. Lancashire south of the Ribble was treated as a separate Royal domain and attached to no county. When, under Edward the Elder, Mercia was divided into counties South Lancashire was apparently treated as a special territory, and so it remained when Domesday-book was written, when it was entered under a special heading as *Terra inter Ripam et Mersem*. This great domain, which had belonged to Edward the Confessor, was made over to Roger of Poitiers, the son of the great Earl of Shrewsbury, who had his chief castle at Clitheroe in Blackburn Hundred. He held many manors in many counties, and his vast holding was designated an honor, and Clitheroe Castle was the focus and capital of it all—the Caput Honoris as the feudal lawyers called it. Roger's lands were presently confiscated for treason. They were largely restored to him by William Rufus. He then, in addition, obtained a second honor, that of Lancaster, with a vast territory north of the Lune. His possessions were again confiscated by Henry I, but the honors which he had held were kept together and became the patrimony of one Royal prince after another, until they finally became the heritage of John of Gaunt and his descendants. Eventually—we do not know when, but later than has been generally thought—they were constituted a county; and being the patrimony of a Royal Duke were also granted a Palatine jurisdiction that is in many respects a Royal and paramount jurisdiction, and so the county has remained to our own day a County Palatine, with its own Court of Chancery, &c., &c., and with the distinction of being a Royal duchy always vested in the Sovereign.

To revert somewhat, the feature about Lancashire which strikes the student of Domesday is the enormous size of the parishes in its southern part compared with the multifarious parishes in the north, marking no doubt the disparity in population between the very thinly-

peopled Hundreds of Salford and Blackburn compared with the districts north of the Ribble.

Lancashire partook in the great afflatus of religious energy which followed the Norman Conquest. While I know of no Anglo-Saxon monasteries in the county, few of their establishments elsewhere rival the great abbeys of Furness and Whalley, beside which we had several subsidiary houses in the county. So far as we can gather from the chartularies, these houses were tenanted by monks recruited almost entirely from the gentry of the county, who in the first centuries after the Conquest endowed the monasteries lavishly. The Black death which devastated the county, as it did others, swept away many of the old families, and from that terrible visitation the peasant monk replaced the monk of older days, and the higher ideal of cenobitic life, self-sacrifice, &c., &c., went to the wall, and lower morals and more uncultivated communities caused many scandals and paved the way for the Reformation.

Lancashire is peculiar among English counties in having retained so many of its old gentry and county families. Nowhere in England are there so many families whose pedigrees go back to the beginning of our evidence, and in some cases overstep the great historical Divide—the Norman Conquest.

The finding of coal and iron under their green fields, and the conversion of their greener meadows into smoky towns, has made our Lancashire proprietors largely independent of agriculture, and enabled them to survive the catastrophies which have overtaken the country gentry elsewhere; and De Trafford and Tempest, Hulton and Gerard, Starkie and Clifton, and many others, still remain among us to witness to the glorious continuity of English history and to the fact that the oldest and best blood among us is not always in the Peerage, but is in the main to be found among the country gentry. It is a special delight to me to remember and recall that an old friend of mine, Mr. Hulton of Hulton, who is now constable of Lancaster Castle, is the head of a family which has been in the forefront of Lancashire local history since its earliest records, and, for aught I know, may have been in possession of Hulton Park and

of Pendleton since the years immediately succeeding the Deluge. If Lancashire be a paradise of wealthy new families, it is assuredly also one of the most famous of English counties in its roll of country gentry with long-drawn-out pedigrees.

Their more or less rugged acres, however, did not afford for the most part any extravagant incomes. The great house of Stanley throughout the Middle Ages probably had statelier surroundings and a larger establishment than any subject of the crown. The De la Warres, the Asshetons, and a few others were also wealthy, but for the most part the Lancashire gentry were people of modest incomes living in small manor houses. In the south of the county these were like those in Cheshire—in many cases magpie houses, made of timber and lath and plaster and coloured black and white: in the north and in the hills, made of the richly-coloured sandstone and grits which abound here. The churches also were modest and small, very few dating from Norman or Early English or Decorated times. The more important ones, like Manchester Cathedral, Cartmel Priory, and the town churches such as Bolton and Bury and Eccles and Warrington, &c., &c., dating for the most part from Perpendicular times.

Of feudal castles we have few and unimportant examples only. There were no enemies at the gate of Mediæval Lancashire, and no necessity therefore for many great castles. Of these, Lancaster, Clitheroe, and Haughton Tower, where the Baron of Beef was knighted, are perhaps the best known. Among the later domestic buildings two are more than remarkable: The Chetham College at Manchester, a unique and most interesting specimen of a Mediæval town house of a great baronial family; and Levens, which you will presently visit, assuredly the most picturesque and complete of gabled and pinnacled Tudor houses with the most complete and picturesque of Jacobean gardens, and the very type we all like to remember of country gentry in my kind friend Captain Bagot and his graceful wife.

As I have said, our county was largely secluded, and lived a life apart behind our English Apennines; but it could not entirely escape the greater waves of historical moment that affected the land. We sent our contingent

to Agincourt, and some of the archers who went there are figured in the stained glass at Middleton. If the Wars of the Roses passed us largely by we gave a name to one of the two factions and a name also to a Royal House; and Henry IV, when Duke of Lancaster, was perhaps the richest prince in Europe, and took a hundred knights in his train when he went to the last of the crusades—a very belated one—against the Letts and Poles. It was Lord Derby's men who decided the battle of Bosworth. In Tudor times we had our domestic dramas. The abbots of the two great Lancashire monasteries, Furness and Whalley, headed the Pilgrimage of Graer, perhaps the most dangerous rebellion we ever had in this country until Charles the First's time, and they both suffered for their temerity with their lives. We possibly burnt more witches than any other county. We harboured Dr. Dee and his necromancy at Manchester; and when the Reformation came about, no part of England was more stirred and nowhere did Puritanism fix itself more firmly than in our remoter valleys. We furnished contingents to either side in the war of the great Rebellion, and here, as elsewhere, heroic men on either side fought out a struggle of principles and secured a new condition of things—the platform on which modern England is planted; but the Rebellion left few traces behind of permanent confiscations or wasted houses. We were too far away from London to receive many Royal visits or to pay the heavier penalties attaching to Royal favours or misfortunes. In one famous struggle in later English history Lancashire took a foremost part—namely, in that of 1745. Prince Charles and his Scotchmen made free with our hospitality in many places, and have left traditions behind. Assuredly few more touching and affecting ballads are anywhere to be found than “Farewell Manchester.” Few more loyal and chivalrous champions of a beaten cause are to be found than our Lancashire Jacobite poet, Dr. Byrom, the author of “Christians, Awake,” and virtually the first introducer of shorthand into these realms.

I sometimes think that the sharp-witted cattle dealers and others, of whom we have a few here—and they have more in Yorkshire—must be a graft from that Scotch

invasion when so many rogues and vagabonds came down upon us and doubtless appropriated our pretty women, as Scotchmen still have the habit of doing, and gave a sharpening edge to their wits.

We now reach a time when the old Lancashire gave place to the new, when steam and machinery revolutionised our life and manners, and when the chaces and rude mountain valleys of Rossendale, of Rochdale, of Oldham, of Bolton, and Bury became the centres of a vast population; when a succession of brilliant mechanical geniuses arose in our midst and decided the fate of the industrial fight. The genius of our people has been largely of the practical kind, involving the application of abstract science to the needs and requirements of men; but it will not be forgotten that in the mental evolution that has marked the last century no names stand out more prominently as scientific discoverers than Dalton and Priestly and Joule, than Whewell and Sedgwick and Roscoe. Few statesmen have left their mark on the Empire more effectually than Gladstone and Bright and Peel. Few literary men have written more graceful English than De Quincey and John Morley; while no son of the soil writing in the vernacular dialect of his fathers, with the single exception of Burns, can approach the delicate poetry, the humour, and imagination of Edwin Waugh.

You will think all this very tedious, very boastful, and very immodest; but I was a little puzzled what to address you about, and it is perhaps a compliment you will not spurn that, in bidding you welcome to this old county, "*Mater dilectissima*" as she is to some of us, we should wish to condense into a few phrases some of the claims we have to your attention. We hope your visit will be a pleasant one. We think you will like us better the longer you know us. We have too often a dull sky and a smoky atmosphere; but, as you will see, we also have some of the most beautiful country in lovely England, and we think that the hard, horny hands of our folk can give as hearty a grip as most. Ladies and gentlemen, we bid you welcome.