

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Cambridge Antiquarian Society.

28 OCTOBER, 1896, TO 26 MAY, 1897,

WITH

Communications

MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

No. XXXIX.

BEING No. 3 OF THE NINTH VOLUME.

(THIRD VOLUME OF THE NEW SERIES.)



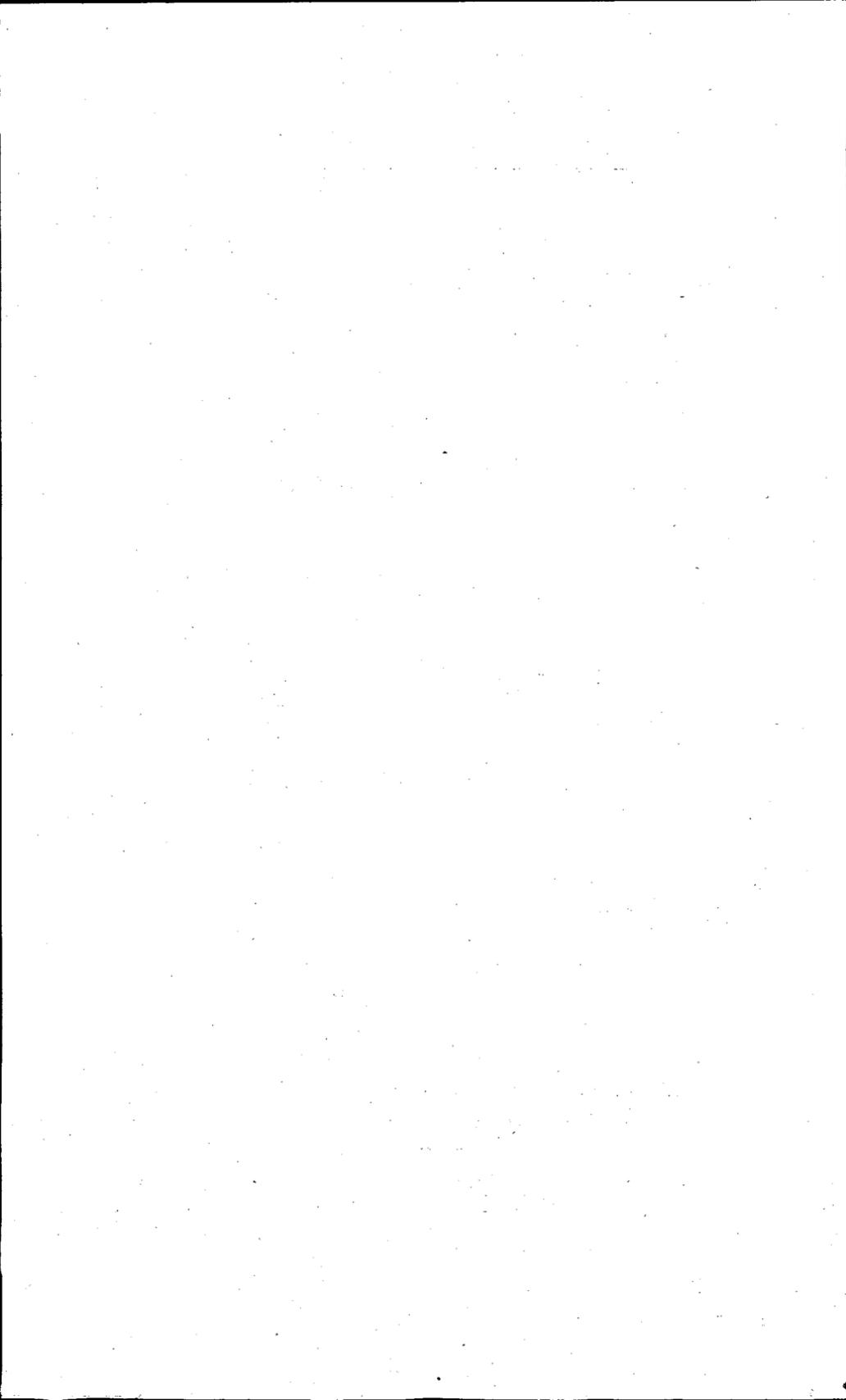
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Wednesday, 28 October, 1896, at 4.30 P.M.

Mr J. B. MULLINGER, President, in the Chair. It was agreed that letters of condolence should be sent to the relatives of the late Sir G. M. Humphry, Dr Campion, and Dr J. H. Middleton.

The PRESIDENT delivered the following address on taking office :

I think I can hardly do better than commence by giving some account of the proceedings of the Congress of Archaeological Societies, which, in conjunction with our Secretary, I attended last July. It was held in Burlington House, London, was presided over by Sir John Evans, and was attended by some 25 delegates from various centres.

It was something of a disappointment to learn that Government declines for the present to undertake any responsibility in connexion with historical monuments throughout the country; the Foreign Office is endeavouring to obtain information as to the steps which are being taken by Governments abroad, and our Government has not arrived at any final decision. It however holds out very little hope, and General Pitt Rivers considers that the owners themselves are the best guardians. A kind of protest against such a view was made by a Resolution passed at the Meeting to the effect that

‘Some public control should be exercised over the restoration or destruction of such ancient buildings as deserve to be classed as historic monuments.’

It was gratifying to learn that the scheme of a National Catalogue of Portraits is under consideration, and that the Heads of Families in the different counties are to be approached on the subject. A Committee has been formed consisting of Mr Gomme, Mr Stanley Leighton, and others; and Mr Lionel Cust undertook to furnish a draught scheme for consideration.

The movement in favour of Photographic Surveys was reported as progressing slowly; Sussex has taken it up and the first Report has been issued to all the Societies in union.

Copies were laid on the table of a Report by Mr F. A. Hyett on COUNTY BIBLIOGRAPHIES, with 'suggestions approved by the Bibliographical Society' for increasing their utility. It was gratifying to hear that Cambridgeshire and Staffordshire are possessed of bibliographies at once 'recent and satisfactory'; it was however stated that these are the *only two*, and Mr Hyett called attention to the fact 'how little work has been done in this field,'—'the large majority of counties,' he says, 'possess no sort of record of their literature.' I venture to quote his own description of the scheme which he proposes, because in matters of organisation it is suggestive in relation to other subjects besides Bibliography:

'Let the production of a County Bibliography be undertaken by a society formed for the purpose, or perhaps better still by a committee of some society already in existence. I do not think it would be difficult to induce many an Antiquarian, or Literary, or Public Record Society to enter on such a work, if its importance were represented to them and they were instructed how they should set about it. Having undertaken the work, the Society should proceed to map out the county into districts, varying in size inversely with the density of the population, and a committee should be constituted of which one member at least should reside in each district. An editor would have to be appointed, and it would be as well if a small editorial sub-committee were also appointed to frame regulations for the conduct of the work. It would be the duty of each member of the general committee to search his district as thoroughly as possible for works falling within the prescribed limits of the bibliography, and to forward to the editor collations of all such works as came under his notice, on forms with which he would have been furnished. To avoid duplicate collations, each member might be periodically supplied by the editor with lists of works which had been collated. This method would ensure exhaustive search and uniformity of treatment. And as the existence and ownership of every work would thus be made known to the editor, he could with little difficulty personally examine any one of more than ordinary interest, if the account of it which he had received were insufficient. This scheme of sub-dividing a county into districts is by no means a visionary one. It has been adopted with marked success in some counties, for the purpose of obtaining photographs of objects of historic or antiquarian interest, and also for the purpose of obtaining drawings and descriptions of church plate, and I see no reason why it should not be applied with a like success to bibliography. By this means I believe that each county could, at least expense, in the least time,

and in the most thorough manner, produce a bibliography of its own literature¹.

In proceeding to say a few words on the claims which our Society has upon the support of the residents in a University town and of the members of a University in which Archaeology itself is now a recognised study, I feel that to some it will probably appear a work of supererogation. But even in Cambridge it can do no harm to recall to mind some of the considerations which serve to redeem the time spent over the subjects which occupy our attention from the imputation of solemn trifling or superstition. Those subjects are mainly connected either with Art or with History. Now as regards those which relate to the former branch, it may be safely asserted that no true Archaeologist has any superstitious veneration for ancient forms or objects simply because they *are* ancient. He values them, in the first place, as links between the Past and the Present, and he aims through them and by them at the prosecution of objects philanthropic, useful and important. Archaeology, *justly interpreted*, it has been wisely said, 'is the handmaid and purveyor of history, the sage commentator on ancient customs and ancient art, the acute and enlightened interpreter of the records of the Past, whether oral, written, or monumental².'

There is much, it is true, in mediaeval art which strikes us as grotesque, frivolous, and even profane, but what an insight it affords us into the real characteristics of an age when such features found permanent expression in the rich mosaic, the sculptured stone, and the carved woodwork! Even where mediaeval art appears to us most frivolous it was often terribly in earnest! And then, again, what a lesson, as regards our own work, we may derive from the thoroughness with which the men of those times did theirs!

More than half a century ago, the most eminent living art critic in this country called attention to this fact in noteworthy phrase: 'All old work nearly,' says Ruskin, 'has been hard

¹ *County Bibliographies*, pp. 9, 10.

² John S. Harford at Bristol in 1851.

work. It may be the hard work of children, of barbarians, of rustics; but it is always their *utmost*. Ours has as constantly the look of money's worth, of a stopping short wherever and whenever we can, of a lazy compliance with low conditions; never of a fair putting forth of strength.' 'And yet,' he adds, 'we are none of us so good architects as to be able to work habitually below our strength; and although there is not a building that I know of, lately raised, wherein it is not sufficiently evident that neither architect nor builder has done his best.'

Now although some thirty years have passed since Ruskin gave expression to these trenchant criticisms, and there has since been a considerable improvement, the lessons and example of the Art of the Past are as valuable as ever. And it is a great advantage to a community to be resident where those lessons are matters of every-day experience; while any new centre of industry rising up on some virgin site, whether on the moorland plain or by the river side, whether in England or in America, must always be at a great disadvantage when compared with any great historic centre, such as, for example, Chester, Norwich, Oxford or Cambridge. There are 'sermons in stones' in another sense, that of the poet's, and surely it should be regarded as almost a duty by every educated denizen in such a centre to be familiar with the lessons taught by the surroundings of his or her every-day life. Such lessons, rightly applied, dignify individual existence, and not only bring the learner into touch with a distant Past but enable him better to comprehend his relations to the Present. Between the feelings and the interest with which the astronomer gazes upon the starry heavens and those of the rude peasant how great the difference! Between those of the geologist and the ordinary labourer, as each looks upon some grand Alpine cutting, how great again! But neither in the one case or the other is the difference greater than that with which the intelligent archaeologist and the man careless of such lore, regards whatever is ancient, historic, or even prae-historic in his own county or town. And if such cultivated appreciation were more widely

spread, I cannot but think that it would serve as a useful counterpoise to that too exclusive devotion to, and admiration of, foreign art, which, as associated with the pleasure of foreign travel, is perhaps unduly prevalent among our countrymen in the present day. It would become a kind of secondary patriotism. We should scarcely, then, see announcements like that which greets the visitor on the door of the Abbey Church at Malvern, cautioning people against assembling *when the wind is high*; nor should we see so many churches in the condition in which Thomas Fuller found the Church of St Andrew here in Cambridge, in his day, when he declared that it 'saddened' him to see the church where the eminent William Perkins was interred ready to fall to the ground. 'Jacob said of Bethel, "How dreadful is this place." I am sorry it may in a far different sense be said of this St Andrew's, filling such as approach it with fear of the ruins thereof.' And he justly concludes that 'as David was glad to go up into the house of the Lord, all good men may be sorrowful to see God's house coming down to them.'

And now to turn for a moment to the historic aspect of our researches. The contributor of a careful paper on some ancient foundation, lay or ecclesiastical, on the Annals of some parish, some extinct family, or on the incidents in the life of some half-forgotten worthy, may himself modestly disclaim the right to rank as an historian, but what a service he renders to history! The great merit and value of such work is, that if really honestly, carefully, and thoughtfully done it is in most cases *done once for all*. A well-established nexus of dates and facts, the result of such research, may be accepted as *trustworthy first-hand evidence*. It was said of Macaulay's *History of England* that the author illumined the scroll of history no faster than it unrolled,—that is to say, it took him as many years to record the Annals of his country, from the Accession of James II. to the death of William III., as that period itself embraced. Lord Acton, in his Inaugural Address, recently observed that 'a lifetime spent in the largest collection of printed books would not suffice to train a real master of

modern history,'—there are vast stores of documentary evidence which still require to be investigated.

And so far as our national history is concerned, it appears to me that careful and minute investigations, such as those undertaken by an Antiquarian Society, render important service. I doubt very much whether any great historical writer would be willing to take all the published labours of the Royal Historical Society as proven and final; but unless some special reason for scepticism arises, the historical investigator does not want to ransack the charter, the deed, and the will, the parish register and the mortuary roll, for dates, names, and facts which previous research has already sufficiently established. And in work of this kind, unpretending though it be, there is not only a great satisfaction to the worker, but a service rendered to others which, however beyond his power to estimate, is none the less real and permanent.

Mr J. E. FOSTER made the following communication:

NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF EXNING.

The name appears in Domesday as Esselinga, and in the grant of the church to Battle Abbey, by William Rufus, in 1087, as Exelingas. The shortened form of Exning, or Ixning, which is subsequently used, has no connection therefore with the Icenii as has been suggested, but the name is probably a tribal or family one.

There is a strong local tradition which looks upon Exning as the birthplace of S. Etheldreda, and a spring in the parish is pointed out as the scene of her baptism by Paulinus, Archbishop of York. The only MS. authorities are the "Liber Eliensis" and the "Historia Eliensis," which erroneously quote Bede's work, "De gestis Anglorum," otherwise the "Historia Ecclesiastica," as the foundation for the statement. The passage relating to S. Etheldreda in the 17th chapter of the 4th book gives no information as to her birthplace, but refers only to her parentage.

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