ON THE HISTORY OF THE SOUTH-WESTERN PORTION OF ENGLAND.[1]

By the LORD HENRY SCOTT, M.P.

In delivering to you the opening address as President of the Historical Section of this Meeting of the Archæological Institute, I feel there are so many who are far more competent than I am to initiate the interesting discourses which will be delivered in this section during the ensuing week, and whose historical knowledge and research fit them rather than myself to occupy this chair, that some apology is due to you for the position I occupy by the invitation of the Institute. It is more, therefore, as one holding a certain position in the county which is visited by the Institute, desirous of bidding it welcome and assisting to promote its success, that I appear here as your President; and asking your indulgence for the short-comings which I know must accompany it, I will endeavour to put before you this slight historical sketch which I have prepared.

In performing the duty I have undertaken, I feel that I labour under a great disadvantage: it should have devolved on one who has been born and bred in this Royal county, who has grown up amidst its local history, and whose mind has been from youth filled with its traditions. I yield to none, however, in the interest I feel in the county of my adoption, in which I have a home, perhaps one of the most historically interesting and picturesquely beautiful within its borders.

To put even this slight sketch before you, I have had to search for materials in such books as were accessible, and greatly have I regretted in this study to find that this great Royal county, equal nearly to Yorkshire in extent—once the metropolitan county of England—abounding in the most interesting associations of the common history of our

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country, has no really good historian. When we remember that the county has within its limits the ancient city of Winchester, the Caer Gwent, or White City of the Britons, founded (if we may believe traditions preserved among its muniments) 892 B.C., the Venta Belgarum of the Romans, the Wintan Ceaster of the Saxons (whence its present name), the capital city of the kingdom of Wessex, and destined under Egbert to become the chief city of the whole Saxon Heptarchy, where Ethelwolf convened the whole council of the nation, and placed upon its cathedral altar the grant of endowment, by which that church still holds its possessions; where Alfred reigned, where all his enlightened policy was framed and enacted, and where his bones were laid to rest under the shadow of Hyde Abbey—a city which long retained under the Normans its former rank and standing, even when London was but rising into power—remembering all this, I say, it must be a matter of surprise and regret as much to you as to myself, that there is really no chronicle worthy of such a subject, certainly none equal to those which other counties, such as Gloucestershire, Somersetshire, or Warwickshire, possess. I am therefore placed in a considerable difficulty, as I can neither refer for my own information, nor recommend to the Members of this Institute, a work which is really worthy of the name of a good County History.

We are of course much indebted to Warner for his sketches of the south-western part of Hampshire, and also for his collection for the history which he was not able to complete. The defect was sought to be remedied by the Queen's late librarian, Woodward, but his removal from Winchester to Windsor, and his subsequent death, prevented the completion of this work. His work has been supplemented by Lockhart and others, and published in three volumes, and contains most accurate accounts of Winchester and other large and important towns. Still it has not wholly filled the vacuum.

Another great want exists in Hants—there has never been formed a County Archæological Society, such as those of Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Somerset, Sussex and Kent, which by their publications have thrown so much light upon the antiquities, manners and customs of each of the above-named counties—not that the meetings of a county society should supersede those of the central

association, but rather act as feeders to it. The Institute deals with the general history of the whole country; the local association investigates all the minute details of one particular district, so that the two combined furnish scope for all antiquarians, and serve to remedy a defect so well described by Mr. Freeman, the President of the Historical Section of last year at Cardiff, when he said,—"The local historian who does not raise his eyes to general history is undoubtedly a very poor creature, but I venture to think that the general historian, who thinks himself too great to cast his eye downwards on local history, is a poorer creature still. The facts gathered together by the local antiquary may be put to use by those who know better than himself how to arrange them in their due place and order."

This, then, appears to be the great advantage of such meetings as the present, that it brings the general historian and the local historian face to face for their mutual edification.

In attempting to give a short sketch of the history of our county, it is impossible for me to go into a detailed account of every object of historical or archæological interest in it, and I must leave it to those who will follow me to deal with the various points which they have specially studied, and which they will put before you in the most interesting form.

I have already alluded to Winchester, which takes us back almost to the earliest point of our county's and country's history.

It would appear that in the British period there were several districts to which the natives gave the appellation of Gwent, or open champaign country, in distinction to the vast wooded tracts of impenetrable forest. For instance, there were the Gwent of the Belgæ, Hampshire; the Gwent of the Silures, Monmouthshire; and the great eastern Gwent of the Iceni, whose capital was Norwich; and even Kent is by some supposed to be a softened form—*caint*—of the same word. In the centre of the Gwents the natives established their strong places of abode and defence, and Winchester was selected as the protected site of the capital of the great Gwent, or open down country of Hants. Here the Britons remained till attacked by the Belgæ from Gaul, who, landing, we may suppose, at Southampton, pressed their

way forwards through the Vale of Itchen, and took possession of the Gwent, driving the original inhabitants before them, till they reached the boundaries of Hants, where still are to be traced the Belgic earthworks erected for their defence.

The Belgæ had, however, to succumb to the Romans under Vespasian, who established themselves in all the native strongholds, especially at Winchester and all the chief places of the Gwent, changing the name, and Latinising it into Venta—thus Venta Belgarum, Venta Icenorum, Venta Silurum. We have only to look at any map in which the Roman roads are delineated to see what an important position Winchester must have held as a centre in Roman times of a network of Roman roads—one great road leading northward to Calleva, the great city of Silchester (whence London could be reached in one direction, and Cirencester, by the Ermine Street, in the other); one leading southward (whence came all the traffic from Gaul) to Clausentum, or Bittern, the ancient Southampton; one leading westward to Salisbury and to Bath; one leading south-east, in communication with Porchester and Chichester, while lesser lines lead off to Tachbury and Kingwood, to Lepe, to Rue Street in the Isle of Wight, to Carisbrook, and on to the coast.

Upon the retirement of the Romans and the establishment of the Saxons, they in turn took possession of the great fortresses of the county. They settled at Venta Belgarum, converted again the Latin V. into the Saxon W.. called it Wintan, and, adding "ceaster" for capital, made it Wintanceaster, or the City of y^{e} Winte, from which it derives its present name; and the Saxon Winton still survives as the ecclesiastical appellation of its present bishops.

Time would fail me to trace the various changes that have taken place since Wintan Ceaster became the capital of Wessex, and King Kynegils being converted to Christianity, in 635, founded the first Christian church upon a Roman temple of Apollo and a Saxon temple of Dagon. It is well known that here Egbert first gave the name of Anglia to his United Kingdom; here Alfred reigned and rests; here Edgar (959) first established Winchester measure as a standard for his dominions; and Canute here hung up before the altar the crown which he refused to wear, after the well-known rebuke

to his courtiers on the sea-shore at Southampton. The cathedral, which Professor Willis has so ably described, and which to this day bears traces of the Saxon period, is a noble monument of the piety and unstinted munificence with which it was sought to make God's house surpass in beauty and grandeur all other buildings. Queen Emma, the mother of Edward the Confessor, here justified her innocence by passing through the fiery ordeal of walking unscathed over hot ploughshares.

Walkelyn, first Bishop of Winchester after the Conquest, nearly rebuilt this cathedral, and a long line of succeeding bishops, amongst whom are conspicuous St. Swithin, Henry de Blois, Peter de la Roche (De rupibus), William of Wykeham, the founder of the ancient and celebrated college, Cardinal Beaufort, Waynflete, Bishop Montagu, and Bishop Andrews, is now represented by that much revered and able prelate, our present bishop, who so worthily fills the chair at this meeting as your President. It was Winchester which first heard the sound of the curfew bell, and there that book of titles to property, so hated by the Saxons, was compiled and named by them Domesday Book. There the splendid Abbey of Hyde, within whose precincts the body of King Alfred rests, lasted to the time of Henry VIII., when it fell with other monastic institutions; and the Castle, Hall, and Palace of King Charles II. attest the partiality with which it was viewed by the sovereign of England. It must be a satisfaction to you to know that this Hall, where the assize courts have hitherto been held, is being restored to its ancient beauty, and will form a part of the new county buildings.

In passing away from Winchester, we should cast our eyes a little lower down the river to the Hospital of St. Cross, where the dole of bread and beer is still given away faithfully, even to modern pilgrims; and then, following down the valley of the Itchen, we at last reach Southampton. This town cannot boast the same antiquities as Winchester, but its interest is also very considerable. Its name is found in the ancient British town Anton or Hantone, which is situated on the river An or Anton, and gave its name at once to the present town and county. Bittern was the site of the Roman Clausentum, the remains of which may be seen in the garden and ground which now belong

to Mr. Stuart Macnaghten, and are attached to his residence. The river An or Anton rises near Andover in the upper part of the county, and passes (by the Test) into what is now called the Southampton Water, close to the Clausentum of the Romans. At what period Hantone was changed into Southampton, and Hants into Hampshire, is a question which local authorities may be able to decide; in the Saxon Chronicle it is first named, and afterwards mentioned in Domesday Book as Hanton Schyre, and the town called Hantone. It is not improbable that the county was converted into Hampshire, and the town into Southampton, when Henry VIII. made Southampton a county itself, independent of Hampshire. South Hampton is supposed by some to have been so called to distinguish it from Northam, when the Saxons, abandoning Clausentum, moved further south, to the point of land upon which the town now stands. It suffered severely from the invasion of the Danes, especially in 833; and once Sweyn, the Dane, passed a winter there, holding the town for its ransom of £10,000, which Ethelred the Unready had promised to pay. The memory of Canute's stay here, and his rebuke to his courtiers, may well be recalled before we quit this early period of its history. During the Norman period it reached its greatest prosperity. Henry I. made it a burgh; King John gave it the first charter, and had a palace in it; and merchants flocked here from all parts of the East. Hence sailed the fleet of Cœur de Lion for Palestine, and here the armies embarked that were to be victorious at Crecy and Agincourt. Here also Philip of Spain, attended by the Spanish and Flemish squadrons, landed to meet Queen Mary at Winchester. But in these embarkations, and the pageants which accompanied them, we must not forget the peaceful but all-important departure from Southampton of Winfred, a native of Crediton, in Devon, educated at the Benedictine monastery of Nurseling, who went forth with a band of missionaries to preach the gospel to the savage tribes of North Germany. He is better known to us by the name of St. Boniface, the Apostle of Germany, Archbishop of Mayence, and martyr. Leland gives a good description of this town, as it was in his time, with "its eight bar gates, its great double dyke full of water, and the four towers on its walls. The East Gate is strong, but nothing so large as the Bar

Gate, and St. Mary's Church of New Hampton standing without the gate." He speaks of "the glory of the castle having a donjon or dungeon, which was both large, fair, and very strong; and further, that there be three principal streets in Hampton, whereof that which goeth from the Bar Gate to the Water Gate is one of the fairest that is in any town of all England. It is well builded for timber building. There be many fair merchants' houses in Hampton. There cometh fresh water into Hampton by a conduit of lead, and there be certain coslelets into this conduit within the town." Such was Southampton when Leland wrote of it in the reign of Henry VIII. Now it may claim a high position as one of our great seaports and principal towns; and none will dispute, that, seen from the west, its appearance is most picturesque, with its ancient walls, old houses, and glittering spires.

The termination of the Saxon period in our history, and the rise of the domination of the Normans, turn our thoughts to that portion of this county with which their race and line of kings is more immediately associated—I mean the New Forest, perhaps the most beautiful monument they have left us of their time. However we may question the manner in which it was established, and condemn the severe and inhuman laws made for the protection "of the king's beastes," we owe now a debt of gratitude to the first Norman sovereigns and to their successors who have preserved to us this national treasure. In these days, when acre after acre is being built upon in our land, when it is often hard to say where the town ends and the country begins, it is no small boon to possess such a grand open space available for health, recreation, and the study of natural beauty, that great gift of God which man alone can mar, but which, when beheld in its wild native garb, softens, civilises, and soothes man's heart, and is a medicine to heal the sickness of the toil and turmoil of life. Accessible as the New Forest is to our fellow-countrymen who have not the means or the power to resort to foreign climes, it is a special boon to our working classes, and as such we must all feel bound to preserve it from encroachment and enclosure. Having said this much in praise of this lovely feature of our county, with which I am myself so well acquainted, I will endeavour to give you a slight sketch of the historical associations connected with it. That the ancient Britons held this country and made a gallant fight for

it against the Saxon invaders, we cannot doubt. In 495, Cedric and his Saxons invaded this part of the country, landing somewhere at the mouth of the Itchen. Dr. Guest has put it on record that shortly after, in the year 501, a Saxon named Port landed at Portsmouth,—perhaps affording a double derivation of its name. He is said to have engaged the British prince or king, Natan Leod, the prince or chief of Natan or Netley (not the Netley whose graceful ruins adorn the shores of the Southampton Water, but Netley Marsh, a large district in the parish of Eling). This Natan Leod is supposed to have been no other than Ambrosius, who has given his name to a farm still called Ambrose Farm at that remarkable camp formed by Vespasian, which still exists near Lymington, and is known as Buckland Rings. Driven to the westward, and making a stand here for the grand forest district which extended in those days from the Hamble to the Avon, he was killed at Chardford or Charford on this latter river, which takes its name from Cedric's ford. Numerous burrows attest that the fight must have been severe in this district, and that the inhabitants had learnt the art of sepulture by incremation from the Romans. But to come to the later period when the forest was enlarged, as *enlarged* it only was by William the Conqueror, we now know how much exaggerated was the account given to us by monkish historians of its *formation* by that king, and the story of Rufus's death, while hunting in the forest which was his father's ruthless work, has often—to use a hackneyed quotation—served "to point a moral and adorn a tale." Many of you will visit the actual spot where the fatal arrow from Tyrrell's bow struck him down, and you doubtless know of Tyrrell's ford, and the fine paid to this day by the owners of Avon for letting the regicide pass. The name of the charcoal-burner in the forest, Purkis, who bore the king's body by the King's Lane (still known as such) to Winchester in his cart, is still represented by some who claim an unbroken descent from him. For many a year the kings of England were not however deterred by the ill-omen of Rufus's death from repairing to the forest to enjoy the pleasures of the chase. The Normans have left us many a relic both of their piety and their power, and perhaps the greatest of the former class is one which has been least spared by the hand of the destroyer, *i.e.*, the lovely Abbey of Beaulieu,

described in the Charter of King John as the "Bellum Locum Regis, or the King's Beau Lieu." Of the magnificence of this abbey we have many records. It was forty years in building, and King Henry III. with all his court were present at its dedication. The wife of Henry VI. took refuge there, and it was there that the last meeting of the Lancastrian party was held, just before the battle of Barnet. Its sanctuary harboured for many years the person of Perkin Warbeck. Netley, the fair daughter of Beaulieu, was founded from this abbey.

We have besides the abbeys or priories of Titchfield and Christchurch, the preceptories of the Templars of South Baddesley, Godsfield, and Selborne, to mark the religious work of that age.

Nor can we forget the many castles scattered through the land which owe their origin to the Normans. The great Castle of Merdon, the remains of which stand in Hursley Park, built by Henry de Blois, Bishop of Winchester, and the fine Castle of Carisbrook in the Isle of Wight, with which is associated a touching picture of the most eventful period of our history, attest the valiant spirit of their time. Our sea-coasts were much exposed to the attacks of enemies, and the sea-coast towns felt alike the fury of the Norsemen or Danes, and the attacks of the French and Dutch even in later days. Three times has Lymington been destroyed by the French, Southampton was twice attacked in the fourteenth century, Portsmouth was once burnt to the ground; and those who aver that England can never be invaded, may make a note of the fact that the French once penetrated as far as Odiham before they were repelled. It would be endless for me to dwell on every incident of historical interest which has occurred in the county; I can but mark the outline, and, as I have shown to you the grandeur of its historical monuments in their prime, so I must point to their ruins, which are all we have now left to cherish. In proportion as this county was rich in its religious establishments, so the more heavily did the hand of destruction fall upon it in the time of Henry VIII. The splendid abbeys of Beaulieu and Netley, the priories of Titchfield and Christchurch, are all in ruins, while some of the smaller houses have passed away from view altogether. In this present day, however, the appreciation of what is old, and the desire to preserve it, are at work to keep intact as

much of these beautiful monuments as remain to us; while the sole anxiety of those who possess the land that the monks formerly held, must be (and I believe I may speak for others as for myself) to make sure that those who depend upon them should feel no loss of pious care for their welfare, and no lack of religious ministrations and ordinances.

To us in this county how full of interest is the period of the Civil War! Can we forget the act with which it virtually began, in the murder of the Duke of Buckingham by Felton in Portsmouth? or the gallant defence of Basing House (so rightly called Loyalty House) by the noble-hearted ancestor of our present Lord Lieutenant? The battle of Newbury, on the border of our county, rings in our ears, and we can also claim the battle-fields of Basing Down, Cheriton, and Alton. We cast our eyes down to Hurst, and then across the Solent, to gaze on the grey towers of Carisbrook, to mark its deep moat and high walls, and we think with pity and sorrow of the royal captive who in his prison endeared himself to all, and more than wiped out by his holy resignation any mistakes of a more prosperous time. Winchester suffered severely during this time of revolution, and the destruction caused by Oliver Cromwell's cannon will not be easily forgotten there. It was he who dismantled the Royal Castle, levelled that of the Bishop at Wolvesley, threw down the fortifications of the Norman tower and west gate, and whose soldiers sacked and desecrated the cathedral, destroying the monuments and taking away the books and plate. At the Restoration, however, more peaceful scenes dawned again upon the town, and it became the favourite resort of Charles II. and his courtiers, who came here after the busy turmoil of London to enjoy their holiday. His palace now stands to mark this point in our history. We may remember that William III. was the first after Charles II. to attempt to repair the ravages which amidst the license of the civil wars had been committed in the New Forest; and the Act known by his name is a sort of starting point in the modern legislation on this subject. We indeed should be well content if now, as then, its only object was the preservation of timber, not its destruction. The era of the Georges brings us to the time when from the great seaport of Portsmouth our gallant sailors went forth to victory, and returned with their prizes to its harbour. The name of Nelson, and that gallant ship, the Victory, which bore his flag

at Trafalgar, will never be forgotten by Englishmen ; long may this ship be kept in Hampshire waters as a monument of those times, and may Nelson's noble name be as well represented in future generations as it is at present.

Hampshire men will associate with Strathfieldsaye the memory of more than Roman greatness—that of one whose equal we have never seen, and probably never shall see in our day. None of us that ever saw the Iron Duke could forget him ; he is a pattern to us all of devotion to his country and duty to his sovereign, and when England is again assailed, may we again find one like him to step forward in defence of her greatness and honour. Nor can we forget our Hampshire poet, who now lies in the churchyard at Hursley, and whose writings have shed such a happy religious influence in our own land and beyond the Atlantic. His house and grave are even now places of pilgrimage, and should not be forgotten in enumerating the most illustrious localities in our county. There is a saying of one whose memory is cherished in Hampshire, one who but yesterday passed away from us, one who seemed to link us with those great men whom we have lost. It was this : that "*the first step towards loving one's country was to love one's county.*" Such were the words of the late Lord Palmerston, and truer words were never spoken. Our Constitution happily has made each county into an independent self-governing community for many purposes, and yet all are tied together as one nation. Our counties, however, speak to us of family associations, local traditions and interests, around which grow our human affections. To us, therefore, these histories and these associations are realities ; they form our part of our country's life, they find their place in our country's history, they bring us together in that common interest in our country's welfare which under God's blessing has made us a happy and contented people. Every age leaves its mark in the history of a country, and so of the world, and in like manner the history of a county leaves its mark on the history of its country—the buildings we rear, the monuments we raise, speak of the social and religious life of the age and of the men who lived in it. Let us then remember that upon each one of us rests the responsibility of making our country's history, and that by our actions, individually as well as collectively, it will be judged whether we have fulfilled the high mission that God has set before us as a nation.