

The Archaeological Journal.

SEPTEMBER.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF THE EARL OF DEVON TO THE ANNUAL MEETING HELD AT EXETER, 1873.¹

IN taking the chair on the present occasion, I cannot commence the few remarks which it is my intention to submit to the Meeting without taking the opportunity of giving expression to that feeling of deep sorrow which must be entertained by all who hear me for the lamentable accident which has deprived the Church and the country of the distinguished man who did us the honour to act last year as our President.

Every one who has known the public career of Bishop Wilberforce (and who can have failed to know it?) will recognise the loss which England has sustained in the death of one who was always foremost in every undertaking which had for its object the religious, moral, or social benefit of his countrymen. To all who have had the advantage of personal intercourse with him will the recollection be ever present of a kindness of heart, a ready sympathy, and an unaffected warmth of manner which won the affectionate regards of all who were brought in contact with him. I have heard the late Bishop Wilberforce described as "*many-sided*;" I am not sure that that epithet was not sometimes applied to him in a disparaging sense, and in any such sense it was entirely undeserved. If, however, a man who habitually devoted his great energies and powers to the general good, who was ready for that object to co-operate with others at any sacrifice except that of principle, who, combining great natural powers with larger acquirements, and uniting vigour of character and boldness in action with sympathy and tender regard for the feelings of others,

¹ Delivered July 29, 1873.

and who was ever ready to minister to the social wants of his countrymen, if such a man be termed "*many-sided*," then do I say that it becomes a term of high praise, and that to none could it be more properly applied than to Bishop Wilberforce.

In now proceeding to address you, I trust that I may be allowed to consider myself as acting, in some sense, in a double character. In the first place, as a resident in this county and neighbourhood, I desire, on the part of the inhabitants of this part of Devonshire, to offer to the members of the Royal Archæological Institute a cordial welcome, and to tender to them our united thanks for the compliment paid to our county in the selection of Exeter as the place of meeting for the present year. It will be the earnest endeavour of all concerned to render the visit as agreeable to the members, and as conducive to the objects of the Society as circumstances will permit. In the second place, as having the honour to hold the office of President of the Meeting, I ask permission to offer, by way of preface to our proceedings, a few observations of an introductory and general character.

On the interest which attaches to archæological studies, it is obviously unnecessary for me to dwell, in addressing such an audience as the present. The main reason why most of us are here is, that we are anxious to receive information in respect to the memorials of ancient times and the vestiges of the former inhabitants of this County which are to be found among us, and that we desire, through the examination and study of these relics and records of the past, to become better acquainted than we are with the modes of life of those who have gone before us. We believe, too, that such studies are not without material advantages. Few of us can observe such indications of the habits and physical condition of the earliest inhabitants of this island as are afforded by the remains of their rude dwellings, and by the rude implements occasionally found, without a sense of thankfulness that our lot has been mercifully cast in times of improved knowledge, of advanced civilization, and more refined habits; or, as I trust that I may add, without readily recognising the truth that greater advantages entail greater social, moral, and religious responsibilities.

Again, in examining the remains of our early castles

and our later domestic buildings, we cannot fail to be struck with the contrast between the numerous and carefully-studied provisions for attack and defence, indicating a state of society where every man's hand was against his neighbour, and might held sway over right ; and the indications of a more peaceful, free, and well-ordered society afforded, as years pass on, by the gradual changes in our architecture. And, once more, the study of our ecclesiastical remains, proving, as it does, that our ancestors deemed it fitting to give, for the glory of God, and the due celebration of His worship, whatever they had most to be prized in the natural material or in the productions of art, may well stimulate the devotion of their descendants, and elevate and guide their judgment. Nor, lastly, ought we to doubt that the study of the past has, if properly and thoughtfully conducted, a sound mental and moral influence.

Living, as we do, in the full enjoyment of all the appliances of modern civilization, we shall yet be led, by archaeological observations, to feel grateful to those who have gone before us for the treasures in art, and in architecture, which have been handed down to us ; we shall consider what would, in many respects, have been our condition had our ancestors done nothing for us, and, unlike the man who said he would do nothing for posterity because posterity had done nothing for him, we shall be the more inclined to endeavour, in our measure, to leave something behind for the benefit of those who are to follow us.

To pass, however, from these general considerations to the special circumstances of our Meeting, I venture to claim for these Western counties some objects of special interest, while I am prepared to admit that, as regards certain other points, other districts of England have the advantage over us. I do not venture to deny that, as regards churches, we do not, with one or two remarkable exceptions, possess such noble specimens of various styles of architecture as may be found in some of the Midland or Northern counties of England, while, with regard to our castles, we have none equally large or equally perfect with others of which remains exist, in a few instances, elsewhere.

Let it not, however, be supposed by any one that we, in the south-west, are destitute of objects of interest to the Archæologist, or that there have not been, in various in-

stances, discoveries made and facts brought to light which, while they have rewarded research, are calculated to stimulate and encourage further investigation. In some respects, indeed, it might naturally be expected that Cornwall and Devonshire would present interesting peculiarities. Known, at a very early period, to the Phœnicians, and, from their numerous harbours and their mineral wealth, much frequented by their vessels, these two counties, it cannot be doubted, became partially civilized at an earlier date than some other parts of England; while, at the same time, the existence of large tracts of elevated and uncultivated land, more especially Dartmoor, has tended to the preservation of remains of ancient character which might, under other circumstances, have been effaced or mutilated.

It is thus that archæology, no longer, as twenty or thirty years ago, limiting its researches to times illuminated by the light of history, is enabled in Devonshire to carry its investigations beyond the times of the Romans into prehistoric times, and, in the cairns and barrows found on some of our hills, (such as those explored by one whose loss to archæology cannot be over-estimated—I mean the late much-lamented Mr. Kirwan) in the graves of the men of olden times which have been opened, and in the caverns, such as those so carefully explored by Mr. Vivian and Mr. Pengelly, near Torquay, which seem to have been their dwelling-places, to form conjectures from the implements and ornaments found, and from other remains, as to the modes of life of the primitive inhabitants.

Of our churches, too, it may safely be asserted that, if they are not usually marked by great size, or by the characteristics of the purest times of ecclesiastical architecture, they possess, in their numerous rood-screens, and in the carved seat-ends, which have survived the so-called improvements of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, peculiar claims to attention. Nor ought it to be forgotten that, though the ordinary parochial church may not be specially noteworthy, the Church of St. Mary's, Ottery, restored mainly by the zeal and liberality of one family, that of Coleridge, whose name is synonymous with intellectual culture and enlightened public spirit; that of Crediton, whose grand fabric awaits, it may be hoped, at no distant period, similar restoration; and those of Plympton, Cul-

lampton, Tiverton, and others, need not shrink from comparison with the remarkable churches which (in greater numbers, it is true) may be found in other counties. Especially, however, may we invite the attention of those of our visitors to whom, as yet, Exeter is, untrodden ground, to the noble Cathedral that rises above our city, to its Norman towers, to its unusual breadth, to the rare beauty and variety of its window tracery; and we venture to believe that, in the work of repair and restoration now being carried on by the munificence, collective and individual, of the Dean and Chapter, liberally aided, as it has been, by the donations of this city and diocese, they will not fail to recognise a zealous endeavour to reproduce the glories of a noble fabric, and to adapt the Mother Church of the Diocese, if not as yet quite as completely as might have been desired, still, with no slight success, to the requirements of increasing assemblages of devout worshippers.

Our castles, we have already acknowledged, cannot compare in point of size, or in their state of preservation, with the Edwardian castles of Wales, or with the Border fortresses of the Northern counties. Still, in the remains of Exeter, Totnes, Plympton, and Launceston castles, nay, even in the picturesque tower of Okehampton, as it rises above the rushing water which washes its base, we trace vestiges of the Norman works of ancient times, while at Berry Pomeroy will be seen at once the ruins of the feudal castle and the remains of the manor house of the sixteenth century. Nor can I omit, in this place, to refer to one castle, to which, though beyond the border of Devonshire, we may justly prefer a claim as belonging to the West, viz., the grand pile of Dunster.

Nor, lastly, if we turn to the specimens of our ancient domestic architecture, whether as exhibited in those buildings which properly belong to the class of castellated houses assigned to the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, or in the remains of the later times of Elizabeth and James I., are we, in these Western Counties devoid of interesting specimens. Under the first class Cothele on the Tamar, if smaller than Haddon Hall, is a no less perfect and unspoilt example of the fifteenth century, while, notably in Compton Castle, and, in a less degree, at Powderham Castle, details not without interest are to be met with. Of the times of Elizabeth and

James, Holcombe Rogus and Bradfield, both recently restored with care and judgment, and Bradley, near Newton Abbot, may be referred to as among remarkable examples. At the same time, it is right to add that, in not a few cases, buildings now used as farm-houses in various parts of the country, retain in the old hall, or the projecting oriel, traces of the times when the owner was an independent proprietor.

In the few remarks which I have now taken the liberty of submitting, it has been my object merely to indicate some of the objects of archæological interests which this county, and the county immediately bordering upon it, possess, but by no means to occupy ground which will be trodden with far greater success and appropriateness by those who, whether in the Sections, or at the visits which may be paid to different spots by the members of the Association, will favour us with the results of their minute observation and extensive knowledge. Interest in archæological pursuits is, happily, shown by many; but minute and accurate knowledge on the subject is the property of the few who can bring to bear upon them the power of careful observation of details, and the faculty of thoughtful generalization. It has been my endeavour only to supply the text; the explanation, the illustration, and the practical conclusion, will come from abler hands.