THE EARLY HISTORY OF CHESTER.[1]

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The last time that I was present at a meeting of this Institute, and took that part in its proceedings which it has so often fallen to my lot, we met in a shire and in a town than which none is clothed with a higher interest in the history of our land and people. We met in a region whose historic associations are spread over many ages, and where those associations are scattered over many spots far and wide within its borders. Meeting in the South-Saxon land, in that borough of Lewes whose name calls up the memory of the greatest of all days in the armed strife for freedom, we made that historic town the centre of journeys to and fro among spots even more memorable than itself. We made our way to the castle of Arundel, already a castle before King William came into England; we made our way to the empty walls of Anderida, to the spot where the Norman Conqueror landed on the scene of one of the chiefest days of English victory; we made our way to the head-quarters of the invader on the hill of Hastings; we called up before our eyes the ebb and flow of the great battle from the hill of Senlac itself. Those memorable spots of the South-Saxon land are spots whose associations cannot be surpassed; on English ground we can hardly see that they can be rivalled. And yet the associations of the land and city in which we are now met are such that even the memories of the South-Saxon land can hardly overshadow them. Here, in the City of the Legions, the history of our island unfolds itself in all its stages. It speaks with hardly less of fulness and of clearness than it does on the spot where Ælle and Cissa stormed the

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Roman walls and where William first set foot on English ground as an enemy; with hardly less than it speaks on the hill where England fell with Harold and on the hill where she rose again with Simon. And there is one marked difference between the researches of which Lewes was the centre and the researches of which Chester is the centre and something more. Our business there lay with the history of a land; it now lies mainly with the history of a city. Sussex does indeed contain a city, a true city, a heritage of the days of the Roman, a temporal conquest of the Saxon, a spiritual conquest of the Norman. But Chichester, the *chester* of Cissa, hardly stands on the same level as that Chester which is parted off among its fellows by needing no title or epithet to mark it. Regnum has its walls, its four arms, its *carfax*, the quarter of the Earl and the quarter of the Bishop more clearly marked than they now are at Lindum or Eboracum. Yet the mocking Jew in the days of King Richard could say that Chichester was a mere village, called a city only because it had become the seat of a bishop. And Chichester, after all, formed no part of our last South-Saxon studies; we had been there—the older part of us at least—full thirty years before our gathering at Lewes. And Lewes itself never claimed the rank of a city or of a borough of the first class. It has no doubt its local and municipal history; on the broad pages of English history its name is chiefly stamped as the town where William of Warren reared his castle and his priory, as the town which looks up to the hill of Earl Simon's victory. In our South-Saxon studies the place of our gathering was simply one place for study among many, and in the shire which contains Anderida and Senlac I need hardly say that it was not the foremost. Here in Chester far be it from me to say that there is nothing to study in the surrounding shire; but I think we may at least say that the chief interest of the shire comes from the fact that it surrounds the city. The nomenclature of the two lands proclaims the difference; we were there, not in the shire of Chichester or of Lewes, but in the South-Saxon kingdom which has never lost its name. Here we are in that corner of the great Mercian realm which takes its name from the city which is its head, in

the county palatine of Chester, the Chestershire of the Great Survey, the Cheshire of the shorter speech of later days. The shire has its history, its privileges, its special constitution, which once made it a land almost apart from the realm of England. But it is round the capital of the land that they all gather. The city is the head, the heart, the life of all; the history of the land has its root in the history of the city, as the history of France has its root in the history of Paris, as the history of England has not its root in the history of London. We could conceive Sussex without Chichester or Lewes; we cannot conceive Cheshire without Chester. This year then the place of meeting is more than the place of meeting; it must be, while we sojourn within its walls, the main object of our thoughts and studies. And this year it will be my business in the chair in which you have again placed me, not to point out the various objects of historic interest in a wide district, but to gather together my energies, not indeed to tell the whole history, but to call your thoughts to some of the distinctive historical features of the memorable city in which we have met this day.

And yet here in Chester one question comes home to me with a force with which it could hardly come in any other city of England, hardly in any other city of Europe. Why am I set in this chair to-day? There is one among you, one, I may now say, of yourselves, who seems strangely moved to a place in which he is surely less at home, while I am placed in the seat which, in this city at least, he is called on to fill before all men. I feel keenly indeed that, in the presence of your Bishop, neither I nor any other man can have any right to fill the chair of History. In his diocese, in his city, before his very face, I feel that, if there were any Domesday of such matters, I should be set down as guilty of the crime of *invasio*; I feel that in the language of an earlier day, I should be stamped as a tyrant thrusting myself into the seat of a lawful prince. I know not by whose bidding I am placed here; it is assuredly not at my own bidding; it may be at the bidding of the Bishop himself; if so, I have nothing to do but to obey. In any case I cannot be altogether sorry that I have thus put into my hands an opportunity —which I am sure that the Bishop himself will wish me

not to use, but which I must use nevertheless—of beginning my sketch of the earliest history of the city by a comment on one of the latest events in its annals. That day is surely marked as a white day in the annals of Deva when the first of living English scholars took his place as your chief pastor on his throne in Saint Werburh's minster. To him, my friend of so many years, my successor in one post, my predecessor in another, I may pay homage in many characters. Where I see him here so worthily filling the chair of a chief shepherd of the Church, my thoughts go back for eight and thirty years to the day when I first casually heard his name under the trees of Christ Church. He and I were both young then, and the words that I heard, to me the first intimation of his being, were these, "Stubbs is a sure first." The speaker, to me unknown then and now, was a sound prophet; not many days after, "the sure first," in possession of his first, was chosen to the fellowship at Trinity which I had just left vacant. The same could not have been said of me, whose place in the class list was no higher then a second, when, six-and-thirty years afterwards, I stepped into the fellowship which he had just left vacant at Oriel. And I can well remember an intermediate time, one summer evening above all, when, as I had first heard his name beneath the trees of Christ Church, I first learned all that was in him beneath the trees of Trinity. It may be that I knew it before others: it may be that I have lived long enough, in this matter as in some others, to see the world come round to my way of thinking. It had so come round at least by the time that I sat at the Ecclesiastical Courts Commission beside the renowned Professor of Oxford, the Constitutional historian of England. On that Commission he did a vast deal, I perhaps did a very little, towards the putting together of a great work of which nothing at all seems to have come in practice. Yes, something may have come after all; it may be that a few noble and reverend personages, even a few learned in the law, may have gained clearer notions then they had before as to the early history of the Church of England from the teaching, for such it was, of the great scholar at whose side they were privileged to sit. Since then he has

come hither as your Bishop; in that process his elder mantle has been rent in twain, and one portion of it has fallen on my own shoulders. It was therefore in some sort as an offshoot of himself that I beheld his hallowing in that mighty minster which the innovating geography of King Harry has given you for your metropolis. The Roman poet said,

"Principibus placuisse viris non ultima laus est."

There must be something special about one who has received one preferment from the late Earl of Derby, a second from the Earl of Beaconsfield, and a third, and the highest, from Mr. Gladstone. There is now a fourth star in the political ascendant. It may be that he is set there to repeat the wise discernment of so many predecessors and to place him of whom Knaresborough and Ripon and Navestock and Oxford and London and Chester may alike be proud on a yet higher seat than any to which he has as yet been called.

As a Professor of Modern History, as called to be such by succession to the subject of my own discourse, I could not help indulging in this small, but I think not inappropriate piece of the most modern history. But I must go back from the Bishop to his city, to the shire and diocese of which his city is the head. Each chief city and town of England has—it is rather my special business just now to enforce that truth—its own history, its own character, I might add its own definition. But here, in the City of the Legions, in that among many chesters which is preeminently Chester, instead of seeking for a definition, I shall rather have to choose which of many definitions I will take. Shall I speak of that Roman Deva, that British Caerlleon, which stood so long defiant against the advance of Angle and Saxon, till it was ruled that beneath its walls the Teutonic invader should make his way to all the seas of Britain? Shall I speak of that one among the cities of Britain of whose fall and rising again there is no doubt, the chester that became waste at the bidding of the Northumbrian King, and which became again a city of men at the bidding of the West Saxon Lady? Shall I speak of the city which, as it had once held out so long against the arms of invading Englishmen, was destined in its turn to be the last city of independent England, the last to bow

to the Norman when he was undisputed lord from the march of Anjou to the march of Scotland? Or shall I speak of your city as the head of that mighty earldom, that all but independent realm, which, too great to be trusted to any lowlier hands, became the accustomed appanage of the eldest born of England's kings? Or shall I speak of it in its strange ecclesiastical aspect, as the home of two distinct and successive bishoprics, of the Mercian see, suffragan of Canterbury, which had its bishopstool in the minster of Saint John without the walls, and the North-humbrian see, suffragan of York, which still holds its bishopstool in the minster of Saint Werburh within the city? Cut down to language drier and more precise, any one of these aspects of the history of Chester would serve as a definition marking off the city as one which has a special character of its own among the cities of England. And alongside of these more marked and telling aspects, a crowd of memories arise, each of which by itself might make the fortune of a spot where associations of the past were less abundant. Each, for instance, of your minsters calls up a memorable moment in the history of Chester and of England. I may have again to speak of that day of Imperial pageantry when Eadgar, with a kingly throng around him, went to make his prayer before an older altar of Saint John. Saint Werburh's in its fabric seems to tell wholly of later times; yet within its walls we cannot forget how Anselm came to watch over the first days of its monastic life, how out of that visit came the whole tale of his memorable primacy, the day of Gloucester, the day of Rockingham, and the day of Winchester, every stage of that meek strife for right, which makes us glad to welcome the stranger as an adopted countryman, and to place the bishop from Aosta among the worthies of our land, alongside of the King from Denmark and the Earl from the Strong Mount that guarded France against the Norman.

Truly that city has a history indeed where memories like these are only secondary. The coming of Eadgar, the coming of Anselm, cannot count among the scenes which make the historic life of Chester; they are rather the contributions of Chester to the general history of England than events which helped to shape the personal being of the city by the Dee. In the tale of Chester itself, as

distinguished from the record of events of which Chester was the scene, three names stand out before all others, the names of Æthelfrith the destroyer, of Æthelflæd the restorer, and of William—by what name shall I call him here? Conqueror in truth, pre-eminently conqueror on the spot where his conquest found its crown and finish, yet, here and elsewhere, not conqueror only, conqueror at least who cared as much to preserve as to destroy. But he who conquers to preserve has another function alike from him who destroys and from him who calls into being, whether it be a first or a renewed being. Now on a crowd of Roman sites where English towns now stand, we suspect, nay we believe with all but certainty, that the Roman *chester* was overthrown in the first havoc of English conquest, and that it arose again as a dwelling-place of Englishmen when our forefathers had ceased to be mere destroyers. I do not take upon myself to deny that there may have been some cases of continuous occupation, whether owing to the English conquerors taking immediate possession, or to the more likely cause of the British town holding out till the English had put away somewhat of their old Teutonic hatred for a life within stone walls. As one case indeed, that of the Damnonian Isca, we may feel as certain as we can be of anything that is not set down in so many words in the Chronicles that there was no time of desolation, no time of heathen occupation, but that Isca did not become Exanceaster till that stage of English conquest when submission to Christian conquerors no longer implied either massacre or slavery. But we may be sure that the common rule of the first days of English settlement was the rule of Anderida, to leave not a Bret within the walls, and to leave the forsaken walls standing empty. At Anderida, at Calleva, we see them so standing to this day. There is also a noble relic of our ancient tongue, which tells of a ruined city with fallen roofs and tottering towers, roofless watch-towers and shattered shelters, where once had been bright burgh-dwellings, bath-houses many, and mead-halls many. And that sad and stately time has been shown by Mr. Earle, with a likelihood that almost reaches certainty, to be a picture of a definite spot, Aquæ Sulis, Bathanceaster, Bath. Before the sword of Ceawlin, Aquæ Sulis and

Glevum and Corinium fell like Jericho and Ai before the sword of Joshua. Anderida and Calleva remained as Ai; Bath, Gloucester, Cirencester, found, like Jericho, new founders to call them into fresh life, and at Gloucester and Cirencester the day of desolation must have been short indeed. So it was with the City of the Legions; Deva fell and rose again; but here in Deva, unlike the cities that Ceawlin smote, we can give the name and date alike of the destroyer and of the renewer, and we can say that the time of desolation was a long one. We can do the like in the case of Lugubalium or Carlisle; but there the circumstances are different. In all the other cases it was Englishmen who destroyed and Englishmen who called again into being; at Carlisle the Dane was the destroyer, and the Norman, the Red King himself, was the second founder. Here at Chester we have our names and dates, but names and dates which are purely English. The time of desolation was three hundred winters and two to spare. What Æthelfrith overthrew in the year 605, Æthelflæd called into fresh being in the year 907.

I spoke of the conquests of Ceawlin, and to one who has sat at the feet of Dr. Guest the conquests of Ceawlin have a close connexion with the tale of Chester. I must ask you to call up the picture—I am far from having been the first to paint it—of Britain as Britain was at the beginning of the year when, the West-Saxon Bretwalda began the march that gave him a right to that dim and lofty title. Of all south Britain, of Britain from the Friths to the Channel, the Teuton held the eastern side with a firm grasp; but he had nowhere reached to the western sea. From the wall of Antoninus to the the coast of the Damnonii and the Durotriges, the Celt still held his own. West-Saxon Ceawlin was the first to clear his way through this solid British mass, and to carry the English arms to the Severn sea. The south-western peninsula of Britain remained a British land, but it was now cut off from that more solid peninsula whose isthmus, if so we may call it, stretches from the north of Severn to the north of Dee. In the language of his own day, he cut of West-Wales from North-Wales; in more modern geographical language he cut off Devonshire, Cornwall, and central and western Somerset, from

the land which we call Wales, North and South. The importance of the conquest in the general history of English advance cannot be overated. Up to that time it might have seemed as if the two races were to dwell side by side on opposite sides of a line drawn from north to south; it was now practically ruled that Englishmen were to dwell and rule on the western as well as the eastern side of the island. But if West-Wales was cut off from the British mass, the Northern and the Southern Cymry still held an unbroken coast from the Firth of Clyde to the Severn sea; there was no isolation as yet between Cambria and Cumbria. The next stage in English advance was to do that work of isolation, to do at the mouth of Dee what had been done at the mouth of Severn, and to carry the English arms to that central sea which, itself or its estuaries, washed Britain, Pictland, and Ireland, and which was now to wash England also. The southern and the central Celtic land had been parted asunder; the next step was to part asunder the central and the northern Celtic land. In other words, the aim of the English invader was to win his way to the great Roman fortress which held the position which tied together the central and the northern land. After the taking of Glevum and the neighbouring cities, the next step in the making of England must be to make the City of the Legions English soil. It was to the spot on which we are now standing, to the walls within which we are gathered, that English enterprise looked with eager eyes in the last years of the sixth century. But to which branch of the Teutonic invaders of Britain was this mighty prize to fall? Was Deva to be won by the Saxon or by the Angle? the Jute in his south-eastern peninsula had no hope, even during the Bretwaldadom of Æthelberht. Now we are so used to think of Wessex in its later geography, as a kingdom lying wholly south of the Thames, that it is hard to throw ourselves back into the days of Ceawlin, when the West-Saxon land took in Bedford and did not take in Bath, or into the days after Ceawlin when Dorchester on the Thames was chosen as a central spot for the West-Saxon bishopstool. It seems perfectly natural for a Northumbrian king to strive to add Deva to his dominions; so to do seems so

strange ambition for a prince whose capital, if he had a capital, must already have been Winchester. Yet at this stage the West-Saxon power was pressing far more north-ward than west-ward; Ceawlin himself, if he pushed further westward than any West-Saxon king before him, also pushed further northwards. And we can hardly doubt that his object was to push yet further northwards, that in the great campaign of the Severn, when Ceawlin and Cutha fought with the Brets at Fethanleah, when he took many towns and spoil beyond reckoning, he was aiming at adding Deva to his list, and cutting his way to the north-western as well as to the south-western sea. So Dr. Guest taught us long ago; and he has taught us also to put a meaning on the dark words which tell of Ceawlin's going back to his own in ire. He had missed the prize of all; he had not carried the West-Saxon dragon to the City of the Legions. Twenty-one years later a nearer neighbour of the city was to do the work.

What that work was I would fain be able to tell, as I told of the work done on the South-Saxon shore, in the recovered words of the gleeman of our own folk. But I have no song of Deva, as I had a song of Anderida, dug out, as I dared to hope, from the Latin of the Archdeacon of Huntingdon six hundred years later. The song of Anderida was the song of the heathen warrior to whom slaughter and havoc were the choicest of delights. Can it be that we have the smallest fragment of a lay of the like kind which once told of the fall of Deva? Look to the Chronicles under the year 605 or 606 in different versions. Between the edifying entry of the death of Pope Gregory and the other edifying reference to the fulfilment of the words of Augustine, we seem to catch the faint echoes of two lines of a battle-song, which told how

Æthelfrith led his host to Legeceaster,
And offslew Welshmen without number,

Here surely speaks the heathen Angle; instead of the rest of his song we have the godly reflexions of the clerk of Winchester. As we now hear the tale, the minstrelsy, the pathos, is all on the other side. The story in Bæda is a poem, but it is a British poem; the reference to it inserted in the Chronicles speaks the language of a

Briton; Augustine threatens the stubborn Welsh with Saxon vengeance, and that vengeance comes from the sword of Anglian Æthelfrith. Who has not heard the tale how the Britons with Brocmail their ealdorman come to meet the Anglian invaders; how the priests come and the monks of Bangor, to pray for victory over the barbarians; how Æthelfrith shrewdly says that they who pray against him to their God are in truth fighting against him, and lets slay priests and monks first of all, even before the coward Brocmail has had time to turn and flee with the fifty men who were not slaughtered? The tale is a familiar and a favourite one; it is well known doubtless to many who have never thought of Chester as the place of that day's slaughter, who have never thought of that day's slaughter as one of the greatest steps in the work of calling life into being. There may even be some who have not outgrown one of the basest of slanders, who believe that Augustine in his grave was in league with the heathen destroyer of Christians who would not submit to his claims. There is much in the tale itself to ponder over. It is something to come face to face with the ancient British Church, and to see how our fathers dealt with it. It is something to study the shrewd theology of Æthelfrith, a kindred spirit with Chlodowig and with his own Coifi. It is something to study the state of mind of Bæda himself, divided in his sympathies between Christian Bret and heathen Angle, and who thereby falls into something like an impartial cursing of both sides, in which the English are "barbari" and the Welsh a "nefanda militia." As a scene in the long drama of English advance, the slaughter of Deva puts on another guise. The blow that Ceawlin had striven to deal was dealt by Æthelfrith. The still British land was again cloven asunder; Cambria was parted from Cumbria, as it had been already parted from Damnonia and the Land of Sumner. On the one hand, the final stroke was given to the Briton; with his land now split into three, he could live on only in corners, with the portions of his own island which were left to him, each of them growing gradually less. But besides having this heavy blow dealt by the Englishman against the Briton, it was a blow only less heavy dealt by the Northern

Englishman against the Southern. The northward advance of Wessex was checked for ever; while to the west it overleaped Axe and Parret and Tone and Exe and Tamar, to the north the Thames became its boundary. The West-Saxon power grew again, but it grew in another shape; Wessex fell back as Wessex to advance again as England. And it may well have been the result of the day of Deva that it was as England that Wessex was destined to advance. The victory of Æthelfrith was a warning from the Angle to the Saxon, "thus far thou go and no further." Had Ceawlin fought his way to Deva, he might well have done the work, and more than the work, of Ecgberht. His folk might here become thus early the ruling folk of Britain; the name of England and the English people might never have been heard; our united folk might have borne on its own lips that Saxon name which it bears on the lips of our Celtic neighbours; instead of England, the Teutonic part of Britain might have kept its older but less abiding name of *Saxony*. Between Ceawlin and Ecgberht no West-Saxon king is enrolled on the list of Bretwaldas; of the five that come between them three are of the land of Æthelfrith.

That Deva, Caerlleon-on-Dee, *Civitas Legionum*, fell along with its British defenders none can doubt. That it was dealt with as Anderida was dealt with, that its Roman walls stood for three hundred years sheltering no dwelling-places of men within them, he must be at once far away of belief who seeks to deny. We may be sure that not a Bret was left in Deva by Æthelfrith any more than a Bret was left in Anderida by Ælle and Cissa. But mark that the conquest of Deva was the last English conquest, at any rate the last English conquest of a great city, wrought after the old heathen rule of slaughter and desolation. Christian Æthelberht already reigned in Kent; Christian Eadwine was soon to reign over Northumberland, and Christian Cenwealh over Wessex. The next cities of the Britons which fell into English hands were not dealt with as Anderida and Deva. Before the century was out, the Angle must have entered into Lugubalium, and the Saxon into the Damnonian Isca. Those cities lived on under the rule of Christian conquerors.

Over Isca, Caerwisc, Exanceaster, no gleeman has ever had need to sing the mournful song that was sung over raised Aquæ Sulis. Over Lugubalium, Leolceaster, Caerlleol, that song might have been sung at a far later day; but that was because before that day the heathen Northman had come to do once more what the Christian Englishman had ceased from doing.

Caerlleon, City of the Legions, took as its first English name the natural English translation of its British name. As Caergwent became Wintanceaster, Caerlleon became Legeceaster. Fertile has the name been in confusion between itself and the midland Ligeraceaster. Later usage solved the knot by in some sort declaring Legeceaster to be the first of *ceasters*. As Old Rome is distinctively *urbs*, as New Rome is distinctively πόλις, so, while the *chester* by the Soar is content to be distinguished as Leicester, the *chester* by the Dee is distinctively Chester. It needs no adjective, at least neither in our days nor in the days with which I am concerned. Let some expounder of later times tell us how it came in the sixteenth century and far later, to be ever and anon distinguished as *West* Chester.[1] So near to our own day as Johnson and Boswell, I read how a certain man went to *West Chester* on his way to Ireland. From what Eastern Chester did he set out? I should greatly like to know. The philologer might whisper that Northamptonshire—at least the soke of Peterborough—has a *Castor*, and that East-Anglia has two *Caistors*. To the philologer all three names are the same; but few men, least of all in the days of Boswell, ever thought of *Castor* or *Caistor* as Chester at all, least of all did any man ever look on them as spots from which the Chester of the Legions needed to be distinguished. A nearer namesake in the Bernician bishopric has to distinguish itself by a surname, and *Chester-le-Street* couples together the two oldest borrowings that our tongue has made from the tongue of Latium. A famous station on the great wall distinguishes itself by putting on a plural form. Whatever later times may have added, Legeceaster, Chester of the

[1] Later in the course of the meeting Sir James Picton brought forward some remarkable documents bearing on the relation between Chester and Liverpool in the sixteenth century. I noticed that the name *West Chester* is several times applied to Chester, but always by outsiders. In the mouth of its own citizens Chester needed no epithet.

Legions, was already Chester without *prænomen* or *cognomen* when the Conqueror entered it as the last prize of his conquest.

We know that Legeceaster was new set up in 907; and that it was new set up in 907 can only have been because it was left empty and desolate in 605. And one glimpse of it we get at an intermediate time, when it was standing empty and desolate, so utterly forsaken that it almost ceased to have a name. It was not Chester, but simply a *chester*, and a chester too which is coupled with a very instructive adjective. And yet the ancient name was not wholly forgotten; men still know that this and no other *chester* had once been the Chester of the Legions. It is in the year 894, one of those great years of fighting with the Dane which mark the later as well as the earlier days of Ælfred. The enemy are everywhere, and the defenders of the land are everywhere. Exeter, Buttington on the Severn, the East-Anglian coast, are all seats of warfare. From Buttington the defeated Danes press across the whole breadth of England to their work in Essex. Strengthened by new forces from Northumberland and East-Anglia, they leave women and ships and all their stuff with their East-Anglian kinsfolk, and again, as winter draws near, press across the whole breadth of England to a point to the north of that from which they had set forth. "They fared with one stretch day and night that they got to a waste chester on Wirhall, that is Legeceaster hight." Two hundred and ninety two years after the coming of Æthelfrith, the walls of Deva were standing, with no man dwelling within them, but ready to be again put to their old use of defence. Within the old Roman ramparts the Danes stood a siege at the hands of the pursuing English. The stretch day and night had been so swift that the enemy that pressed after them could not overtake them till they had reached the forsaken ruin which to them was a city of refuge. Legeceaster was again a chester of legions, but legions this time of Denmark and not of Rome. The walls were still strong, and the warriors who so strangely manned them were men of might and daring. For two days did the English beset the work—the work of the days of Cæsars and consuls;—they slew every Dane that they found without

the wall; they took cattle and corn; some they burned, with some they fed the horses. The Danes could only defend the Roman fortress, but they did defend it; the walls of Deva were not to be stormed, and the heathen invaders kept their Yule-tide as they might within the rampart which had once girded a city of men and which before long was to gird a city of men once more.

One can hardly doubt that this short occupation of the waste chester or Wirhall, this proof of what the forsaken walls could still do in time of need, taught the defenders of England a lesson. The Englishmen of the first days of the seventh century, if not, like the Goth of an earlier day, at peace with stone walls, had no thought of turning stone walls either to peaceful or to warlike uses. The Northumbrian King dreamed not of shutting up himself or his folk within a circuit which they looked on as a prison. Three hundred years later the West-Saxon Lady better knew the arts both of peace and of warfare. According to one account, her husband Æthelred had been present, with the great King her father, at the two days fruitless siege against the Dane. At any rate, both of the rulers of Mercia, the Heretoga and the Lady, and the unconquered King with whom they wrought in brotherhood, were fully minded that such a siege as that should not again be set down in English annals. The mighty work of old, the work of the Romans of old—οἱ πάλαι Ῥωμαῖοι, as Procopius wrote in wonder as he gazed on their works in their own land—the work which had guarded the Roman against the Briton and the Briton against the Saxon, which had just shown how well it could still guard the Dane against the Englishman, was no longer to be left to form a chance post for any friend or any enemy. The waste chester should be a waste chester no longer; it should again be a chester of man, a chester of Englishmen, a bulwark of England against Briton or Dane or any other enemy that might come, the foremost haven of England on the shores and inlets of the north-western sea. The entry ending the year 907 is a simple one. "This year was Legeceaster new made." The City of the Legions again arose as a dwelling-place of men; its walls fenced in the houses of men speaking a tongue unheard of within their walls in the older day; they

forced in the temples of the faith whose prophets had fallen beneath the sword of Æthelfrith, the faith to which the countrymen of Æthelfrith had bowed, and which, wherever it had fallen back before new heathen conquerors, the children of Ælfred made it their work to bring back to its old dominion. Yet, when I begin to speak of churches in Legeceaster, I am surrounded with hard questions. Can I say that the walls fenced in temples, when the oldest and most famous church of Legeceaster, the minster of Saint John, the work of the Lord of the Mercians, fellow-worker with his Lady, arose beyond the walls by the banks of Dee? When did its fellow minster of Saint Werburh come into being? It is hard to believe tales in Randolf Higden or even in William of Malmesbury, of bodies of saints, of Saint Werburh herself, being brought to Legeceaster as to a safe place in the days of desolation, in the very thick of the Danish wars. The desolation of the spot is so clear in the Chronicles, it was so thoroughly well understood by Florence, that such stories must come of some misunderstanding or other. Yet the same stories tell us of the foundation of Saint Werburh's by Æthelstan, later therefore than the foundation of Saint John's by his uncle Æthelred. But why should I tarry to perplex myself and you about such matters? The true oracle is at hand. It is for the prelate whose bishopstool is in Saint Werburh's, whose dwelling is hard by Saint John's, to stand forth and tell us the whole tale of his own churches.

But there is one other point in the work of the Heretoga and the Lady at which we must glance before we pass on to later times. Æthelflæd, we may believe, found the Roman walls of Deva standing, doubtless needing repair, but not needing rebuilding. The later walls, the walls now abiding, follow, as we all know, the greater part of the line of the Roman work, and show signs of the Roman foundations.[1] The slight departure of the Roman

[1] May I say this still? A great deal of discussion about the walls of Chester went on later in the meeting, which I had not the advantage of hearing. From such light as I can pretend to, I will venture two remarks. First, if anybody thought that the walls, as they stand, were Roman walls, or that there was any Roman work in them besides pieces of foundation here and there, his error was so plain as hardly to be worth arguing against. But, secondly, in more parts than one I saw stones which, if I had seen them at Rome or Arles or Sens or Périgueux, I should certainly have set down as remnants of the Roman defences.

lines from the strict quadrangular shape was doubtless owing to the walls following the lines of the water, remembering that, in the days of Æthelflæd and long afterwards, the water came up to the walls on the side of what we know now as the Roodeye. But at one corner, the south-eastern corner, the departure from strict mathematical accuracy is greater. For there it was that the Roman circuit was slightly enlarged—the Roman wall was therefore for a certain space pulled down—to allow the raising of that specially English form of defence with which the Lady, her father and her brother, strengthened so many spots of the land which they had to guard. The City of the Legions, ever a Roman *ceaster*, was now further defended by an English *burh*. The site of Legeceaster rose boldly above the waters; deep indeed was the fosse which fenced it in on its northern side; but there was no such hill, no such natural akropolis, to supply a ready-made citadel as the engineers of successive ages and nations found in the Red Mount of Exeter. A slighter height there was at the favourable point, which might be improved by the special military skill of the tenth century. Between art and nature, the mound, the *burh*, the special English defence rose at the point where the ancient lines made way for it. It rose, here as elsewhere, to be turned, in the later years of the next century. The mound of the West-Saxon supplied a foundation, a hill wrought into its shape by the hand of man, for the castle of the Norman.

The next entry in the chronicles in which the name of Legeceaster is found brings us to the most glorious year of Eadgar the Giver-of-peace. It was the year of his crowning and of his triumph. Why was it that Eadgar, having reigned for fourteen years as king, should in 973 fall back on the estate of a king-elect, an ætheling still needing the kingly hallowing, I will not dispute here. It was done in the old borough Acemannesceaster, which by another name men Bath call, and it therefore belongs to the local history of the land of the Sumorsætan. But what follows belongs pre-eminently to Chester. Whatever Eadgar had been during those fourteen years, he was now at least fully King of the English, and he had to show himself to the world in his other character of Emperor of

Britain. Lord of the seas, lord of so many subject realms, fresh from his royal crowning, he set forth on his imperial voyage. The haven for which he sailed is not told us; but, though Bristol is not named for eighty years later, it was surely already in being, and it can hardly fail to have been there that a king just crowned at Bath took ship for his progress over his watery realm. He sailed round the vassal land of the Briton, by the headland of Menevia, the holy place of his own creed, by the island of Mevania, once the holy place of a creed which had vanished for ages. Thus he made his way from the estuary of Severn to the estuary of Dee, and there he found, at his bidding, a brilliant train indeed of men waiting for their lord. All the kings of the island had come to do their homage and plight their oaths to the Basileus of Britain, the Cæsar of the island world, the peer of the Augustus of either Rome. Well fitted for such a gathering was the city by the Dee, central as was no other city for all the princes of the isle of Albion, for the Scot and the Cumbrian, for the Briton of Gwent and the Briton of Gwynedd, for princes too whose names speak of the Scandinavian North, for Sigefrith and Magnus, Magnus lord of many islands and prince of the rovers of the sea. The presence of the kings, their homage, their oaths, is witnessed by the English Chronicles themselves. And is there any just ground for casting aside the picture which the best of our Latin writers add to it, the picture of the waters of Deva parted by the oars of the under-kings, while the lord of all in very truth guides the helm of Empire, and passes through the portal of the minster surrounded by a prouder train than ever gathered round Bretwalda or Basileus before him? Such was the glory of the father. One is tempted to pass by the exploit of the son recorded in the next entry of the name of Legeceaster in the Chronicles. In the last year of the first millennium of our æra, the son of Eadgar, Æthelred, has also his fleet in the waters of the Dee. The Danes have left him a moment's peace; their fleet has sailed for Richard's land, the Gaulish land of the Norman. The work of his little space of rest is to war with his own vassals. He harries Cumberland; the fleet that failed to meet him harries Man; next year the Danes are in the waters of the Exe,

and the unready king has no help to give to the valiant men of Exeter who drive back the force by their own strength.

It is for those who have local knowledge to explain to me, not for me to explain to those who have local knowledge, the exact return of the physical changes, for considerable changes there have certainly been, by which the position of Chester as a haven has been transferred to a neighbouring borough lately raised to the rank of a city. For in the ages with which I am most concerned, Chester certainly held the position which answered, as nearly as the difference of circumstance would allow, to the modern position of Liverpool. It was not the starting-point for America, because there was no America to start for. But it was one of the two great starting-points for Ireland, as Bristol was the other. Our friend even in Boswell's day who went to West Chester went to West Chester to start for Ireland. Holyhead and Milford could not be called into play till Wales had been tamed, and till first roads, and then railroads had been made across it. For any gathering in the North-western seas Chester was the usual, because the natural, centre. We have just seen that it was there that the fleet was brought together for the mad expedition of Æthelred. When in 1055 Ælfgar comes back with a force partly of Welsh, partly of Danes from Ireland, his fleet waits for him at Chester. When in 1069 the sons of Harold come back with a Danish fleet for Ireland, their first point is Bristol. That was the choice, Bristol or Chester, according doubtless to the port of Ireland for which the ships started or the port to which they were to make their way. The shiftings in the relative positions of the great towns of England, the causes of various kinds that have worked in each case, would be a good subject to treat in a comparative fashion. Bristol still abides in its own person, and still advances, though its relative position has passed from it. Chester is represented by Liverpool. Lincoln, I think we may say, is represented by Kingston-on-Hull, as the chief seat of Scandinavian traffic. Exeter, on the other hand, has not kept up its position like Bristol; nor has it, like Chester, an obvious modern representative. Plymouth can hardly be said to have taken its place in the way in

which Liverpool has taken the place of Chester. The one English town which has lived on and prospered through all changes is London. London, though an old town in the fourth century, has not the antiquity of Cadiz, of Marseilles, or even of Bordeaux. But it is our nearest insular approach to them.

And now am I to tell again the tale which I have already told in what is as yet the chief work of my life, the tale of the days when Chester was the last city of England to bow to the Norman invader? I know not that I can add ought to the picture which I then drew of the march of William to Chester; of the siege and of the storm or the surrender we have no picture to draw. I can only speak as I spoke then, when I wrote, not specially for an audience gathering together in Chester itself, but for all who cared to hear the story of the Norman Conquest.

"Here was the one great city which had not yet bowed to his might, the one still abiding home of English freedom. All the other great seats of royal, ecclesiastical, and municipal power were already his. William was King at Winchester and London, at Canterbury and York, at Glastonbury and Peterborough, at Exeter and Lincoln. But he was not yet King at Chester. The old City of the Legions, the river on which Eadgar had been rowed by vassal Kings, the minster where the English Basileus had knelt with his vassal Kings around him, the walls from which men could look out on the land which Harold had added to the English realm—all still were free, standing untouched amid surrounding bondage, like a single perfect column standing unhurt amid the shattered ruins of a forsaken temple." * * * * * * * * * * * * * There is no point in William's history at which we should more gladly welcome the minutest details than in this, the last stage of the real Conquest of England. But not a detail, not an anecdote, is preserved; we know only the results. The work which had begun at Pevensey was brought to an end at Chester, and we can see that it was not brought to an end without hard fighting. William had to put down by force the hostile movements of what was now specially the Mercian land. We know not whether the city surrendered or was taken by storm; we know not by what means the shire and the adjoining lands were conquered. * * * * * How this our last national stronghold fell we know not, but we know that it did fall, and that, as usual, a Norman keep soon rose on the old mound to act as a curb on the conquered city. * * * * At whatever cost, England was conquered. William had yet to struggle against revolts both among the conquered English and among his own people. But the land was won; there was no longer any portion of English ground which could still refuse submission to an invader; future struggles were simply revolts against a government which was now in full possession. The fall of Chester was the last scene of the long battle the first

blows of which had been struck when, well nigh four years back, Tostig had first harried English ground by William's licence. We ask, but we ask in vain, whether Ealdgyth and her babes were still within the walls of the captured city, and whether it was now that William gained possession of the young heir of the House of Godwine, whose life, as long as William lived, was to be the life-in-death of a Norman prison. To questions like these no certain answer can be given. We know only that the land was won. * * * * * * After the fall of Chester, no integral part of the English kingdom remained unsubdued. William was full King over all England."

There is a legend too of which I suppose I need hardly speak. Chester has too much of real history, it is too deeply connected with the true story of the Conquest of England, to need additions from romance. I need not then again examine the wild tale, curious only as a piece of comparative mythology, which makes Harold escape from the hill of slaughter and live and die an anchorite at Saint John's. On that head it was once enough to say, with the Waltham writer whom your Bishop knows well, "Quidquid fabulentur homines quod in rupe manserit Doroberniae et nuper defunctus sit Cestriae, pro certo quiescit Walthamiæ." The havoc of the sixteenth century, when all that was left of Ælfred and Harold and Waltheof and Simon was scattered to the winds, makes it needful to change the tense, but that is all.

The local historian of Chester has a rich store of materials for this age in the Domesday entries of the city. The customs of Chester there set forth are precious studies indeed. But as we grudge that we cannot tell the tale of the siege of Chester as we can tell the tale of the siege of Exeter, so we grudge that at Chester we make no man's personal acquaintance; we do not come face to face with the Chester judges as we do come face to face with the Lincoln lawmen. Then there is the earldom of Hugh of Avranches—how he came to be called a Wolf perhaps some one may be able to tell me, as they may be able to tell me why people call him the Conqueror's nephew; Wolf or no Wolf, we know him well from Domesday, Orderic, and Eadmer. His earldom, so great in its powers and privileges, stood alone in England. The Conqueror's policy of keeping power in his own hands, of appointing no earls who might grow into the fellows of continental counts and dukes, had to be relaxed on dangerous borders when the earl, guardian of a march,

was in truth a marquess. But even Northumberland and Shrewsbury, even the Kentish and the Cornish lordship of his brothers, were none of them as Chester. The earldom of Hugh stood alone in its greatness and its distinctness from the rest of the realm. What in Gaul and Germany was the rule was in England the exception; had all earldoms been like Chester, had all bishoprics been like Durham, England could hardly have remained an united kingdom; it must have split up like the lands of the Empire; Chester, instead of the harmless appanage of a future King, might have become the seat of a dangerous Elector by whom kings were to be chosen and defied. How distinct Chester and Durham stood from the rest of the kingdom is best shown by their having for so many ages no voice in the national Parliament. While Chester had its own courts, its own baronage, knights and citizens from the all-but-independent state would have been as much out of place as knights and citizens from Man or the Norman Islands.

There is one more aspect of the city at which I must glance, even in the presence of him who is most specially concerned in that respect. I asked the Bishop of Chester to tell us the earlier history of the two minsters of Chester, as they immediately concerned the history of the city. I may, even before him, venture to say a few words about this from the comparative point of view. I conceive that a visitor to Chester, familiar with the history of other cities, but knowing nothing specially of this one, seeing your two minsters, Saint Werburh's within the walls and Saint John's without, would at once leap to the conclusion that here is a city of the type of which we have so many on the continent and so few in Britain, a city which has been a bishopric from the beginning, with the bishop's church within the walls, while in after times a second minster, monastic or collegiate, has arisen beyond the walls. He would take for granted that Saint Werburh's was the fellow of Christ Church at Canterbury and of our Lady of Rouen, while Saint John's answered to Saint Augustine's and Saint Ouen's. Yet so we all know it is not. The strange thing in the episcopal history of Chester is, not only that both the great churches should at different times have been the head church of

a diocese, but that they have been, we may say, the heads of two different dioceses. There is something like this in the history of the northern Dorchester, once the head church of a West-Saxon diocese whose bishopstool was translated to Winchester, afterwards the seat of a Mercian diocese whose bishopstool was translated to Lincoln. When we hear of a Bishop of Chester in the twelfth century, and long afterwards, it means a bishop sitting at Saint John's, with a diocese stretching northward to the Ribble and stretching southward far into Warwickshire. When we hear of a Bishop of Chester at any time from Henry the Eighth till our day, it means a bishop sitting at Saint Werburh's, with a diocese not stretching southward beyond the border of the earldom of Chester, but stretching northward to the borders of the earldom of Carlisle. The earlier Bishop of Chester was a suffragan of Canterbury; the later is a suffragan of York. There is nothing in common between the elder bishopric of Chester and the later, except that the county palatine of Chester forms part of the diocese of each. When the Conqueror entered Chester, the city had two minsters of secular canons, Saint Werburh's within the walls, Saint John's without. Presently Bishop Peter moves his bishopstool from Lichfield to Chester, and plants it in the minster without the walls. In Domesday Saint John's seem wholly merged in the bishopric. Then Robert of Limesi moves the bishopstool again from Chester to Coventry, and we find the bishop spoken of indifferently as Bishop of Chester and Bishop of Coventry. Now the point on which I wish to know more is this. How was it that in the course of the twelfth century the election of the bishop came to be a matter of dispute between the monks of Coventry and the canons of Lichfield, seemingly without the assertion of any right on the part of the canons of Saint John's? They go on, as a secular college, without any special connexion with the bishopric, till the general suppression of colleges. Meanwhile Saint Werburh, changed by Earl Hugh with the help of Anselm from a secular college into a Benedictine abbey, lives on as such till the suppression of monasteries. Then comes its new foundation by Henry the Eighth as the head of an altogether new diocese, carved out

of those of York and Coventry. Carved thus, not only out of two dioceses, but out of two provinces, first of all the lands north of Ribble were transferred from York to Canterbury, then the lands south of Ribble were transferred from Canterbury to York. The spiritual geography was at last arranged according to the taste of the heathen King from Deira, not according to the taste of the Christian Lady from Wessex. So in temporal matters Cheshire, north of Mersey, the land of Roger of Poitou, had ceased to have to do with earls of Chester long before it ceased to have to do with bishops of Chester or Coventry. A shire unknown to Domesday, the shire of Lancaster, made up of a piece from York and a piece from Chester crept in unawares. With later ecclesiastical changes I am hardly concerned. Two new dioceses have been formed out of the lands north of the Mersey. The practical gain is great, and geography has no complaint. Against simple division and simple union geography has no complaint. When geography does complain is when a division, civil or ecclesiastical, is put together out of scraps. It may be practically needful, but geography complains all the same. To me perhaps these shiftings and divisions to and fro in this part of England seem the more striking when I compare them with the historical geography either of my own district or of the district in which I last met this Institute. Within the kingdom of the South-Saxon and the *gá* of the Sumorsætan, the seats of authority, spiritual and temporal, have often changed, but the boundaries of the district over which authority has been exercised have hardly changed at all. In Somerset and in Sussex shire and diocese have been more nearly and more steadily conterminous than anywhere else. And Chester and Cheshire have at last conformed to the same rule. After all these shiftings to and fro, the earldom of your first Earl and the diocese of your present Bishop have become nearly the same thing.

My business this evening is simply to open this section. Perhaps I have done something more than open it; I have taken it to myself. But I wish only to set others working, to supply general thoughts which others with more of local knowledge may work out in minuter detail. Besides the early story of this city, there is a later story.

The walls of Chester that now stand are not the walls which Æthelfrith left empty and which Æthelflæd again made compass the dwellings of men. And from the walls that now are men have looked out on warfare later than the days of Ælfred and of William. I would fain wish that the great master of later English history were here to tell the tale of the stirring time which he has made his own. But in the home, in the presence, of the master of all history, he and I and all of us can but take each one his vassal's portion and do homage for it to our lord.