OPENING ADDRESS OF THE HISTORICAL SECTION AT THE LONDON MEETING.[1]

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It has been, to some extent, customary for successive Presidents of the Historical Section to give an account of the different places selected for the annual meetings of the Royal Archæological Institute, and the members of this body have special cause to deplore the death of Professor Freeman, for he, from time to time, contributed to its Proceedings very valuable essays on particular localities. No one was better qualified than he to point out the distinctive characteristics of a town or of a county, and to emphasize the chief incidents in its history. All who have heard or read his addresses on such subjects will remember the forcible manner in which he brought out points of similitude and points of difference between places in various parts of our own country; while his frequent visits to the continent, and his wide knowledge of the history of foreign lands, enabled him to supply parallels from abroad. A volume about *English Towns and Districts*, which he published ten years ago, contains papers which he had read before the Royal Archæological Institute in connexion with Exeter, Cardiff and Glamorgan, the county of Somerset, Colchester, and Carlisle. The first of these deserves special notice as forming the original nucleus of the monograph on Exeter, which he contributed to the series of volumes on *Historic Towns*, of which he was the joint editor.

If, then, with this eminent example before me, I venture on the present occasion to depart from an established practice, it is not from any doubt as to its desirability under ordinary circumstances. My justification lies in the fact that the Institute, instead of visiting some

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provincial town, is this year holding its congress in the capital of the British Empire. Most of those whom it has brought together need no introduction to the locality, and the briefest sketch of the history of London would far exceed the limits of an inaugural address.

Instead, therefore, of attempting to say anything about this great town, I propose to call your attention briefly to the progress of historical science in England during the twenty-seven years which have elapsed since this Institute last held its annual congress in London. Several of our foremost historians have passed away since 1866, but their writings and their precepts remain for the guidance of future generations. Evidences of a wider interest in archæological studies, of a greater desire for historical accuracy are, I think, visible on every side. The painter, the theatrical manager, and the novelist alike turn to the archæologist for assistance.

To begin with recent histories of the kingdom at large, we have, in the first place, the *Constitutional History of England*, by the present Bishop of Oxford, which extends from the earliest times to the reign of Henry VII., and shows an unsurpassed knowledge of institutions, of events, and of men alike. The collection of *Select Charters* may be regarded as an appendix to the *History*, but these two works taken together do not by any means represent the whole of the learned author's recent contributions to historical literature.

Very different in character, although equally based upon original authorities, is the late Mr. J. R. Green's *Short History of the English People*, which obtained a very wide popularity within a few months of its publication. Intended originally as a mere school-book, a revised edition of it has been issued suitable for the library, and, more recently, it has been appropriately illustrated with pictures from old manuscripts and the like.

Turning next to books dealing with more limited periods, we have, for very early times, Mr. Elton's *Origins of English History*, and, for the eleventh century, the monumental *History of the Norman Conquest*, by the late Professor Freeman, and the continuation of it, which embraces *The Reign of William Rufus*.

Mr. Wylie's uncompleted *History of the Reign of*

Henry IV. is largely based upon manuscript authorities which he has consulted in person, and Sir James Ramsay's two volumes, dealing with part of the fifteenth century, also bring to light a number of facts unknown to writers who have depended upon the more accessible sources of information.

The late Mr. Brewer's Introductions to the first four volumes of the official Calendar of *Letters and Papers* of the reign of Henry VIII. are practically a history of the earlier part of that period, and as such they have been reprinted in a separate form. In the Introductions to the subsequent volumes of this important Calendar, Mr. Gairdner has confined himself more closely to a consideration of the documents with which he had to deal, and especially of those which had not been printed before. Among other workers in the same field, I may mention Mr. Pocock and Father Gasquet, whose book on *Henry VIII. and the English Monasteries* throws a flood of fresh light upon events connected with the dissolution of the religious houses.

For the reigns of the first two English kings of the house of Stuart, we have in Mr. Gardiner a historian who spares no pains to obtain materials hitherto unused, and who will, we may hope, favour us with further volumes as valuable as those which have already appeared. Although the eighteenth century scarcely comes within the purview of an Archæological Institute, one cannot mention it without remembering that it has a living historian of the highest eminence in Mr. Lecky.

Other important works relating to the history of the whole kingdom might easily be mentioned, but those which I have enumerated are enough to show that great progress has been made during the period under consideration.

Much attention has been devoted during the last twenty-seven years to the study of the social institutions of the middle ages. The Bishop of Oxford's *Constitutional History*, already mentioned, contains a great deal of information about them, and separate books deal with some of them in detail. The laborious *History of Agriculture and Prices*, for instance, by the late Professor Rogers, covers a period of four centuries and a half, and

the same author has brought together some of the results of his researches in his *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*. Only ten years ago, Mr. Seebohm, by his book on *The English Village Community*, drew attention to a subject which had until then been almost neglected, and this has been followed by Professor Vinogradoff's volume on *Villeinage in England*, which, although written by a learned Russian, may fairly be mentioned here because the materials for it were collected in this country, and it is written in our own language. Another foreigner, temporarily sojourning among us, M. Jusserand, has collected a great deal of curious information about *English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages* Dr. Brentano, the late Mr Toulmin Smith, Mr. Goss, Mr. Lambert and others have written at some length as to the origin and organisation of the mediæval gilds, but the subject is by no means exhausted. The University of Cambridge has found an able historian in Mr. Mullinger, and several other writers have traced the fortunes of different academical institutions in England.

The fiscal antiquities of the kingdom have been examined by Mr. Dowell in his *History of Taxation*, and by Mr. Hubert Hall in his *History of the Custom-Revenue*. Some recent books of a professedly legal character may fairly be said to belong to the domain of history, such as Sir William Anson's *Law and Custom of the Constitution*, Mr. Pike's *History of Crime*, and Mr. Digby's *History of the Law of Real Property*.

It would be hopeless in this brief review to attempt to enumerate the more important of the numerous biographies and books of memoirs that have been published in England during the last twenty-seven years, and I will only remark that a vast amount of fresh materials for such works has been made available of late, especially by the Calendars which have been issued by the Government. It is, however, impossible to quit this subject without some mention of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, a gigantic undertaking which would have been wholly impracticable if the work had not been distributed among the members of a large literary staff.

Another conspicuous recent example of the advantages of co-operation in such matters is the *New English*

Dictionary, which fairly claims a place here because it is founded "on historical principles."

A third periodical publication supported by numerous contributors is the *English Historical Review*, which, under very able management, contains original essays of permanent value, careful reviews of books, and quarterly lists of recent historical works.

The last twenty-seven years have not been fruitful in large county histories, although there have been a few new ones such as Mr. Cussan's *History of Hertfordshire*, and Mr. Hunter's *History of Hallamshire*, and revised editions of some old ones such as Ormerod's *History of Cheshire*, Hutchins's *History of Dorset*, and Baines's *History of Lancashire*. The bulky folios and quartos, compiled with so much industry by antiquaries of former generations, command long prices in the book-market, but they do not nowadays provoke imitation. For the change of feeling and practice in this respect, there are, I think, several causes. In the first place, a new county history would be expected to reach a very high standard of excellence, and to embrace a very great variety of subjects, thus requiring on the part of the editor an extraordinary breadth of accurate knowledge. Then again, the comparatively recent opening of archives—national, corporate and private—has so vastly increased the amount of material which would have to be digested, that the topographical and genealogical sections of an important county history would alone entail long years of assiduous labour.

The cessation of great county histories, however, does not imply any diminution of general interest in local antiquities. On the contrary, the number of persons engaged in researches concerning particular places or particular institutions is probably much greater now than at any previous time. I cannot, for obvious reasons, attempt to enumerate the many books which have been printed within the last twenty-seven years dealing with portions of a county, still less those which deal with the history of a single parish. Some have taken the form of handsomely illustrated volumes; some are little more than pamphlets, and they differ as much in quality as they differ in outward appearance, mere size and cost being of course no criterion

of real value. In some cases the local historian gives only a circumstantial account of one ancient residence, and of the fortunes of its successive owners, and monographs of this sort, being very limited in range and suitable to a narrative form, often interest readers who make no special profession of antiquarian tastes.

The steady increase in the number of persons pursuing independent researches in the various branches of English history has led to the production, within the last twenty-seven years, of several manuals for their guidance, which I venture to enumerate without comment. as their respective titles are sufficiently explanatory of their contents:—An *Introduction to the Study of English History*, by Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Mullinger; a *Guide to the Principal Classes of Documents in the Public Record Office*, by Mr. Scargill-Bird; the *Record Interpreter*, by Mr. C. T. Martin; *Records and Record Searching*, by Mr. W. Rye; *How to write the History of a Parish*, by Mr. J. C. Cox; *How to write the History of a Family*, by Mr. W. P. Phillimore; and a *Handy Book for Dates*, by the late Mr. J. J. Bond. The possession of these unpretending but useful books is of the greatest advantage to students, especially to beginners.

More ambitious in character than any of the above, but equally indispensable, are the late Mr. Doyle's *Official Baronage of England* and Mr. Cokayne's *Complete Peerage*. Unfortunately the *Baronage* does not include the ordinary barons, and the *Complete Peerage* has not yet been completed.

Mere lists of names and dates do not claim a high place in historical literature, but we have reason to be grateful for the publication of Mr. Foster's *Alumni Oxoniensis*; Mr. Metcalfe's *Book of Knights* and other lists of that sort. Such works are useful not only for biographical and genealogical purposes, but also for settling the dates of undated documents.

During the last twenty-seven years the venerable Society of Antiquaries, the Royal Archæological Institute, the Camden Society, the Surtees Society and other analogous societies have continued to supply their members with volumes illustrating various phases of English history. Several new societies have also been established,

which I may briefly enumerate. The Royal Historical Society, originally founded in 1868, is now in a flourishing condition, and is devoting itself to serious work covering a very wide field. The Selden Society, established primarily for the publication of materials for the history of English law, has by means of its scholarlike volumes, thrown fresh light upon the history of the social institutions of the middle ages. The Pipe Roll Society almost confines its attention to the twelfth century, but not exclusively to the class of records from which it derives its name. The Harleian Society has for its object "the publication of inedited manuscripts relating to genealogy, family history and heraldry," and the more recent British Record Society also appeals mainly to persons engaged in genealogical researches. The Huguenot Society of London publishes documents relating to the French and Dutch Calvinists whose industry has contributed so much to the prosperity of the places in which they have settled.

Within the last fortnight practical steps have been taken towards the establishment of a Navy Records Society, for the publication of manuscripts illustrating the history, administration and social life of the British Navy; and an Anglo-Norman Record Society for the publication of ancient charters and chartularies of religious houses in or connected with England has been proposed.

Local archæological bodies have increased and multiplied, separate societies having been established for Yorkshire, for Cumberland and Westmoreland, for Shropshire and for Derbyshire and Leicestershire. Field Clubs have also been founded in different parts of the country, and several counties now have their own local *Notes and Queries*.

More strictly within the purview of the Historical Section of this Institute are the Record Societies which have been established for the publication of original documents connected with particular districts. Societies of this sort are doing good work in Yorkshire, in the West Riding, in Lancashire and Cheshire, in Staffordshire, in Somersetshire, in Hampshire, in Middlesex, in Worcestershire, and notably at Oxford. The oldest of these Record Societies is of very recent origin.

Several ancient corporations have displayed a praiseworthy interest in their own archives, and as the annual

meeting of the Royal Archæological Institute is being held in London, I may be allowed to invite special attention to books issued under the auspices of the Corporation of this great city :—*Memorials of London and London Life in the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, by the late Mr. Riley ; a *Calendar of Letters from the Mayor and Corporation* in the reign of Edward III. ; an *Analytical Index to the Remembrancia* from 1579 to 1664 ; an admirable *Calendar of Wills proved in the Court of Hustings* between 1258 and 1688 ; and lastly, a sumptuous volume entitled, *A Descriptive Account of the Guildhall*. More may shortly be expected from the same quarter.

From books published at the expense of public bodies, we pass naturally to books published at the expense of the nation, and I think it may fairly be said that the British Government has done more to encourage historical studies during the last twenty-seven years than during any previous period of double that length. If a line is to be drawn between archæological works on the one hand and historical works on the other, the invaluable catalogues of the contents of the British Museum must, I suppose, be reckoned to belong mainly to the section of antiquities, the Catalogues of Manuscripts and of Seals being, perhaps, the principal exceptions.

The publications of the Public Record Office, with which I have the honour to be connected, belong to the historical class. The series of *Chronicles and Memorials of the Middle Ages*, commonly known as " the Rolls Series," was projected as far back as 1857, but the great majority of the volumes composing it have been published since the last meeting of the Royal Archæological Institute in London. It now comprises ninety-seven works, extending to 234 volumes, and there are others to follow, but the series is drawing to a close.

The Calendars of State Papers, begun about the same time as the *Chronicles and Memorials*, have, like them, greatly increased in number during the last twenty-seven years. For the eventful reign of Henry VIII. there are now eighteen volumes, or parts, which deal exhaustively with documents belonging to the first twenty-nine years of the period, and the work goes on steadily. A some-

what less elaborate *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic*, extends to no less than sixty-two volumes, and covers the space of a hundred and twenty years, beginning at the accession of Edward VI. Further volumes will shortly follow, for there are now two editors at work upon the Domestic Papers of the reign of Charles II., and a third upon those of the reign of William and Mary. The Treasury Papers have been calendared from 1557 to 1728, and the Home Office Papers from 1760 to 1772. Within the last four years, six volumes have been published of *Acts of the Privy Council of England* in the middle of the sixteenth century, and the series will be continued.

Various foreign archives are being searched for notices of England and Englishmen, and some of the results have been published. One series of abstracts of State Papers, chiefly in Spain, already extends to twelve printed volumes, and there are also nine printed volumes of similar abstracts made at Venice and elsewhere in the north of Italy. Many documents in the Vatican archives have been transcribed, and a volume will very shortly be published giving all entries in the Papal Registers of the thirteenth century which relate to the British Islands.

Since the days of the old Record Commission, comparatively little has been done in the way of printing our national manuscripts of the mediæval period; but, as the Calendars of State Papers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are now well advanced, attention has recently been re-directed to documents of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Calendars of the Patent Rolls and the Close Rolls have accordingly been begun upon a uniform system, with the result so far that three volumes have been published, and three or four more are in the press and almost ready for publication. The first volume of a *Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient Deeds* in the Public Record office has also been issued.

The system of attaching bulky appendixes to the Annual Reports of the Deputy Keeper of the Records has been recently discontinued, and in their stead a separate series of publications has been begun under the name of *Lists and Indexes*, the object of which is to build up a general catalogue of the national archives, and at the same time to facilitate the production of documents in the Search Rooms.

Closely connected with the Public Record Office is the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, which was originally appointed in 1869, to make enquiry as to papers and manuscripts of general public interest belonging to institutions and private families. Owners have, in almost every case, shown themselves willing to assist in this work, and so the Commissioners have been able to examine and report upon more than three hundred and sixty collections in England alone, and others in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. Altogether it has issued seventeen volumes in folio size, and thirty-one in octavo, several of which have been in such request that they are now out of print. Two or three more will be published before the end of the present year. The contents of the volumes are of the most varied character, comprising alike charters of the twelfth century, extracts from registers and rolls of accounts, private letters, and diplomatic correspondence as recent as the end of the eighteenth century.

In the foregoing remarks I have confined myself to mentioning some recent works illustrative of English history written in our own language, and I will not trespass further on your patience by mentioning analogous works published on the continent, or, on the other hand, recent English books dealing with the history of foreign lands. Slight and imperfect as my review has been, I have, I think, said enough to show that the last twenty-seven years have been extraordinarily productive of historical literature in this country. To anticipate the future is no part of my task, but before sitting down, I should like to indicate very briefly some deficiencies.

In the first place, we want a Dictionary of Mediæval Antiquities. Sir William Smith's well-known *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* has been followed by a similar *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities;* but the work stops short before the commencement of the period which attracts the attention of the majority of English historical students. Although there is in print a vast amount of information about ecclesiastical and military antiquities, about the history of architecture, of the fine arts, of costume, of domestic manners and many kindred subjects, it is scattered in a great variety of books and not readily accessible. A good Dictionary would give the

results of the most recent researches, and indicate the places in which further information is to be found.

Then again, we ought to have a Dictionary of the Latin that was in use in England in the later middle ages. For want of such a book, many curious blunders have been committed by scholars whose knowledge of Latin, however exact, has been confined to the language of the Augustan age. Invaluable as is the great work of Ducange, it often fails to elucidate obscure words and phrases in English documents of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and the student wishing to ascertain their meaning has to turn from one book to another for help – sometimes without success.

Lastly, I would suggest that we want some institution analogous to the French *Ecole des Chartes*, where a course of systematic instruction would be given in the art of deciphering ancient manuscripts and other kindred subjects. No good work of the sort could of course be done without the co-operation of a number of competent scholars, but I hope that something may be accomplished in the directions which I have indicated before the Royal Archæological Institute again holds its annual congress in London.