INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS,

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[Read at the Second General Meeting, held in Crosby Hall, Jan. 28, 1856; the Right Honourable the Lord Londesborough in the Chair.]

My Lord, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—We meet this evening, not indeed to inaugurate our young Institution, but, our government and rules already agreed upon and our social machinery adjusted, to enter, for the first time as a Society, on the discussion of those peculiar topics which it is our aim and object to investigate. We are assembled in the heart of our ancient, renowned, and beloved metropolis; and in one of its most beautiful structures and most suggestive localities. We are congregated in a noble hall, which has reverberated to the voices of some of the greatest of our countrymen, whose inspiration yet hovers around and hallows the spot. And we are come for what I will not hesitate to call a sacred purpose,—to endeavour, namely, to rescue from oblivion, and to acquire information about things, which, as a nation and a community, it greatly behoves us to know and to remember, and to deliberate together accordingly as to the manner in which the same may most effectually and faithfully be done.

It cannot but be a matter of great astonishment that it should have remained till now to set on foot an association whose sole business should be to investigate the antiquities of the capital of England, and to record the discoveries which from day to day are being made within its pale. Surprising, however, as it is, the fact is notorious. Of all existing societies established for the cultivation of archæological knowledge, there is not one which regards our metropolis as its own peculiar field, or which looks upon the remains of its ancient grandeur with a partial and exclusive eye. The honoured parent of all our archæological bodies, the Society of Antiquaries, devotes equal attention to foreign and home antiquities; whilst the Archæological Institute, though for the most part confining its researches to our own country, extends them to the remotest limits of our shores. The more general attention

which, during the last few years, has happily been devoted to these pursuits has raised into existence a goodly number of provincial societies, which have effected immense good, and for whose most valuable efforts in rescuing from oblivion the fast-decaying memorials of our early history no antiquary can be sufficiently grateful. In the midst of such general indications of earnest and intelligent zeal, the want of a society like the present becomes still more palpable, and its absence still more conspicuous. Indeed it can only be accounted for by the fact that a fancy has prevailed that those bodies which have their permanent seat in London are accustomed first and foremost to direct their attention to the discovery, elucidation, collection, and preservation of those ancient remains by which they are immediately surrounded. I need not tell the audience which I have now the honour of addressing that any thought of the kind is but a fancy, and entirely destitute of real foundation. It is not the province of these societies so to do; nor were they instituted for such an end. And therefore they are not to be blamed for an omission which, how much soever to be lamented, they were not created to supply.

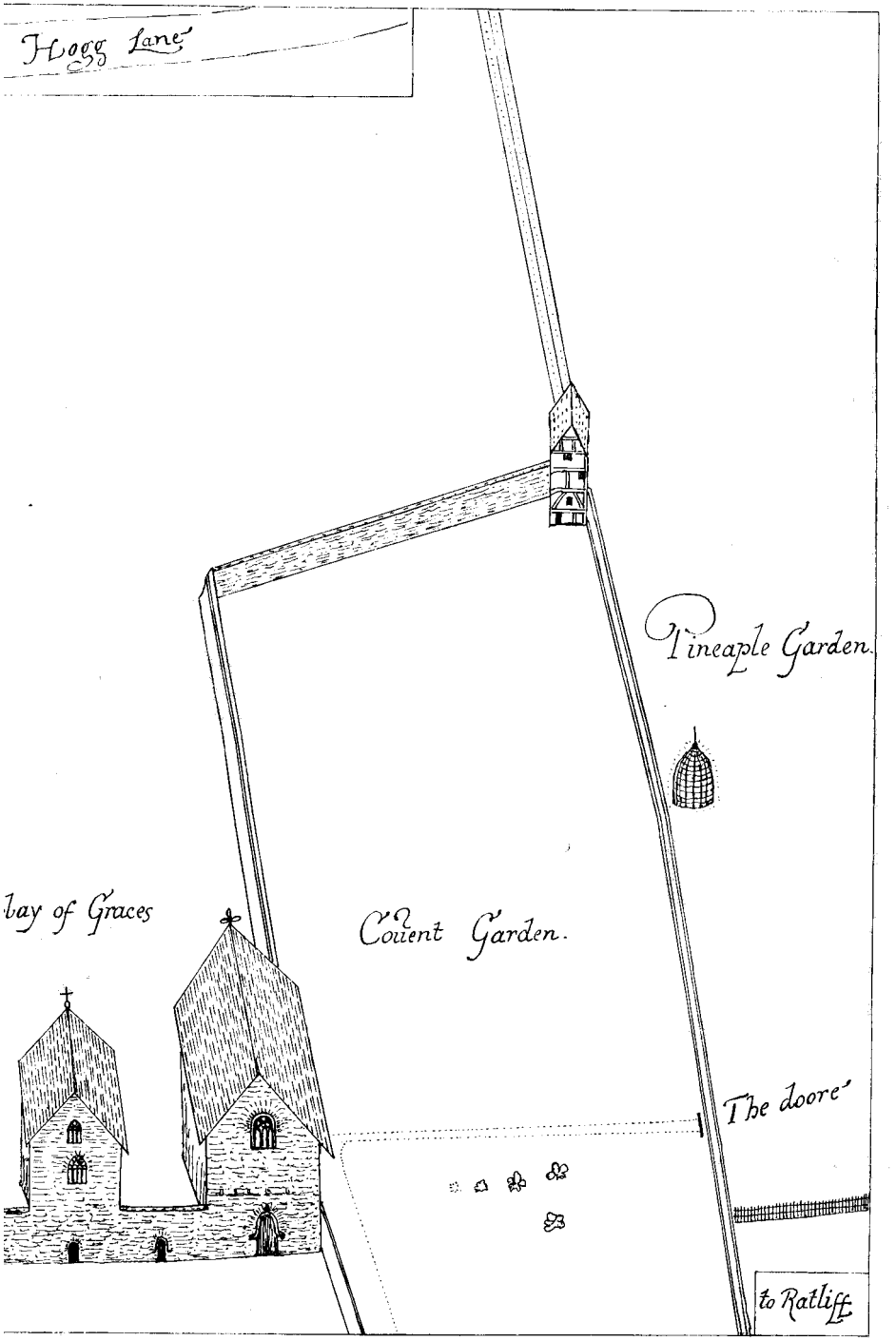
Here, then, the present Society steps in, and appeals to the public at large for aid and support. It does not address itself exclusively to one class or order of men. The object of its study is undoubtedly a learned one; but it appeals not to learned men alone for a vigorous right hand or an approving smile. It speaks to all. For it recollects with the highest self-respect, which is the first step towards real success, the scene of its operations, and the matters whereon it is employed. May I in such a place, and before such a company as the present, be permitted to enter into any detail of that scene and of these matters? If so, I would humbly suggest the recollection that the field of our labours is a Capital and a County where the greatest and best of Englishmen have dwelt and found a home; where, generation after generation, incidents have eventuated which have constituted this country's history; and where almost every foot may be called holy ground, dedicated to religion, to literature, to heroism, and to love. There is hardly an acre within the limits here assigned to us which has not its tale of wonder and enchanting interest; and

on many of them have been done the grandest acts, and have been spoken the grandest words that the muse of England's history can cherish, and delight to recal for the admiration of her sons. Within the crumbling foundations which modern excavators are daily bringing to light, have lived and breathed those whom we regard as our common benefactors, and to whom we point as examples and patterns, whose lives are our admiration, their works our delight, and their words our treasure! The very names of a multitude of our localities will be enough to prove how world-wide is their fame and how world-enduring is their interest.—The Tower, where Gundulf, saint and sage combined, first raised his stately fabric, awful still as ever, where age after age the bravest, noblest, fairest of the land found, some a palace, some a prison, and some a grave; Westminster Abbey and Hall, the one the most revered of English temples, the other the scene of regal magnificence and of the law's majesty age after age; the Temple Church, dedicated so long ago as 1185 by Heraclius, patriarch of Jerusalem; All Hallows Barking, where Launcelot Andrewes, the revered Bishop of Winchester, was baptised, and where the venerable Fisher and the martyred Laud were carried headless when tyranny and puritanism had done their worst; Crosby Hall, where Richard of Gloucester, and Sir Thomas More, and Shakspeare, and a host of other worthies resided as possessors or as guests; Austin Friars, with its fearful tale of sacrilege; St. Olave's Hart Street, whither Pepys carried the news of the victory over the Dutch at sea, and whispered it to Sir John Minnes and my lady Pen; Guildhall, the scene of the City pageants; London Stone; the Metropolitan Cathedral of St. Paul, and the parish churches of Sir Christopher Wren; Holland House, where Addison sent for the profligate Earl of Warwick "that he might see how a Christian can die;" Hampton Court, the delight of Wolsey and the admiration of every man of taste from his day to our own—what hosts of memories can they each and all elicit! And these are but a few among the most interesting of those ten thousand objects which invite our attention and stimulate our curiosity. Things which are first elsewhere are tenth-rate here. Remains of ancient work, of

which many of our provinces are justly proud, would here rank among the many, and attract no special observation. Indeed the difficulty rather is to select and particularise—the ground is so rich, the materials so abundant, the interest so paramount and yet so general. Investigate as we may, there is still more to know; labour as we will, there is still more to do; collect as we can, every excavation reveals fresh features, and supplies fresh examples We stand a chance of being perplexed by the treasures presented to us, of being bewildered in the blaze of light, and of having our faculties too confused and overpowered by the abundance to assist us as we could desire.

Then, the remains which exist are not only of superlative interest, but of varied ages, and present a regular chain of study from primæval times down through continuous generations to our own. In architecture, for instance, we have in the metropolis itself, spite of the devastation inflicted by the great fire, specimens of every successive style. There is, just to mention one or two, the noble simplicity of the Norman chapel in the White Tower built for the Conqueror, and of the church of St. Bartholomew, the Early-English of Westminster Abbey and the Temple, the Decorated of Austin Friars, and the Perpendicular of St. Helen and St. Andrew Undershaft. We have several portions of old London wall; and various crypts exist which are already known, besides more which only require a little careful investigation to detect and bring to light. We have houses innumerable, full of interesting details and suggestive peculiarities. We have immense stores of MS. memoranda all but untouched, and alas! unreadable by most eyes, yet rich beyond calculation.*

* As a specimen of what may be recovered, I offer the annexed illustration. It is a tracing from a Survey of the former part of the seventeenth century, probably copied from one more ancient, preserved among a number of early maps at Carlton Ride, and furnishes us with a view of the Cistercian Abbey of St. Mary Graces, New Abbey, or East Minster, once standing eastward of East Smithfield, beyond Tower Hill. The house was founded by King Edward III. in 1349, at the time of the first great pestilence. A toft of ground was procured of Nicholas, prior of the Holy Trinity without Aldgate, for the burial of those who died in the visitation; "and a chapel was built in the same place to the honour of God." To which King Edward, in



The Abbey and Precinct of S. Mary Graces, London.
From an ancient Survey preserved at Carlton Ride, 1856.

We cannot excavate to the depth of a few yards between the Tower and St. Paul's, without turning up abundant evidences of Roman occupation. Coins, tessellated pavements, pottery, remains of buildings, occasionally fragments of inscriptions, bronze swords and spearheads, and domestic implements of every description, together with works of ornament, fibulæ and rings, statuettes and engraved gems, all attest the existence of a large, opulent, and luxurious city. Nor indeed are these the earliest proofs of human possession. Specimens now soliciting your attention in our temporary museum carry us back to ages when no Roman legionary had yet set foot in Britain, and when the Phœnician trader was the only foreigner who landed on our shores. To illustrate this period there are some exquisite flint and bronze celts, the finest that I have ever had the good fortune to see, and to which I direct your special notice. There are also several examples of bronze armillæ, worn by the fair for personal adornment, and possibly accompanying a woad-dyed skin. Proceeding downward from the Roman æra, we find coins of our several monarchs, implements illustrating the daily life and manners of the people, and ecclesiastical antiquities in the shape of crucifixes, bullæ, pilgrim's signs, carved fragments of buildings, and encaustic tiles. So that among the results of a large excavation it does not need an eye more than ordinarily practised in such matters to detect the work of many centuries, ranging from ages previous to the

performance of a vow, there added a monastery. The abbey shared the fate of other religious houses in 1539. Since which time, adds Newcourt, "the said monastery being by King Henry VIII. in the 34th year of his reign, granted to Sir Arthur Darcy, was clean pulled down; and of late time, in place thereof, is built a large storehouse for victuals; and convenient ovens are built there for baking of biskets for the Royal Navy; and it is the Victualling Office for the same to this day. The grounds adjoyning and belonging formerly to the said abby, have small tenements built thereon." (Newcourt, Repertorium, fol. Lond. 1708, vol. i. pp. 465, 466.) Though the abbey is frequently mentioned in the records, its architectural peculiarities were entirely unknown previous to our cognisance of this very interesting delineation, which exhibits the Decorated character of the edifice, and represents King Edward's building as continuing, with little or no alteration, till the era of the Dissolution. "Hogg Lane" is still remembered, and "Ratcliffe" is still the designation of a neighbouring locality.

Christian æra down to times but little anterior to those in which we live.

It is, however, a melancholy fact, and one which has its due weight in bringing this Society into existence, that day by day sees the wanton destruction of these and similar objects, which if lost are of course lost for ever. The unreasonable and senseless apathy with which many regard the memorials of by-gone times, so far from lifting a finger to ward off mutilation or to prevent decay, seems, unless summarily checked, destined in no great while to surrender every vestige of ancient occupation. Ruthless alterations are daily perpetrated, where the original features of that which is so sacrilegiously violated are entirely disregarded and beaten out. Excavations are daily made; and, when a pavement or other ancient work is perceived, it is forthwith dug up and broken to pieces. The specimen now in the room is the largest that could be found in a mass of fragments of what constituted a very fine tessellated pavement, discovered in Suffolk Lane so lately as last year. No doubt there are instances where the removal of ancient objects is strictly necessary in favour of public utility. Of such a kind, perhaps, was the removal of Gerard's Hall, most deeply indeed to be deplored, but, as I understand, imperatively called for by the circumstances of the case. The antiquary is not deaf to reason or blind to modern requirements. It is a libel on him to call him so. He knows that streets must be widened, and eminences levelled, and buildings removed, to meet the needs of our immensely increased population. He knows that a "sentiment," as some are pleased to style it, is not to be defended and to rule at the expense of advantages important and universal, but unattainable without a sacrifice. He has at least a right, however, to demand that alterations shall not be wanton mutilations, that people shall not be allowed to go out of their way to deface and ruin that to which other and greater men attach an unapproachable value; that due respect shall be paid to love of antiquity, and to what generally accompanies it, love of country; and that it shall not be quite so easy for Vandal brutality or utilitarian ignorance to deal with a nation's treasures as their shameless will inclines. If

sacred memorials of olden time are to be taken down, let it at least be shown that the removal is necessary. If ancient remains are discovered in the course of excavations, let them at least be examined by competent persons; and let any objects of antique handicraft which are brought to light be carefully collected and religiously preserved. All this the antiquary has a right to claim—though his claim is in London but too commonly ignored, if not scouted and derided.

To endeavour to save some few things from impending ruin, at least to examine them while they are still in being and our own, to record their peculiarities, and to furnish those who are to come after us with information which the lapse of day after day makes it more difficult to afford, to watch excavations and to chronicle discoveries, to rescue what we can from wanton destruction, and to prevent the dispersion of metropolitan antiquities in general, is the task to which we address ourselves. Daily we are losing precious treasures—we will try to save them. Daily we hear of needless aggressions—we will endeavour to prevent them. Daily we see evidences of apathetic carelessness in the preservation of ancient relics—we will do our best to defeat them. Daily are important fragments of information sinking down into the abyss of oblivion—we will endeavour to arrest them in their descent, and to make them available for future investigators. We are not bent upon making a museum of pretty trinkets and singular curiosities. We desire rather to study archæology in that spirit, truly philosophical, which values its acquisitions not simply as beautiful objects or examples of high art, but rather as materials for the elucidation of history and the illustration of the life of times long passed away. We would regard every object, how humble and rude soever, as teaching a lesson of equal, if not greater importance than that presented by one of the most exquisite workmanship and refined character. We know that truth is substantiated as well by humble as by splendid adjuncts; and our sole object is the exhibition and elucidation of truth. In our meetings we will endeavour to bring before our members at large many facts connected with the City and County as yet unrecorded; and to introduce to each other our several

contributions in strict connexion with the purpose for which we are instituted. In our publications we will hope and endeavour to do accurately and well what our pecuniary position may possibly compel to be little. Whatever treatment we receive from rivals (for rivals no doubt we shall have, as archæology in this country seems fated to bring out the antagonistic principle), we will give no real occasion of offence. We envy, I am sure, no society its field of operation; and we beg to be met in a similar spirit, and to be treated with similar courtesy. We believe that there is abundant room for all—that there is indeed more to be done than what, with our multitudinous avocations of other kinds, all of us can ever hope to accomplish—that anything gained by any one will be so much saved from certain destruction. And we are determined to have no squabbles—a decision imperatively taught us by the fate of other bodies which once promised well. We regard ourselves as occupied on too sacred, high, and important a work to allow ourselves to waste our time and energies on miserable discords, petty jealousies, and unworthy intrigues. Looking on our array of names, I may surely be allowed to add, that, be the issue of our Institution what it will, at the worst they who come after us shall say, "They were not unequal to their work; but they were among the first labourers in the field, and the times were against them." Whether, therefore, we succeed or fail, we will endeavour to show in the former case that at least by earnestness and archæological knowledge, by courteous bearing and upright conduct, we are not undeserving of our success, or in the latter, that lack of sense or lack of honesty and of good-temper was not the cause of our failure. And so, with consciousness of right motives, and a desire of doing good, prepared for any fortune, but hopeful of the better, we entrust our bark to the winds and waves, and steer for utility if not for fame.