

THE GROWTH OF INTEREST IN ARCHÆOLOGY.

*A Presidential Address to the Society at the Annual General Meeting held
at Bishopsgate Institute, February 14th, 1913,*

BY

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I HAVE recently had the pleasant duty of representing this Society on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of the Essex Archæological Society, of which I have now been for forty years an honorary member; and having been called upon to say something on the subject of kindred societies, I was led to consider the manner in which the organised pursuit of antiquarian studies has developed itself among us.

The Society of Antiquaries of London will celebrate the 200th anniversary of its foundation in the year 1717; and as by that time I hope that its minutes for the years from 1717 to 1843 will have been published, I need not now further allude to the giants that there were in the days of its early history. That society had always been a stay-at-home body. It had held its meetings at its own rooms in King's Bench Walk, or Chancery Lane, or Somerset House, and there received and discussed communications of recent explorations and discoveries, and other antiquarian dissertations; but about the forties of the nineteenth century, it was felt that more than this was necessary. The British Association for the Advancement of Science had been established in 1831, and had achieved a considerable

amount of popularity and success. Why should not a British Archæological Association be established for the advancement of antiquarian science? Like the British Association, it should each year seek some new place of meeting, where its members could inspect ancient buildings on the spot, and listen to clinical lectures upon the causes and the remedies of any decay or misuse they may appear to have undergone. Like the British Association, it would divide its work into sections: a primæval section, a mediæval section, an architectural section, and an historical section. Each section should have a President, Vice-Presidents, Secretaries and a Committee; while there should be a Central Committee, meeting once a month in London, in the intervals between one provincial meeting and another, that should watch over the interests of archæology, take note of new discoveries, and take action in matters affecting the protection and the renovation of objects of antiquity.

The new Association held its first meeting in September, 1844. It was a great success, and the Association speedily enrolled nearly 1,800 members. But antiquaries are by nature a quarrelsome race, and peace did not long prevail. Disputes arose as to the editorship of the journal and other matters, and became so acute that the President resigned his office. The Treasurer thereupon summoned a general meeting to be held on the 5th March, 1845, which proceeded to turn out the majority of the Committee. That majority was not prepared meekly to acquiesce; and accordingly two parties were formed, which got to be called the Wright party (after Thomas Wright, whose bust I had the

pleasure many years afterwards to present to the Society of Antiquaries, on behalf of the subscribers for the purchase) and the Way party (after Albert Way, one of my predecessors as Director of the Society of Antiquaries). It ended in the Association being split into two, Wright's half being called by the original name, and Way's half being called the Archæological Institute. There followed an almost ludicrous consequence: the Association held a meeting at Winchester in August 1845, and the Institute one at the same place in September. At the latter, the sections were rearranged, and reduced to three:—1, History; 2, Architecture; and 3, Early and Mediæval Antiquities. At the Association meeting an address was delivered by Mr. T. J. Pettigrew, and at the Institute meeting one by Samuel Wilberforce, then Dean of Westminster and shortly afterwards Bishop of Oxford. Both orators referred to the fact that the Antiquary has been commonly conceived to be a harmless creature, patient alike and provocative of jibes; with little pith or point of character, and little earnestness, except for trifles, and both quoted the sonorous antithesis of Pope:—

“With sharpened sight pale Antiquaries pore,
The inscription value, but the rust adore.”

I cite a few passages from the eloquent address of Wilberforce: “Assuredly, the first idea of our pursuit is noble; we profess to believe in the fellowship which, for all the generations of men, runs through all times. We know that we now are what all those bygone ages have made us to be, and we will not be fooled by the

visible intrusive present into believing that we and our objects and our days are all, or the greatest, things. We see that we are a link in the golden chain, which reaches from the beginning to the end." "This is our purpose—to reproduce before our eyes the old times: and therefore is it, that we would watch with such a brooding care over every relique, be its outward circumstance in itself beautiful or deformed; for—so that it be not tampered with and taught a new tale—it is a witness of that which was and is not, of that which we would fain recall; and therefore do we pore into its dust, not as if that dust was precious in itself, but precious for the witness which it bears—precious as the coat of down upon the virgin and unhandled fruit; telling us that so indeed Time left it, with this cunning overlaying, which should bear silent but undoubted record of any stolen visits of the artfullest intruder." "Into the old past we love to look, because in it was life; into it we dare to look, because that life is now in us, and that same gift we do believe we may pass to those beyond us. We too may and shall be ancients and matter for history." I need not apologise for repeating these fine words.

Though the object of the Association and of the Institute was to do that which the Society of Antiquaries could not do, and to popularise the study in a way that Society had never attempted, they testified their loyalty to the mother Society by frequently passing on to it papers presented to them, but which appeared to be worthy of notice by the older Society. The two bodies, at first hostile to each other but as time went on growing indifferent, each kept its solitary course, and to this day, though the protagonists have long been dead, those

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CORRIGENDA.

P. 483, line 5, for "dreamy" read "dreary."

P. 487, ,, 22, ,, "busts" read "beasts."

P. 491, lines 20 to 23, omit the sentence beginning "Mr. Potter."

The staircase has not been sold. The information given by Mr. Potter related to a proposed sale, which has not been carried into effect, as the writer erroneously thought. While glad to be corrected as to the fact, he much regrets having fallen into the error.

E. W. B.

Insert at p. 483]

bodies exist separately, every attempt to combine them having failed.

They stand aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder ;
A dreamy sea now flows between ;
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.

May we not repeat the old question :

Tantæne animis caelestibus iræ?

If I might venture to distinguish between the two bodies, I should be inclined to say that the Association represented the democratic element among antiquaries, and the Institute, which is now the Royal Archæological Institute, the aristocratic.

It may perhaps be asked, why I refer to these old, unhappy, far-off things and battles long ago? My first answer is that I think myself competent to do so. It is true that these disputes happened before my time, long as that time has been—but the antiquarian friends of my earlier days belonged to the democratic wing, and adhered to the Wright side, no doubt because they thought that it was so ; while in my latter experience I have fallen by the Wayside. I claim no copyright in these wretched puns ; they were invented by J. R. Planché.

They would have their Way, and on trifles divide ;
So we took our own, having Wright on our side.

My impartiality may I think be inferred from the facts that the Association has recently created me one of its Vice-Presidents, as the Institute had done some years before, and that I am the Institute's Treasurer.

My real motive, however, is to draw your attention to what, if only a coincidence, is a remarkable one. It is that the year of dispute, 1845, was the year in which the Sussex and the Hertfordshire County Archæological Societies were formed; that a few years afterwards the Essex Society was founded; and that this was followed in rapid sequence by the Surrey, Middlesex (that is, our own London and Middlesex) and Kent Societies—so that we have a succession of diamond jubilees to look forward to. I think this is more than a coincidence, and that the law of compensation which prevails in nature and secures that no evil should be an unmixed evil, has so worked in this instance as immediately upon the ferment caused by the competition between the Association and the Institute to bring under the notice of all persons interested in archæology the necessity and value of the clinical or bedside treatment, as I have ventured to call it, and the facilities for that treatment afforded by a county organisation. The result has, I think, been admirable. These county societies have not only accumulated a vast amount of local information, which is suitably embodied in their Transactions, and which—even if it would or could have been collected without their organisation—could not have been given to the public without their means, inasmuch as it would have overloaded the transactions of the central societies with local detail. They have also set on foot many local investigations, and equipped the explorers with the necessary knowledge and means to make them effectually. More than this, they have introduced those of kindred tastes to a personal acquaintance with each other, have stimulated the interest of the county families and other inhabitants in their local antiquities, and have

widely disseminated knowledge on these matters. There cannot be better evidence of this than the contrast between the interest now taken in ancient buildings and other remains, and the apathy or even hostility that used to prevail. In the early part of the nineteenth century the best thing that could happen to an old building was indifference; the public regarded it either as a quarry from which they might remove the stones as material for a modern building, or as an object of which the attraction and the use had long passed away and for which others should be substituted more consonant with modern taste and modern notions of utility. Sir Walter Scott did much to revive public interest and public admiration for ancient things. Later in the century came another Scott, the great apostle of destructive restoration.

The evil that man did is patent to all eyes. The smug uniformity to which he reduced the churches with which he had to deal, and his ruthless destruction of the historical element in them are visible all over the country. We might say of him as the devil said to Gilbert Foliot:—

O Georgi Gilberte Scott
Dum revolvis tot et tot
Deus tous est Astarot.

A better mind has now come over the country, and we are as little disposed to allow destructive restoration now as to allow the more obvious and brutal means of destruction of the previous period. This is one of the results of the spread of antiquarian taste and archæological knowledge by means of the formation of such societies as those I have mentioned. It has been carried still further by the later development of more local

societies such as the Lewisham Antiquarian Society and the Balham and District Antiquarian and Natural History Society.

The growth of public opinion in these directions is apparent from the history of legislation in respect of ancient monuments. When Lord Avebury (then Sir John Lubbock) first introduced his Ancient Monuments Bill, it met with great opposition on the ground of its interference with the rights of property. He had, in consequence, to assent to its being limited and weakened in many directions before he could succeed in getting any measure passed, and the Act in its ultimate form was different in these respects from the Bill as drawn up by him. It resulted, however, in the appointment of an Inspector of Ancient Monuments in the person of the late Lieut.-General Pitt Rivers. No better appointment could possibly have been made. His monumental works on the discoveries made by him on his estates at Cranbourn Chase are, and will long remain, an object lesson and a model for explorers of ancient monuments.

He entered upon his duties with zeal, but it was not long before he found himself obstructed by the limitations of the Act. Upon his death a dreary interval of inaction followed. No successor was appointed for several years, until at last the duty of inspecting ancient monuments was assigned to one of the staff of His Majesty's Office of Works, the late Mr. Fitzgerald. It is understood that he discharged himself of that duty with great ability and discretion; but upon his death, the authorities adopted the wise course of seeking for someone outside who should possess architectural and archæological qualifications of a high order. They

made the happy choice of my colleague, Mr. Charles Reed Peers, the secretary of the Society of Antiquaries, and the energy with which he has devoted himself to the work, and the success which he has attained in spite of the limitations of the Act, have emphasised the necessity of getting those limitations removed. I may mention that, during the holiday season this year, I visited the cathedral of Arbroath, in the company of my kind host, the Bishop of Brechin, Primus of the Episcopal Church of Scotland, and we were witnesses of the good work done there by Mr. Peers. The care of the ruins has been undertaken by his department, and everything has been done that could be done towards ensuring their preservation, preventing further decay, and making visible and intelligible to the public the architectural beauties and the sepulchral and other remains that still exist. This is only a single typical instance of the good work that has been already done. Others may be found in the operations undertaken at Hampton Court Palace and at the Tower of London. In the former, the moat has been cleared and Henry VIII.'s bridge over it, with all its quaint busts, including the "yale," has been replaced. In the latter, excavations have brought to light several important features of ancient work.

From the memorandum by Lord Beauchamp, the First Commissioner of Works, prefixed to Mr. Peers's report for the last financial year, it is gratifying to observe that the number of monuments of which the State has been asked to assume the guardianship is increasing rapidly. The wise principle upon which the Department has proceeded is to avoid, as far as possible, anything in the nature of restoration, to do

nothing which could impair the archæological interest of the monuments, to confine the work rigorously to such as is necessary for securing stability and perpetuating the existence of the monuments in the form in which they have come down to us. The work is carried out by a special staff created for the purpose working in the closest co-operation with the inspector and doing nothing without his approval. So good is it that it is eminently desirable that the powers of the Department should be extended to cover cases in which the owners of neglected monuments will not apply for its guardianship.

An instance of the changed attitude of public opinion towards ancient monuments occurs as I write. Mr. T. G. Jackson, R.A. (now Sir Thomas) is put upon his defence against a charge of vandalism at Christchurch priory, raised by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. He says, in a letter to the "Times" of 5th December, that he has removed from the north transept an ugly and useless gallery where nobody ever sat, and some shabby deal pewing on the floor below, and has undertaken a difficult and delicate operation, which caused him some anxiety, in the repair of stonework which had been found to be injured when those structures were removed. He asserts that all the work done to the fabric during the past few years has been of the nature of structural repair; that not a single old stone has been touched unnecessarily, and that the church has gained by the view of beautiful Norman and English work, which for more than 100 years had been hidden by sordid deal carpentry. The attack and the defence are alike significant of the growth of public opinion on the

matter. This case leads me to refer to a question on which there was recently some heated discussion. The Government Bill for amending the law relating to the Preservation of Ancient Monuments expressly excluded from its operation such ecclesiastical buildings as are still in use ; but it is in buildings of that class that much mischief has been done which ought to be prevented. The matter was brought before the Congress of Archæological Societies in union with the Society of Antiquaries at a special meeting, which was well attended, and it was fully discussed. Finally, a resolution was unanimously agreed to which, while fully maintaining the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts, required the judges of those courts, before issuing a faculty, to ascertain from the opinion of some archæological expert that the thing proposed to be done under the faculty would not affect the archæological or historical value of the building. A set of clauses prepared by Mr. Paley Baildon to carry this resolution into effect was approved.

The method proposed to be adopted was to form a panel of experts, from whom the ecclesiastical judge would select his own referee. It is clear that in this there was no derogation from the functions of the ecclesiastical judge. With him would still rest all the prerogatives that he now possesses. Nothing could be done in any church without a faculty granted by him, and the granting or the refusal of a faculty would remain as heretofore wholly in his discretion. All the difference would be that there would be some further precaution than now exists against his granting *per incuriam* a faculty for doing something that would injure the archæological or historical value of the build-

ing as a monument. If he should choose for other and countervailing reasons to disregard this, he would still be able to do so. Yet many people thought this moderate measure to be an attack on the rights of the Church of England.

The two houses of Convocation of the Province of York, indeed, passed a resolution affirming that any proposal to include ancient churches under the Ecclesiastical Buildings and Ancient Monuments Bill would not only tend to imperil their use as places of religious worship, but would also interfere with the adequate protection afforded by the Ecclesiastical Courts under which they are at present placed. The answer to this is assuredly that that protection is not, and never has been, adequate; and will not be made so unless and until provision is made for supplying the ecclesiastical judges with information as to the archæological and historical value of the edifices with which they have to deal. Provision is also necessary for preventing the mischief that is frequently done without a faculty, in defiance of those judges, and for preventing the alienation of objects of antiquity belonging to a parish.

Instances of this latter evil are of frequent occurrence, which shows that purely ecclesiastical measures for preventing it are insufficient. The case of the cup at Malling, in Kent, will be in your memory. Recently, Mr. Arthur Leveson Gower, with the assistance of members of the Essex Archæological Society, bought back a cup belonging to the parishioners of Wake's Colne, and restored it to them. He mentions other recent cases of alienation. A valuable and ancient cup

belonging to Little Stambridge was sold not long ago to a private collector.

Another cup and a paten belonging to Seavington is in a silversmith's shop in London. A set of Elizabethan plate has been found under a churchwarden's bed, while the vessels used in the church were of pewter. At this moment the people of Tong are looking hungrily for the money they may derive from the sale of their unique cup to a collector. Such examples could easily be multiplied, and they point to the urgent necessity of some measures being adopted to preserve artistic relics of this character.

The not unnatural and not unworthy desire of our cousins in the United States of America that, pending the passage of those centuries which will create antiquities for them in their own land, they would like to share some of those which are the common heritage here, has been the cause of some regrettable transactions with respect both to ecclesiastical and civil property. The case of the Tettenhall fireplaces is familiar. Mr. Potter informs me that the staircase of Cromwell House, Highgate, with the figures on its newels, has been sold for £1,000 and removed. In this connection, it is only fair to mention the munificent gifts that have been made to this country by some American collectors—notably Mr. Pierpont Morgan, who has not only presented many things of value to the British Museum, but has lent others for exhibition to the Victoria and Albert Museum. Now, alas! the time has come for his loan to be recalled, and it is understood that he is sending all his important and well selected collections to his American home.

Not only has an Inspector of Ancient Monuments been appointed and shown exemplary zeal in the discharge of his duties, but three Royal Commissions have been issued with authority to ascertain what ancient monuments exist and to publish calendars and descriptions of them. The first was that for Scotland, presided over by the Right Honourable Sir Herbert Maxwell, president of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland; the second that for England, presided over by Lord Burghclere; the third that for Wales, presided over by the Right Honourable Sir John Rhys, president of Jesus College, Oxford. All three have been strenuous in the exercise of their functions, taking up definite portions of the countries for which they were appointed, and have issued comprehensive and well-illustrated reports, which when complete will form a guide to the ancient monuments of the United Kingdom of the greatest interest and value.

Meanwhile, excavations are being proceeded with in many directions. At Corbridge, several statues have been unearthed. At Caerwent the work has been prosecuted with continued success. At Old Sarum, the lines of the cathedral have been exposed to view, and many interesting discoveries have been made. At Wroxeter, a good beginning has been effected by Mr. Bushe Fox, the expert appointed by the Society of Antiquaries to superintend the work. It was a happy and generous inspiration of the late Sir John Evans to provide that Society with the nucleus of a fund for assisting excavations. That fund has not only enabled the Society to undertake work of the kind under its own supervision, but has also enabled it to encourage local exploration by a small contribution, made not so

much as being a substantial help, but more as giving the stamp of the Society's approval to the undertaking.

A further interesting development in the promotion of archæological study has been organised by Sir Hercules Read, the president of that Society. He has arranged with the authorities of the University of London for the grant by the Society each year of a scholarship of the value of £50, to be devoted by the recipient towards the study of a subject connected with the archæology of the British islands; not excluding the illustration of the subject by reference to the remains of other countries having a distinct bearing upon British archæology. It may be expected that this new departure, which is to be tried as an experiment for five years, and is to be a post-graduate course, will stimulate the interest of the graduates of the University in archæological studies, and if it should prove to be successful and should be made permanent, will tend to train up for the fellowship of the Society a succession of persons versed in the scientific study and treatment of historical remains. In any case, it is a welcome departure from the stay-at-home policy to which I have referred as characteristic of the Society's early days.

I must not omit to notice, as especially interesting to us in London, the publication in the fifty-third volume of "Archæologia" of a memoir on the discoveries relating to Roman London from 1906 to 1912, written by my colleague, Dr. Philip Norman, and by Mr. Reader, illustrated by thirty-one plates and thirty-six figures in the text. Dr. Norman's continuous vigilance during the period in question has been rewarded by considerable discoveries.

In this connection the Society is much indebted to

our able honorary secretary, Mr. Allen Walker, for the organising skill he has displayed in the arrangements for our meetings, which have been full of interest and have kept our members up to date with all modern discoveries. To Colonel Pearson, our indefatigable Chairman of Council, Mr. Bonner, our judicious editor, and Mr. Pitman, whose administration of our financial affairs as Treasurer has been so successful, the thanks of the Society are eminently due, and I take the liberty of adding to that tribute my own warm personal acknowledgments for the manner in which they have supplied my lack of service.

Besides the Royal Commissions for the Ancient Monuments, another Royal Commission has been appointed, the labour of which will be of value to the student of antiquities. It is empowered to consider the custody and treatment of public records of all kinds, and is composed of nine persons who possess great knowledge and experience on the matter in question. It has already presented its first report, which contains many valuable recommendations.

I think it will be clear, from the facts I have attempted to lay before you, that there has been during the last two or three generations a continuous increase in the respect for antiquity accompanied by a growing desire for the conservation and study of ancient remains and by the dissemination among greater numbers of the people at large of knowledge about, and interest in, these relics of the past. We must all hope that these excellent tendencies may continue for many generations to come.