

THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

*Read at the Annual Meeting of the Society, at Bishopsgate Institute,
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IN rising to say a few words by way of an Anniversary Address on the completion of the Society's sixty-third year, I do not propose to call it our grand climacteric. On the one hand, the steady progress of archæological investigation rarely leads to such important discoveries as would form an epoch in our science, and justify the use of so ambitious a term—least of all in a time like this, when the preoccupations of war take our minds away from the peaceful problems of antiquity, and the making of history in the present occupies us rather than research into the history of former times. On the other hand, there is in our studies no sign of that falling away into gradual decay which is supposed to follow, and indeed is often indicated by the arrival at a climacteric period. When the obsession of war shall have passed away, we shall renew our labours with fresh interest. The destruction which savages, who pride themselves on their kultur, have wreaked upon many of the noblest monuments of antiquity will make us more than ever anxious to secure the perpetuity of those that remain, and to record the history and preserve the memory of those that have been ruined.

One event has occurred which possesses some antiquarian interest, and, now that party politics are in abeyance, I may

ask leave to refer to it, although it has to some extent a political bearing; I mean the repeal by the Representation of the People Bill of the right of the liverymen of London to vote for the election of the members of Parliament for the City. This was referred to in the House of Lords as a fancy franchise. It was said that the City of London could not stand alone. York, for instance, claimed rights, privileges, and antiquities as high. There were many other ancient corporations which had very strong cases. The Earl of Jersey urged the right of the freemen of the City of Oxford. I certainly do not wish to say anything in disparagement of the claims of York or of Oxford, or of any other corporation. If they care to establish them and can succeed in doing so, I should be glad; for I am not one of those who think that everything has been gained when all has been reduced to one dull uniformity. I do not see anything in a "fancy franchise," as such, that should lead to its instant and final rejection. *I shall therefore consider the case of the liverymen of London on its merits, and ignore the question whether there are any others equally meritorious. If those liverymen ought to retain their privilege, it is quite immaterial what other bodies exist that have or ought to have similar privileges. Dr. Sharpe's admirable work on London and the Kingdom shows with unanswerable force that the position of London in the Kingdom is one that stands by itself, and is entitled to exclusive consideration.*

It would seem that anciently the City's representatives in Parliament were elected by consent of the Common Council, who are representatives of the several wards into which the City is divided. The right of the liverymen of the several companies has existed since 1539 and perhaps earlier, and was made an exclusive right by the Act of 1725. Upon the most modest computation, therefore, the right which the Bill of the present year proposed to abolish had existed for four centuries, and had been established by Act of Parliament

for 200 years. If it would be a refinement of antiquarianism to represent it as a privilege of remote antiquity, it is at least one of respectable duration, and well worthy of respectful and conservative treatment. Before the passing of the Reform Act in 1832, the right of voting for the City of London was, by 11 Geo. I, c. 18, in the freemen of the City, being also liverymen of a company. The livery or clothing of a company is conferred by the court or ruling body of that company, and the lists of liverymen are made out by the clerks of the several companies. The Reform Act of 1832 did not affect those rights, but it admitted the ordinary electors who were not freemen and liverymen also to vote in the election of members of Parliament.

Chaucer's "Haburdasher, Carpenter, Webbe, Deyer, and Tapicer" were

" clothed in oo lyveré
Of a solempne and gret fraternité."
" Wei semed eche of them a fair burgeys,
To sitten in a geldchalle on the deys.
Every man for the wisdom that he can
Was schaply for to ben an alderman
For catel hadde they inough and rente,
And eek here wyfes wolde it well assente;
And elles certeyn hadde thei ben to blame,
It is right fair for to be clept *madame*,
And for to go to vigilies al byfore,
And han a mantel rially i-bore."

It is obvious that the liveryman of the fourteenth century was a power in the City; and it seems probable, as all the five companies are represented as clothed in one livery of a "solemn and great fraternity," that already the guilds had found some reason for united action.

Unfortunately not one of the City liverymen was called upon for a tale. This is greatly to be regretted; for Chaucer was so well acquainted with City life that, if he had been moved to construct a prologue and a tale for one or more of the five, it could not but have thrown even brighter light on guild usage than we derive from the few lines in which his genius has sketched the wealth of the liverymen and the ambition of their wives.

It is a circumstance worthy of some note that the *Liber Albus* which was compiled by John Carpenter shortly after the time of Chaucer contains no reference to the share the guilds by that time must have acquired in the government of the City. Evidently their influence was growing.

It has been claimed for the livery that in the time of Henry VII (1485-1509) they supported the King in his measures to loose the German hold on English trade acquired by bribery in the time of Edward IV. It is also claimed that they financed Queen Elizabeth in resisting foreign aggression, and persuaded her to discard the merchants of the Steelyard. It is not, however, until later that we meet with the institution of the Common Hall, in which the liverymen of the several guilds met as a body. It is interesting to note that, in the recent agitation to secure the retention of the livery vote, a Common Hall was summoned for that purpose; and it was curious to observe the device by which it was secured that only members of the livery of the various companies should be allowed to be present. A kind of narthex or porch was erected at the entrance to the Guildhall, having a number of doors, over each of which was inscribed in alphabetical order the names of the several guilds, and each liveryman had to present himself at his proper door, and satisfy the beadle or other officer of his company as to his identity. Proclamation was also made by the common crier at the opening of the proceedings that anyone who

is not a liveryman of a company must depart "on pain of imprisonment."

In 1642 we find that the liveries assembled in Common Hall voted £100,000 to the Parliament, and a Common Hall was summoned to nominate the Mayor. In the following year, Charles I inquired which was the larger assembly, the Common Council or the Common Hall, and, being told that the latter was the more numerous, addressed a communication there, calling upon the citizens to arrest the Lord Mayor and others as traitors, which they refused to do. In 1651 the Common Council passed an Act negating the claim of the liveries to elect the Mayor. In 1681 the Common Hall braved the displeasure of Charles II. On the other hand, in 1696 the liverymen in Common Hall resolved to stand by King William III with their lives and fortunes. The part they took in the Wilkes disputes is well known. It is commemorated by the Beckford monument in the Guildhall. In 1773 it was adjudged that a wilful refusal of a livery company to attend a Common Hall summoned by the Mayor would incur its disfranchisement; but this judgment was reversed in 1775, and now the Lord Mayor is not able to compel the attendance of the livery at Common Hall. The Recorder and Common Serjeant, however, gave an opinion that a Common Hall is a lawful assembly vested with legal powers.

In 1775 the livery met in Common Hall and warned the King against the policy pursued by his Ministers towards America. Wilkes was then Mayor, and claimed the right of presenting the address to the King on his throne. In 1781 they again urged the King to put an end to the war. Not being allowed to present this to the King on the throne, they met again to attack the Ministry, which shortly after resigned. In 1795 they met to ask for a speedy peace with France. Again in 1797 they drew up an address to the

King demanding the dismissal of his Ministers, but were not allowed to present it. The same contest continued in 1809 and 1810, when they took up the case of Sir Francis Burdett. In 1812 they presented an address to the Prince Regent, and again in 1816. On the accession of William IV in 1830, they passed an address in favour of parliamentary reform, but it was not presented. Again in 1832 they passed an address encouraging the King to secure the passing of the Reform Bill over the opposition of the Lords by the creation of peerages. The Bill, as it ultimately became law on June 7, 1832, contained provisions saving the franchise of the livery. The City was greatly pleased with the passing of the Bill, and in 1841 Lord John Russell was returned as one of the members for the City of London. He continued to be so returned, generally at the head of the poll, until his acceptance of a peerage ended his membership of the Commons.

We have now arrived at a time when I can speak from my own personal knowledge. Born in the heart of the City, I was familiar from early childhood with events that stirred the citizens, and I recollect well the contested elections of that day. The brief summary I have given of the acts of the livery, which are stated in full detail in Dr. Sharpe's work, serves to show that neither the frowns of the King nor the thunders of either or both of the Houses of Parliament could turn them back from their resolute determination to maintain the liberties of the people; and I venture to think, therefore, that their record is such as to justify the demand for the retention of the livery vote.

It will have been noticed that between the Common Council, which is returned by the several wards into which the City is divided, and the Common Hall, which is an assembly of the livery of the several companies, there has always been a friendly rivalry, which has sometimes been

accentuated into a controversy. It cannot be denied that the Common Council has antiquity on its side, as well as the technical claim that it is the corporate body of the citizens of London. It could not be otherwise; for it is obvious that the division of this famous square mile into wards must have preceded the creation of an assembly composed of the members of the various trade guilds.

This is proved by the manuscript in the Chapter Library of St. Paul's Cathedral, which is reproduced in facsimile in the monumental work on the History of the Guildhall by our former secretary, Mr. J. E. Price. It gives us a list of the wards of the City as they existed early in the 12th century. Some of the wards are described by the names of the aldermen who represented them, or perhaps of the principal owners of the site; others by the buildings they contained, as the *Warda Fori*—the ward of the forum or market-place—since known as the Ward of Chepe, and the Ward of *Alegate*, since known as Aldgate. In this connection I have had much pleasure in reading a little work by a gentleman who was recently our secretary, Mr. Knight, on Cordwainer Ward, which is believed to be the "*Warda Liuredi*" of the manuscript, after the name of Liured, probably alderman of the ward. It indicates the early custom of the men of one trade associating in one place—the workers in Cordovan leather assembling to carry on their business in Cordwainer Ward, and the common hall or college of their guild being erected there or close by. Sir Walter Scott tells a story of a Cordinare, who was sentenced in 1561 to be hanged for playing Robin Hood, to the scandal of the precisians of Edinburgh, but was rescued by the craftsmen of that city.

Mr. Knight's book shows how much of interest there may be in the records of the various wards of our ancient City, and leads to the suggestion whether the Council might

not arrange, with the co-operation of the aldermen, deputies, and members of the Common Council for the several wards, to obtain from the ward clerks or other competent persons transcripts of such of those records as are worthy of publication, and to enshrine them in our transactions. We have done much in that way for the livery companies. Might we not now do something for the wards?

I pass to another subject which caused grave anxiety for a time to London archæologists—the proposal to occupy the British Museum by some of the multitudinous departments of Government that have originated out of the war, and will, it is to be hoped, terminate with it. A deputation to the Prime Minister was organised, but was rendered unnecessary by the withdrawal of a proposal that was indefensible from every point of view and ought never to have been made. Indeed, my learned friend Mr. Minet has pointed out that it was illegal; for DORA, as the Defence of the Realm Act is affectionately called, contains an express provision that the Government shall not commandeer the sites of ancient monuments or places of archæological interest.

Another matter that concerns us is the private Bill for destroying the Church of St. Olaf or Olave, Southwark. It seems always a pity that any church should be demolished; and where the church is an ancient one, or one beautiful for its architecture, or especially venerable for its associations, the destruction amounts to a scandal, and would be earnestly deprecated by us. St. Olaf's Church is not ancient. It was built in 1739 from the designs of H. Flitcraft, the architect of St. Giles's-in-the-Fields, and had to be nearly rebuilt after a fire in 1843—neither of them very good times for church architecture. It has a sword rest dated 1674, which is a relic of the previous church. But it stands where a church was standing in the year 1088, which was the chief of the five

churches in London dedicated to St. Olaf, of which only two now remain. Whether the dedication is in honour of the breaking down of London Bridge in 1009, or of St. Olaf's wresting London from the Danes in 1014 (as my friend Sir Henry Howarth thinks), or of his acting as Knut's ally against the English in 1016, I will not attempt to determine, nor whether St. Magnus' Church in London Bridge was dedicated in honour of the son of Olaf. It is said that miraculous cures have been worked at St. Olaf's, through the virtues of the saint. However that may be, the resolution of the London County Council to petition against the Bill is well justified. We wish them success in their efforts, if they cannot save the church, to mitigate the loss of it to London. It is some satisfaction to know that clauses are to be put in the Bill preserving a suitable record of the church, and ensuring an investigation of the site before the foundations of any new buildings are laid on it. I hope that the name "Tooley Street"—which by the elision of the "s" represents St. Olaf, just as St. Anthony is represented by the same elision in the Tantony pig, and St. Etheldreda by the word "tawdry"—may still be continued.

I congratulate you on the progress our Society has made during the past year, under so many discouragements, and I wish every prosperity for it and for our "joyous City, whose antiquity is of ancient days" (Isaiah xxiii, 7).