

THE ANNUAL MEETING, 1925,
 BY
 THE PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

To my great disappointment, my health did not allow of my attending this meeting. I ask the Editor's hospitality for the few words that I would have said if I had been there.

It was the 70th anniversary of the Society's foundation. Ten years ago I gave a brief summary of its origin and history, which I need not now repeat. These ten years have been eventful years for archaeologists. They have shown the horrors of war in a new light. Buildings that we have venerated not less for their architectural beauty than for their historical associations, libraries that have for centuries been stores of learning and founts of inspiration to scholars, have been ruthlessly destroyed, without even the poor pretence of military necessity or any motive except a deadly hatred of civilization and of beauty. Plans were laid for the destruction by assaults from the air of London's Cathedral, its museums, its galleries of art, its fine buildings of every kind. Fortunately, effectual measures were taken to protect them, and those plans were defeated, but sufficient mischief was done to show what the fiendish intensity of the war spirit is capable of. Slowly we have travelled back to peace, and to the continuance of that study of the past which is the main purpose for which our Society was established.

Where could we find a better field for that study than in London and Middlesex? the continuous history, the growing importance, the enticing beauty of London give it a permanent charm.* We need not dwell on the Palæo-

* Since I wrote this, I have been pleased to find a similar opinion in the County Memorial Lecture of W. Arthur Kestö, delivered 26th March, 1925. He says: "We who spend our lives in London . . . live on the roof of a vast repository of

lithic flints of Gray's Inn Lane, or the extinct animals of Charing Cross, for these finds are themselves ancient history. Evidence of Neolithic occupation is given by a bowl from Mortlake in the British Museum and by one from Putney in the Royal Scottish Museum which are figured and described by Mr. Curle in the *Antiquaries Journal* for April, 1924, pp. 149-150. There are those who doubt whether London was a place of importance in Celtic times. Mr. Lethaby in his recently published work on Londinium asks for the publication of an authentic list of Celtic finds and his Reviewer in the same *Journal*, p. 185, thinks that when that list is published it will be an exceedingly scanty one.

So we come to Roman times:—and here the members of our Society have done admirable work. Our valued member, Mr. W. Charles Edwards, has kept watch over the deep diggings in Cornhill, which have been required in order to procure a stable foundation for heavy buildings there in the place of lighter houses that have been pulled down, and has been rewarded by the discovery of remains of Roman wall. Our honorary member, Dr. Philip Norman, has recorded these discoveries. As Mr. Page has well said (*Antiquaries Journal*, iv. 429) “London is the city of the two hills—Cornhill and Ludgate Hill—formed by the Walbrook trench which cut between them.” For the first information to London antiquaries of another most interesting discovery relating to Roman London we are indebted to Dr. William Martin in our *Transactions*, for 1923,† where he draws

historical documents, in which the story of the Thames valley and of the pre-historic occupants of that valley, is to be with a wealth of detail our river has served as historian. . . . At an early period the valley stood 100 feet below its present level . . . still higher up there are other defects, but we need not go beyond those of the 100 feet terrace. . . . It is not necessary to take up the story of man as far back, it is enough to make the acquaintance of the pre-Londoner at the close of the ice-age, some 10,000 years ago I estimate that the tribe or tribes which hunted over the site of London did not number more than eighty or a hundred at most. Now, on the site where a handful of human beings scraped a scanty living, live just eight millions of people” (see pp. 28-46).

† See vol. iv, p. 375 and vol. v, part 1.

attention to a gold medallion found (with other treasures) in September, 1922 at Beauvais, near Arras in France, bearing on the obverse the effigy of the Emperor Constantius Chlorus, and on the reverse a design representing the welcome that London gave to him on his decisive victory in A.D. 296. The proud inscription describes him as Restorer of the Eternal Light. "Redditor Lucis Aeternae." Mr. Edwards comments further upon this subject on page 61 of our *Transactions* for 1924.

London possesses evidence of the permanence of its institutions in the charter of William I preserved at Guildhall in its corporate organisation, in its wards with their aldermen, deputies, ward-motes, and ward clerks, and in its Companies who retain their ancient privileges. In the study of these, our Society has a fruitful field of labour, which it has not neglected, as the report of the Council shows.

I will now refer to some indications, outside our own Society, of the increasing hold which archæology is taking on the public mind. I have quoted the *Antiquaries Journal* several times, and I desire to congratulate the Director of the Society of Antiquaries and other members of the Editing Committee on the excellent work they have done. Five years ago, that Society resolved to terminate the Second Series of its *Proceedings* and to substitute for it a quarterly Journal which should contain the papers read (other than those reserved for *Archæologia*) in a more convenient form, and should also contain notes of matters interesting to antiquaries, and reviews of antiquarian books. This resolution has been carried into effect with great success.

Another event of importance has been the establishment of the London Museum and its installation in a noble (if somewhat inadequate) mansion near St. James's Palace.

A third noteworthy event is the undertaking by the London County Council of a Survey of London under the joint editorship of the late Sir James Bird, for the Council, and

Dr. Philip Norman for the Survey Committee. Of this, nine volumes have already been issued.

The Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments has also published an inventory of Westminster Abbey.

I do not refer to these undertakings as rivals to our modest Society, but rather as powerful allies. Any one who visits the Museums or examines these monumental and finely illustrated works may well wish for those privileges of inspection, viva voce description and discussion, which our Society affords him, and thus many may be disposed to offer themselves for membership.

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