

THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—Unlike my distinguished predecessor, I am no interpreter of prehistoric monuments, and am therefore unable to pursue the subject he treated with so much learning and skill at the last meeting of our Association.

Yet the theme of the brief address I have now the honour to give is kindred to his, since it has to do with the *preservation* of such and later monuments. The threatened destruction of many of these, and the “violation of Nature” (as Mr. Gladstone calls it) in all directions, cannot fail to remind us that a great wave of vandalism is sweeping over the land which our boasted civilization appears inadequate to resist. Can we doubt this when we read almost daily of some fresh outrage and defacement? It is fortunate that the Press is alive to the mischief going on, and generally employs its great influence in the right direction. Not many weeks after the Ashburton meeting, at which, if I mistake not, the truly conservative statement was endorsed that Dartmoor wanted nothing more than to be let alone, a road contractor, taking an entirely different view of the matter, and having a single eye to his own business—a very Cyclops—deliberately destroyed a stone avenue, and partially demolished a hut circle, on Sberberton Common. Representations were made to the local authority, and it is understood that subsequently the surveyor was instructed to see that the roads under his inspection were not in future to be repaired with the remains of ancient monuments.

The indignation aroused by this outrageous proceeding was by no means confined to the county, and a leading London journal, commenting upon it, forcibly remarks: “Such an act of brutal barbarism is not to be atoned for by an expression of regret and a promise not to do it

again, or we shall next hear that Stonehenge, which must be a tempting object to a road contractor, and would cover a lot of highway if broken up small, has been carted off under the authority of some local body, who will be ready with a handsome apology when their little mistake is pointed out to them. The destruction of these priceless, because irreplaceable, relics is not merely the disgrace of rural ignoramuses; it is a disgrace to the country in which such a thing could, by any possibility, happen, and more directly still to the Legislature by whose laws that possibility was created."

That was written before *Stonehenge, Limited*, was suggested, it would be premature to say *floated*!

"It is said," remarks the *Financial News*, "that the whole circle is to be removed from its present position, just below the highest point on Salisbury Plain, to some more convenient place, if not to the Metropolis itself, and there used as an attraction for holiday-seekers; but this scheme, seeing that the resources of modern engineering would be taxed to move some of the huge trilithons which make up the circle, is treated with derision. Another and alternative scheme which is said to be hatching is that the whole thing is to be acquired in its present position on the Plain, and run there as a sort of antiquarian show."

A very different speculation this from that which for many centuries has occupied the minds of antiquarians and philosophers, including the perhaps not very subtle intellect of that early Fellow of the Royal Society, Samuel Pepys, of diary fame, who 230 years ago visited the mystic circles, and exclaimed in awe and fright, "Prodigious! God knows what their *use* was! It is hard to say, but yet *may* be told." And might he not have added, "To what *base* uses may they not yet be put"? It may never come to that; but the mere fact that such a scheme has been coolly suggested for Stonehenge should have the effect of increasing exertions for the preservation of the natural beauty and antiquities of Dartmoor.

We know what a road contractor has done on a comparatively small scale, and that a hint has been given of a Vic Tor Monument, sixty feet high, with winding stairs to the top, as a suitable memorial of the Queen's Diamond Reign; also of a wayside cross with a Victorian crown on the top of it. One shudders, therefore, at the thought of what changes a *Dartmoor, Limited* (or unlimited), might bring about, in generally making rough places smooth (a difficult task,

certainly, but still a great deal can be done with asphalt); giving an up-to-date character to the summits of some of the tors by the erection of small but useful and ornate houses, chiefly for inspiring refreshment; Brent Tor treated differently, and with a switchback railway on its sunny slope! And when all this is done, the ghost of Carrington will not know the scene of his poem.

May this dream—although it may have its warning—never be fulfilled; and especially may no revived race of Gubbinses ever lay hands on the loveliest of the tors—crowned with its thirteenth-century parish church, guarded by the archangel, and wrapped in the clouds of heaven.

A touching letter appeared in the *Western Morning News* a few months ago, written by a gentleman who was Curate-in-Charge of Lydford sixty-four years ago, and who is now, I am informed, the oldest clergyman in Cornwall. He says: "Never have I ceased to love the place and people—Dartmoor—with its rugged hills and grand amphitheatre of tors, into which when I entered I felt impelled to uncover my head as in a cathedral."

May the shadows of those tors never be less or more than they are now.

We cannot, I think, fail to recognise the respect for Nature shown by the old moorland builders. Their churches, whether at Widdecombe, Walkhampton, Brent Tor, or elsewhere, never mar the beauty of the landscape, but, on the contrary, enhance it, and no artist would rather be without them. And even the old farm buildings, with their thick and low granite walls, steep thatched roofs, and rudely-shaped chimneys, are in harmony with the scene around. There are not very many of them left, but they are very picturesque. Can we say the same of what is called "the Capital of the Moor"—Prince Town? I do not mean Her Majesty's prison, which from a pictorial point of view or any other aspect would be anywhere a melancholy blot on Nature; nor do I allude to the outlying houses a little away from the town (which town, fortunately, you can soon get out of), commanding a more sylvan scene, but to the long street leading up to, or culminating, as it were, in the prison—the shops, the church, the chapel, all extremely modern and unæsthetic, "built for use and not for ornament," as the saying is, but with fronts and profiles having a more or less dejected and dissatisfied appearance, as though the efforts to be useful had not been very successful, at any rate, in the direction of keeping the wet out, in spite of great coats of stucco and tar.

The venerable statesman before mentioned applied the epithet, *a violation of Nature*, to a brand-new watering-place, with a long name, in North Wales, on the occasion of a recent visit to the place, and after receiving a flattering address from the inhabitants. Would he withhold it from Prince Town if on a visit to it? I think not. It is impossible not to say so with every desire to do justice to a place which is very health-restoring, and where one can rest and be thankful for, at any rate, *some things*.

It may be hoped that the proposed acquisition of the Forest of Dartmoor, or what remains of it, by the County Council is gradually approaching a practical stage. With that acquisition not only would the preservation of pre-historic remains be guaranteed, but the repetition of such buildings as I have alluded to—which are fatal blots on moorland scenery, but which may be expected to follow all new enclosures—would be at once arrested. I am sure it is the desire of this Association that Devon should have her Forest of Dartmoor whilst there is beauty to preserve, and before it is *too late*.

The rescue or provision of forests, parks, and open spaces for the full enjoyment and benefit of the people is happily being recognised as a necessity of modern times and conditions, and as constituting almost the only compensation for the wide-spreading encroachments of the great towns on the country, and the consequent defacement in many instances of Nature.

In England such public grounds are often too limited in extent to be of much use or ornament, and in some cases are mere patches. In France and Germany they are usually on a broader scale, and one town in Germany—Hanover—has a finely-wooded park sixteen miles in length; whilst the largest public park in the world is, as might indeed be expected, in the United States, the Yellowstone National Park being sixty-five miles long and fifty-five miles wide. Like Dartmoor, it has grand geological features and comparatively few trees; but no doubt there, as well as on the Devon moors, before long, forestry will supplement the work of Nature—almost the only exception to be allowed, let us hope, to the *let alone* rule.

What sources of enjoyment are to be found in these greater altitudes! “The feeding of the rivers,” Mr. Ruskin says, “and the purifying of the winds are the least of the services appointed to the hills. To fill the thirst of the human heart with the beauty of God’s working, to startle

its lethargy with the deep and pure agitation of astonishment, are their higher missions. They are a great and noble architecture; first giving shelter, comfort, and rest; and covered also with mighty sculpture and painted legend."

The pity is such thoughts and lessons are too often entirely lost on those who build their houses amidst such surroundings, and also on the makers of new towns. The same eloquent writer has told us that "art is the expression of man's delight in God's work"; yet the very first step in the creation, for instance, of some new watering-place or some detached house on our western coast has been, and is, a deliberate violation of Nature by the cutting away of the noblest crags and the finest portions of cliffs for the purpose of building ignoble walls, because, forsooth, it is easier to do a great wrong by removing the surface of the cliff (with all its lovely colouring, as at the Lizard) than, without injury, to obtain the stone from some neighbouring quarry.

The appeal comes from all parts of Devon and Cornwall that something may be done to avert the wanton destruction of our unrivalled coast scenery in both counties—the breaking up of those natural charms which constitute the chief attraction of at least "the rocky land of strangers." (Nordon.)

Surely the loud voice of intelligent public opinion will be heard—above the dense mass of indifferentism—in favour of the preservation of the natural beauty of our charming western country.

The fine headland opposite Tintagel Castle has fortunately been secured this year by the National Trust, and is now the property of the nation for ever; but how to preserve stretches of coast, equally beautiful if of less legendary interest, miles in extent, is the more difficult problem to solve. But even Parliament, which has this year recommitted to a Select Committee a Scotch Railway Bill on the ground *that the railway would ruin the beauty of the country through which it passed*, may possibly not be appealed to in vain. That business-like motion was carried by a good majority in a full House: let it not therefore be said that such a topic as I have chosen for this address is merely a "sentimental question," not to be seriously entertained in this practical and progressive age—progressive, no doubt, in almost everything relating to invention, but leaving the past unrivalled in its artistic records.

Do we quite realize the high state of civilization which

prevailed in Britain during the Roman occupation, as attested by the marvellous finds at Silchester, at Brading, in London, at Bath, and even nearer our own borders?

There have been various relapses to barbarism since then. What would the Roman vine-grower, whose beautiful villa (rich in mosaic pavements and inlaid walls) overlooked the Bay of Brading in the Isle of Wight, say could he visit one of the newest towns of this advanced and progressive age on our western shore—built without any regard to the fine scenery around, devoid of grace and beauty in form and colour, and stamped with all the shams of modern construction—built, mark you, to attract strangers, and yet growing up ugly as though nobody cared—what would he be likely to say? “Where are we? what is the exact time of the world’s history? *Surely* this is a relapse to barbarism. Let me forget: bring me a goblet of my own wine, something more potent than your nineteenth-century British wines.”

And then he might add—one cannot tell; who knows *what* a man may say in an intemperate mood?—but perhaps his final sentence would be, “Hang the architect!” Upon which it will be desirable to inform him that he is conspicuous by his absence; and perhaps to repeat the compliment once paid to the profession regarding a tower of old, commenced amidst considerable misunderstanding, and designed to be carried up to a most presumptuous height—“There was no architect, hence the confusion.”

The Anglo-Roman would look with great surprise at the iron road which had superseded not only MacAdam’s road, but the Roman Way, which he would know something about; and during his rapid progress along the line his eye would detect many blemishes on the face of Nature. “What,” he will ask, “are those hideous screens on stilts planted in every field and wood” (not, I think, yet in South Devon) “and what proclamations are inscribed on them?” It will be necessary to explain that these hoardings are advertising *media*—blessings in disguise, the disguise of ugliness—a boon, for instance, in the way of rent to depressed agriculturists; a restorer of life and activity to torpid humanity; a sovereign remedy—I mean a guinea remedy (that being its reputed worth)—for all the maladies that flesh is not only heir to but the possessor of. What a pity that so much happiness and freedom from suffering could not have been conferred on mankind without such a distressingly vulgar disfigurement of beautiful scenery! The more attractive and interesting a place is, the more

likely is it to be spotted and desecrated by the advertising genius; and I am informed that between Bideford and Westward Ho—almost classic ground—there is a continuous line of such unpicturesque advertisements (even covering in some places the rocks) as startled and shocked the ghost of our civilized Anglo-Roman friend.

“God made the country, man the town.” It may be permitted man to build up (if he can) great towns in stateliness and beauty, but let him keep the country inviolate, everywhere there reverencing and respecting Nature; not advertising nostrums on field gates and big boards; not roofing cottage homes and farm buildings with corrugated iron instead of thatch; and not robbing stone walls of ivy and moss, and covering them with that other abomination, stucco. Perhaps the most deplorable of these modern introductions—from the point of view we are considering—is corrugated iron, which has not only largely superseded thatch, but also the old Devonshire mode of covering buildings with small slates and then interlocking them, as it were, in the valley gutters, rendering lead there unnecessary. This is now a lost art. Fine specimens of this kind of slating may be seen on Mr. Mildmay's buildings about Flete and Mothecombe, and on Mr. Tremayne's grand old Elizabethan house and out-buildings at Sydenham, where nothing can be more lovely in colour than the sheen of yellow and orange lichens on the old slates.

I fear the rustic mind is often not very appreciative of the beautiful it has so long enjoyed, but craves rather for what is new and worthless, town-like and shoddy, and what is really not wanted in the country. There is a quaint old house at Tintagel, the last of the survivals of the sixteenth century. It is not what it was, but there it still stands. It was formerly full of beautiful colour, running through all gradations, from a warm buff into purple and greenish grey; and numberless artists came to sketch and paint it, much to the surprise of the proprietor, who was inclined to pity the taste of the poor fellows who saw anything in it to admire or make a picture of. One artist came again and again, and was expected once more. So the owner determined on having the old house “done up,” and made decent to look at, and especially to give extra satisfaction to the visitor. He had the open joints of the masonry—which Prout, the greatest delineator of old buildings, so delighted in, and in which here and there the stone-crop and mosses grew—neatly filled up with mortar and flush pointed, and

then the walls, and I think the roof, *whitewashed all over*. Needless to say that when the artist came and saw the transformation he was almost broken-hearted. He left, it is said, for the Lizard (hoping not to find the rocks whitewashed), never again to return to Tintagel.

The poor African parts with his ivory (or *used* to part with it—he is getting better informed now) for a string of bright beads or a few brass buttons, or (crowning bargain) a large striped umbrella; but it is left to civilized communities to sometimes barter away, for little worth having, the beauties of Nature, or what is historic and precious in art.

It must be admitted that there is an absolute necessity now for the defacement of Nature in the manufacturing districts, and that there is a certain, if inadequate, compensation for a pandemonium of fire and smoke in the employment of large masses of the population; but there is no excuse for this defacement in Devon, which has almost ceased to be a manufacturing county, although when Daniel Defoe visited it in 1723 Exeter had the largest serge market in England next to Leeds. But there were no mighty steam engines and tall chimneys then, and the beauty of the city, which it still retains, instead of being impaired by its once flourishing manufactures, was probably largely due to them. Devon, now with few manufactures, though having its large shipping and commercial interests, should be most jealous to guard and preserve from injury its natural beauty as its great possession and glory, not only for the delight of its own inhabitants, but for the attraction of those who desire to be free from the foul rivers and the masses of smoke and darkness overhanging so many towns in the North and Midlands, and to enjoy here in Devon—to quote once more Mr. Gladstone's words—"the light and air God has given us just in the way He gave them."

The century approaching its close has seen the marvellous development of the great towns of England and Scotland in area and population, and immense have been the strides taken, for example, by Liverpool, Edinburgh, Birmingham, in nobility of building; but of nearly every one of the great towns it may be truly said, I think, that, representing the progress and enterprise of the district, and reflecting the complex conditions of modern civilization, whilst there may be a magnificent centre, the vast surroundings are motley.

Of these great absorptions of the country into the towns

—for better or for worse, for weal or for woe—the results are no doubt often eminently important and satisfactory; whilst in other and numerous instances, and especially from an artistic and æsthetic point of view, the changes are of the most melancholy and disappointing kind. There are few landmarks and milestones to indicate the various transitions. Here and there one sees a milestone in the middle of a town, which when fixed was a mile or two out of it; and now and then in the great labyrinth of London we come upon a directing-post which tells us we are so many “miles from where Hicks’s Hall formerly stood,” which is not altogether conclusive information as to where *we* are standing, and which only makes us wonder who Hicks was, that he should be so immortalized, and what his Hall was like. Hudibras does, however, inform us that—

“An old dull sot, who had told the clock
For many years at Bridewel-Dock,
At Westminster, and Hiekes-Hall,
And Hiccius-Dockius play’d in all.”

The diligent and even the casual observer of the growth of some of our great towns during the last fifty years will not need to be reminded by a milestone of Hicks’s type of the changes on the face of Nature which have taken place within that period. He will call to mind large tracts of land with not much beauty, it is true, to preserve—flat and swampy sites in a transitional condition indicative of impending changes—hovering for a few years between cultivation and neglect, or between market-gardening and brick-making, preparatory to the inevitable “building operations,” the said operations resulting, we may be sure, in giving no delight to anybody, except a few useful professional men who probably have been called in to keep things a little straight, and eventually, when the houses are occupied, affording employment and melancholy satisfaction to the disciples of Æsculapius.

But he will remember other and brighter transformations—beautiful sites which have been reverently dealt with, where every graceful tree which could be spared has been, where the laying out of the roads and building plots has been subordinated to the preservation of the natural advantages of the place, and where all the houses are of a picturesque character and go well with the pleasant surroundings. There is a well-known charming suburban estate answering to this description not very distant from the Metropolis; and bordering on a few of the great provincial towns may be noticed

estates—some humbler, some more important—showing much the same regard for Nature and kindred artistic feeling.

The growth, however, of great towns is not generally after this manner; more often it involves, not only the defacement, but really the obliteration of Nature, the abandonment of every consideration of beauty whatever. You may have observed in passing through the country the gradual disintegration and destruction of some finely-wooded and beautiful domain, the thinning out of noble trees of centuries' growth, until they are all gone, and then the arising of an unsightly suburb of densely-packed houses, without gardens or open spaces, and the appearance from a distance of a vast and unrelieved wilderness of pantiles and plaster.

A Paradise lost, never to be regained.

Happy are those who are not in danger of such revolutionary and unlovely changes as these, who have not lost their Paradise, and who dwell amongst scenes of *unspoiled* beauty—

“ Where peaceful rivers, soft and slow,
Amid the verdant landscape flow.”

The interest of many towns, large and small, is centred in their antiquity. There may be a modern revival, as in Rome, but still their chief glory is connected with the past, and this constitutes a very honourable boast; whereas there is nothing to be proud of in mere expansion, or magnitude, of quantity apart from quality. The preservation of the ancient buildings of historic towns is, it is almost needless to say, of paramount importance. At Chester there are laws—as unalterable as other codes so oft quoted, but yet so invaluable as early precedents—affecting the maintenance of the good old building customs of that city; and who does not appreciate the charm of the picturesque Chester Rows, without which the town would lose half its interest and attraction? Might not similar laws be usefully adopted for the preservation of the ancient buildings of such towns as Exeter, Totnes, and Dartmouth? At any rate, there would be nothing impracticable in the requirement that the *style* of such structures should be adopted in new buildings, just as in greater towns it is recognised that there can be no dignity in modern street architecture in endless diversity, and without the adherence to a given design throughout, or through one group.

It was very gratifying to read, a few weeks ago, that the

Totnes Commercial Association "recommended as worthy of consideration:—the preservation and protection of the style and character of ancient houses of the town and district." There is a good conservative ring about that resolution, and would that a similar one had been adopted by many towns, including Totnes, at the beginning instead of the end of the nineteenth century; but better late than never, and opportunities of carrying it out will no doubt occur in the twentieth century.

Totnes is our "Devonshire Chester," and has much left of fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth century work. May it long continue, marking the importance of the town at those periods, and the value attached then to the beautiful as well as the useful. We have heard occasionally (though not quite lately) with astonishment, no less than regret, rumours of the contemplated destruction of the Butterwalk at Dartmouth, that grand old example of Jacobian street architecture; and we have asked, "Can it be possible?" because it seems almost incredible that the town should entertain the idea of sacrificing a building so handsome and full of interest, so attractive to strangers in general and artists in particular, and the only important memorial, in stone and carving, left of Dartmouth in its palmy days. What a blank it would leave, and what would the town be without it?

Granted, there are many persons (though fewer than there were) who think nothing of old buildings or their history, or anything of the kind, and who would walk through Dartmouth and leave it without even looking at the Butterwalk: like the tourist who lately visited Hildesheim, that town of seven gates and wonderfully beautiful half-timbered houses, and who after listlessly strolling about the streets all the morning, asked the hotel waiter "if there was anything worth seeing in the place?" and on being informed that there was not much besides the houses, the town gates, and the cathedral with its ten altars and bronze doors covered with bas-reliefs, made his way to the railway station, which was much more in his way.

Now, that man, or the other stranger who passed the Butterwalk without looking at it, must have been as destitute of imagination as was the Scotchman of humour who had to undergo a surgical operation before he could see one of Charles Lamb's jokes, but when he saw it he was much surprised and interested.

There is just enough, and only that, left of Old Dartmouth to indicate what an exceedingly quaint and picturesque town

it must have been two centuries ago, and to induce the wish that we could see it as it then was, in all the glory of its carved and gabled houses; and if the Totnes resolution had been then adopted and ever after enforced there, what a charming and unique place it would still be!

There is nothing, as a rule, to be gained, but everything to be lost, by modernizing the aspect of country towns and villages by the introduction of the stateliness and artificiality of great cities, the unfitness of which is always very apparent and very unpleasing to the eye.

My subject does not extend to other important considerations connected with towns. Whether a town is picturesque or ugly, large or small, sanitation is now an absolute necessity, and a very costly necessity, and happy is the community which has chosen a good *scheme*, which is perhaps not altogether a fortunate word, as it is just a little suggestive of uncertainty. It is a progressive science, unlike the laws of our old friends the Medes, and as variable in its application as the four winds, scattering broadcast a waste-paper basketful of new patents every twenty-four hours.

Let us hope there is no truth in the rumour that the destruction of the famous bridge of Bideford is in contemplation; for a more vandal act could not be perpetrated; and it is very hard to believe that any Bideford man could be a party to the *obliteration* of his town in all that is most attractive and interesting. It is Charles Kingsley, President of this Association at the Bideford meeting in 1871, who says in *Westward Ho*:

“Bideford Bridge is the very soul around which the town, as a body, has organized itself; and as Edinburgh is Edinburgh by virtue of its castle, Rome Rome by virtue of its capitol, and Egypt Egypt by virtue of its pyramids, so is Bideford Bideford by virtue of its bridge. But all do not know the occult powers which have advanced and animated the said wondrous bridge for now 500 years, and made it the chief wonder, according to Prince and Fuller, of this fair land of Devon: being first an inspired bridge, a soul-saving bridge, an alms-giving bridge, an educational bridge, a sentient bridge, and last, but not least, a dinner-giving bridge. And all do not know how Bishop Grandisson, of Exeter, proclaimed throughout his diocese indulgences, benedictions, and ‘participation in all spiritual blessings for ever’ to all who would promote the bridging of that dangerous ford; and so, consulting alike the interests of their souls and of their bodies ‘make the best of both worlds.’”

This is the prelate who built the beautiful and perfect nave of Exeter Cathedral, completed about the year 1350, and to whom we are also, no doubt, largely indebted for the noblest bridge in the western counties. Not that the bridge now is exactly as it was in Bishop Grandisson's time. Would it were! It has undergone various so-called "improvements" since then. Now, as then, it has its twenty-four massive arches; but long ago it lost its chapel and spire on one side, its bell-tower and gateway on the other side, and over the central pier, the shaft and capital bearing high the figure of the Blessed Virgin with the Divine Child. What a marvel of beauty Bideford Bridge must have been four centuries ago! The parapets have undergone at least two alterations in comparatively modern times, and in the last changes, which took place, I think, about thirty years ago, when the over-hanging footways were formed, the quaint V-shaped recesses, which we still see in a few remaining old Devonshire bridges, were entirely done away with here.

But Bideford Bridge still retains its noble arches and piers, and the wonderful interest attaching to a long and unrivalled history, and surely the town will not part with such a great possession.

From Newton Abbot, and Liskeard in the adjoining county, the cry comes, "Down with it! down with it! Why cumbereth it the ground?" And not unlikely, when twelve months hence we tell the towers thereof, we may find one of them missing.

Now, Newton Abbot is an eminently respectable, modernly stuccoed town, and if it is slightly uninteresting it is because it seems to want maturity (to use a crusty port-wine phrase), the maturity which old buildings always give a town. No one goes there in search of the picturesque; there are no street vistas sufficiently attractive for the photographer; no Proutesque bits for the artist; nothing to remind one of the past except a solitary and venerable tower, which marks almost the first stage in the adventures of a Dutch prince in search of a crown, the success of which adventures, I sometimes fancy, must have rather surprised him, and induced him to laugh in his capacious sleeve. But I should have thought that Newton Abbot would have made much of this one important historical incident—have had its tulip day, its tulip garlands around the old tower, and that the day would have been religiously kept in all the chapels and some of the churches of the town.

But St. Leonard's Tower had a prior history, and was between two and three centuries old when the Dutch prince landed at Torbay; and the pity is that it ever lost the interesting little chapel, with its carved fifteenth-century seats, and probably much older font, formerly attached to it; but Newton Abbot cannot afford to lose its venerable tower, which is still useful as well as ornamental, and which possesses, it is said, for I have not heard them, a musical peal of bells.

And what would England be without her church towers and the voices of her church bells—the bells which awake us by their glad peal on the festal morn, which hallow the nuptial rite, which call us to our final rest?

A very warm controversy has been going on in reference to the restoration or destruction of the Norman tower at Liskeard. It has arisen out of a competition which was invited for designs for a new tower. I have not seen any of the drawings submitted, and can therefore give no opinion on the design which it is understood has been adopted.

But it is the proposal to take down—when it has been shown to be unnecessary—a very early tower of almost unique interest which so staggers one.

These towers are something more than “sermons in stones,” valuable as such sermons are; they are History, of the most undoubted kind, in stone. There at Liskeard is the only visible, tangible proof of the connection of that now prosaic town with the Norman period, and yet by a few blows from cruel hands that evidence is to be destroyed, or so weakened by the stones being placed in a museum or in a new building as to be comparatively valueless. It is a treasure which I venture to think should be preserved either in its present condition, subject to some few repairs—in which state it would probably last for ages—or, better still, preserved by complete restoration, of which, in the opinion of a competent architect who has more recently examined it than I have, it is capable. If, however, it can be clearly shown that though restored it would be unfit for a peal of bells, then I would say, Build your new bell-tower attached to some other part of the church, or detached except by an archway or porch; but whatever you do, keep your historic tower.

Llandaff has its ancient tower on the north side of the west end, and its new tower with spire on the south side, and the grouping of the old and the new is satisfactory there, as it could be at Liskeard.

This note on Liskeard tower was written some months ago

in the earlier period of the controversy (in which I have taken no part, knowing I should have something to say on the subject upon this occasion), and I am glad to see that Prebendary Hingeston-Randolph has quite recently proposed a compromise, namely, that the old tower should remain, and a new tower be built on the north side of the church, which very much coincides with my suggestion. The latest and most extraordinary argument used by some who favour the destruction of the Norman tower is that it is not in keeping with the Perpendicular church. This reminds me of Boswell's visit to Iona, and his great disappointment at finding the monuments there so inferior, as he said, to those in Westminster Abbey. Poor, but sacred Iona! And scarcely less sacred should this vestige of Norman Liskeard be.¹

Truly this is an age of destruction rather than preservation; yet, strange to say, the ancient buildings of this country command the greatest admiration and respect from the cultured portion of the most utilitarian and enterprising nation of the world—I mean the American. The people of the great Republic are far ahead of us in many branches of manufacture connected with building, especially in steel and iron, and they have their twenty-storied houses such as we never dream of erecting (and, for that matter, never want), and they have their great and increasingly costly churches; but they have no ancient, historic buildings, and it is beyond the wit of even the cute Yankee to create such buildings. And when they make their pilgrimages to old England, they are lost in wonder and admiration at cathedrals and churches which, beyond their intrinsic architectural beauty, are invested with all the charm and poetry of a history—like that of the Norman tower of Liskeard—occupying nearly half the Christian era. So, too, with a love for English association and literature, they sometimes come to our ancient altars for the marriage rite, as on a recent occasion, when a bridal party crossed the Atlantic to be wedded at Stoke-Pogis, the scene of Gray's immortal *Elegy*, undeterred by its pathetic lines:

“ And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike th' inevitable hour:
The paths of glory lead but to the grave”;

¹ With what interest would the proposed removal of this ancient tower have been regarded by the great Archbishop who has lately passed away, whose knowledge of Christian art was so profound, and whose love for Cornwall was so unfeigned. In a letter I received from him when he was leaving Truro, he said, “*I grieve to leave this land of sacred wonders.*”

and to be reminded that here, after the curfew has tolled
 "the knell of parting day,"

" All the air a solemn stillness holds . . .
 Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
 The moping owl does to the moon complain
 Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
 Molest her ancient solitary reign."

It is said that ninety-five per cent. of all the ancient parish churches of England have now been wholly or partially restored. This has been the work of rather less than sixty years. There had been miscalled restorations somewhat earlier in the century, which do not count, such as the appalling reproduction of the whole of the west front of Lichfield Cathedral in Roman cement. Acknowledged and legitimate, as distinct from spurious, church restoration began about 1840. The work has been too precipitant and quick. Following another movement originating at Oxford, priests and architects rushed at it, without sometimes, perhaps, a prayer *from the latter* (I would not presume to suggest any clerical neglect) for "a right *judgment* in all things" relating to it, and without the money to do the work in the best and truest way. I think the parish parson of the last century had some good ground for *hesitation*. He was perhaps an ecclesiologist of the old school, and conjectured that under the plaster which covered the whole of the interior of his church there probably was beautiful and precious work; but his knowledge of such things was limited, and where was he to get perfectly reliable information and advice? So, like the angel, he feared to *move*, and when the clerk on the lower deck announced with the utmost gravity that there would be a vestry meeting on such and such a day, "to take into consideration what colour the church should be whitewashed," he was an assenting party to the notice—excepting its contradictory framing; and he left the beauty of his church to be unfolded, as he fully anticipated it would be, in the light of the nineteenth century.

It would have been better for many of the parish churches if they had been left whitewashed, yellowwashed, or blue-washed (those were the prevailing colours) until now.

The work of the last sixty years has no doubt been a great one, and there have been a multitude of noble restorations; but the very magnitude, not less than the rapidity, of the work has been its difficulty; for at its commencement—although an interest had been awakened by Britton, Le Keux, Mackensie, Prout, and Pugin—there were compara-

tively few who by special study and research, combined with professional acumen, were known to possess the qualities essential in a safe restorer. Fortunately these few were good men, but the very fact that their latest restorations were their best—the most consistent and conservative, the most regardful of history—indicates the unequal success of their work.

Considering the very large number of restorations which were going on and occupying each mind at one time, it is surprising there are so few weak points in them. The work now is more equally distributed throughout the country, and, looking back a good number of years, I do not think there has been a time when (with a few lamentable exceptions) a finer discrimination in church restoration has been shown than now. This is partly due to the fact that the true principles of restoration are better understood and are insisted upon now for adoption; and partly due also, I believe, to the efforts of a very vigilant and occasionally mistaken and troublesome Society—I mean the one for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings. That Society, I fear, can point to fine old oak roofs which not so very long ago were needlessly taken down (because a little decayed) to make place for common deal roofs; to fifteenth-century seats with carved ends (which never go utterly to decay) which found their way to very secular places; to ancient masonry reworked, hacked, and mutilated beyond identification; and to restored churches which need re-restoration.

There is one thing which cannot be avoided, the renewal of utterly decayed masonry on the exteriors of cathedrals and churches. I dare say many present have lately noticed that a large portion of the stonework of the west front of Exeter Cathedral, including the great west window, is undergoing renewal. I do not presume to question the judgment of the eminent architect, Mr. Pearson, under whose direction this work is being done; the new stone facing is no doubt an absolute necessity, but it is a sad necessity, and it will be many years before the venerable façade recovers its harmonious tone. We enter the nave, Bishop Grandisson's great work. The piers and arches were scraped (a somewhat dangerous, if necessary, process) in Sir Gilbert Scott's restoration; but here and there are portions of masonry—the lower parts of the vaulting shafts, some of the carved corbels under, and parts of the minstrels' gallery—which, with the remains of the original polychrome, were judiciously left *undisturbed*; and to my mind they are the most impressive and interesting fragments of the whole interior. These are

indeed the touches of the vanished hands of those who five centuries and a half ago were engaged on this sublime work. Be assured that the secret of the interest and value of ancient buildings lies in such touches of vanished hands—the very work as left by the old masons and craftsmen.

May I be permitted, in conclusion, to express a desire that the increasing influence of our Association may be employed—by protest, appeal, and in every possible way—against the further violation of Nature and the destruction or mutilation of prehistoric remains and ancient buildings in this county? The conservation of what is so precious is quite consistent with a hearty desire for real progress. Very barbarous things have been done; but there are signs of reaction, indications that the tide of public opinion is setting in strongly in favour of the preservation of places of historic interest and natural beauty; to redeem modern civilization and education from still sadder reflections.