

The following resolution, moved by the President and seconded by Mr. Wilson, was passed unanimously, viz. :—

“That a former Law be revived—that the High Sheriffs of Lancashire and Cheshire and the Mayor of Liverpool be Vice-Presidents *ex officio*.”

Mr. E. F. Evans moved, seconded by Dr. Buxton, and it was unanimously resolved :—

“That in conformity with the practice of other societies meeting in Liverpool, an entrance fee be not charged in future.”

The Election of the Officers and Council was then proceeded with, with the result as shown on page iv.

November 2nd, 1871.

Rev. A. HUME, D.C.L., &c., President, in the Chair.

Mr. John G. Jacob exhibited several newspapers, containing very curious and interesting items, of the dates 1793, 1800, 1801, 1802.

The following

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

Was delivered by the PRESIDENT :—

Another Session has closed, and we have started on a new one. The last had nothing of a special kind to mark it; indeed it was one of the least exciting that we have had. There was nothing special, like the *meeting of the British Association*, which gave an impulse to the two previous Sessions ;—to the former in expectancy, and to the latter in retrospect.

Perhaps this was so much the better, as the quality and usefulness of the Society have thereby been more fairly tested. We can thus know more clearly whether or not it is in a healthy condition. If in a sound state, it is like a healthy body, independent of artificial stimulants; but if in an unsound state, such temporary excitement may delay, but cannot prevent, premature old age.

It is folly and waste of time for a provincial society to imitate the best of the metropolitan ones; to say that no matter shall be produced and no facts stated but those which are original,—or to look to the

world of learning at large when we are only engaged in cultivating a small corner of it. We may, it is true, glance incidentally at what is passing beyond ourselves; and notice our own relation to the good work; but we should never lose sight of our special objects and duties.

A society of this kind has very definite objects and aims of a local character, the value and importance of which cannot be doubted. It should endeavour to keep the lamp of learning burning brightly in our own neighbourhood; to utilise the materials which are at present available, and to prepare others for the future; to cultivate friendly relations with sister societies, established for common or for kindred objects; to give and receive suggestions and publications; and in general to remedy as far as we can the absence of any intellectual organization in our town. I shall, therefore, direct your attention to what may be called our Home policy, and to circumstances connected with our general working; and I feel certain that such practical suggestions will be at once more valuable and more highly appreciated by you, than if I attempted a dissertation either on the general subjects of human inquiry or upon some specific portion of them.

At our last Anniversary, we had completed twenty-three years of continued existence, or two beyond the attainment of our majority; yet some of us remember well our earliest meetings, and the prospects of success or otherwise which were entertained by various friends according to their enthusiasm or capability of judging. We were, I believe, the very first in the provinces to attempt the issue of an annual volume; and with greater or less success the pledge has been fulfilled to the present hour. The plan has been imitated by others, partly no doubt from a feeling of emulation, as well as on grounds of policy, or from a sense of duty. But, whatever may have been the motive, it is gratifying to see a higher class of intellectual investigations, and greater regularity in laying the results before the members at large.

In other respects also, we have done something of which it may be well briefly to remind you. We have accumulated an interesting collection of books,—many of them the Transactions of other societies older or younger,—and a small number of illustrative objects. Our labours have promoted and popularised intellectual research, in a district where manufactures and commerce too frequently exclude literary and scientific subjects from human attention. We have had the gratification of seeing Archæology,—which has been and should ever be a prominent subject with us,—rise from its despised condition in England and other countries, to take its rank as an important branch

of Science; the handmaid to History and General Literature, to Geology and Ethnology. For our own locality, we have thrown upon the surface a large amount of materials which the future Historian of the district, the Genealogist and Topographer, will know how to value. And contemporaneously,—partly we may believe as a cause and partly as an effect,—numerous local treatises have been produced, of a larger and more important kind, for their respective districts, than the memoirs which find a place in our volumes.

Probably we have failed in one respect of late. We have been too much of a Borough Society and too little of a County and District one, narrowing our ground instead of keeping the entire area steadily in view; and the fact has been noticed by some of our best friends. This certainly is not a move in the right direction; and the most successful years of our Society, such as we hope to realise again, were those in which our County friends felt that they were quite in their place in aiding us. We should enlist the talent and concentrate the information procurable, from North Lancashire on the borders of Cumberland and Westmoreland, by Yorkshire on the east, on to South and West Cheshire on the confines of the counties of Stafford and Flint. We must therefore return, in so far as we have diverged from them, to our first great aims; and strive against the narrowness or local centralization which would make us in effect a Society of South-west Lancashire, under a false name.

It is for this reason, as one of several, that I am glad to see a return to our *ex officio* Vice-Presidents; recognising the chief officers of the shires year by year, and enrolling them at the expiration of their respective terms of office, if they testify a wish to be retained on our list of Members in their private capacity.

We should make it a point, too, to illustrate obscure localities, to throw more light upon others which are well known, and to embalm the history of public institutions year by year, especially those that are passing away. The knowledge respecting our own district will thus gradually increase; and inquirers will know where to look with the hope of finding it. Why should we not have every Session a full history of some parish or smaller district, or the illustrated genealogy of some existing or extinct county family, or the biography of an eminent person? All these are comprised in our varied and interesting bill of fare, and each would be readily acceptable to some intellectual appetite. I am persuaded that for such a harvest the labourers are not few, except by comparison with our numerous gross population. There

are many able and willing workers, the majority of whom require only a hint respecting the manner in which they can be most useful,—ready to become earnest colleagues and fellow-labourers. So long as any of these are strangers, there is a want of economy of our intellectual material; and I trust it is only necessary to refer to the fact to secure attention to it by the members of our new Council.

The illustration of a wide area and the keeping of first principles before us is analogous to the division of the business into Sections. By covering the whole field, even in effort and intention, we are kept alive to the question whether certain branches of knowledge are feebly represented or not at all, and we are able from time to time to strengthen the weak links of the chain. But, when subjects of all kinds are grouped together in one promiscuous mass, when instead of specific treatment of selected subjects a Society takes what comes readiest to hand, it practically sinks its demand for quality and stipulates for quantity only. A Society need never be at a loss for papers, if that be all that is required, just as a newspaper is never at a loss for matter; but I am assuming that the best of their kind should be sought for. In such a case, and we have known not a few, the Society sinks to the limits of the knowledge of its two or three active and leading men; and its researches lie say for five sessions in one groove, for three in another, and, perhaps, for four in another,—perpetually changing. It is this want of system which explains the difficulty sometimes felt of getting papers in sufficient number or at the required time; and it is the complaint of the Councils of several Provincial Societies, that in order to produce volumes at all, they are obliged to print papers which should never have been even read.

During the past Session two very important facts have occurred.

First the finances have been placed on a better footing,—as owing mainly to the illness of the late treasurer and his subsequent lamented death, arrears had been allowed to accumulate. A large proportion of these have been called in; and much of the dead wood of the Society has been lopped off. The true principle is never to suffer arrears to accrue; and it is obvious that any gentleman would more readily pay a single subscription for the current Session, than two or three, the volumes representing which he has never seen. As the volume is not sent out to members who are in arrear, at all events they are not entitled to it, the interest awakened by the reception of it is wanting, and when two or three volumes have lapsed, a member is inclined to fancy, erroneously of course, that he had resigned. It is not sufficiently known, or rather

I should say it is too readily forgotten, that resignation is impossible while a member is in arrear. I am persuaded that if ever we or our successors be found in troubled waters it will not be from want either of public sympathy or intellectual material, it will be from some oversight on the subject of finance. I have more than once alluded to this; even in the early years of the Society's existence.

Second, our collections have been put in better order; and will be made interesting and useful to the members. Some of our friends are not aware that we have a Library or objects at all; and others do not know the extent of the former. The three catalogues, as you have learned from the Report, are being posted up and will soon be complete.

On the subject of Members, it may suffice to say that a Society possessing a large geographical area requires for its proper cultivation a large intellectual one also. All men have not the same tastes, nor the same materials for investigation, nor the same opportunities; yet each may possess some knowledge of value, in a greater or less degree. Among 400 or 500 members, there should be a large number of instructors; but it should be borne in mind that more is required than mere numbers. Good men, like good papers, deserve to be selected and sought for, and in some instances this is required. Besides, we have had a good many papers, some of them of great interest and value, from gentlemen who volunteered from without, but who were not enrolled with us. There is reason to believe that auxiliaries of both classes may still be found.

It has been mentioned that we have already completed twenty-three Sessions, and that our twenty-third volume is on the eve of issue. I venture, therefore, to recommend that our next volume,—viz. XXIV, for the Session on which we have now entered,—be the last of the series; and that we begin a third series with Volume XXV. There are many of our members who do not possess the whole of the Second Series, commencing with Volume XIII, and still more who do not possess the earlier volumes. Hence, new members often regard their volumes as somehow forming a broken set, if they do not possess the whole of a series, though of course each volume is complete in itself. The two old series could then be sold to members at moderate prices; and we should get rid opportunely of our accumulating and now somewhat cumbrous stock.

The Report has alluded to the Excursion for the year; and it was very interesting for special reasons. It is a pity that the details of the Excursion are sometimes fixed upon rather hastily; for it may be made,

on the one hand, either merely a day of rustic enjoyment, a holiday with pleasant companions, or, on the other, a day of important special information not easily obtainable otherwise. Within our own limits there is no lack of suitable places to visit,—mines, factories, ancient buildings, ruins, &c.,—the age, the manhood, and the infancy of English life are all within our reach. But on all such occasions if we wish to profit there should be one or two persons responsible for the duty of teaching. Sometimes a formal paper should be read, but often a brief oral lecture is preferable; and besides the fact of seeing objects for ourselves *in situ*, it is wonderful what an amount of light is thrown on our past history and present state by a few even rude drawings. In some societies of the Kingdom, especially those for separate shires, the work is largely done at such excursions, prolonged sometimes over two or more days; and it certainly is a charming way of bringing us into familiar acquaintance with whatever is of value or interest in our own part of the country. There are obvious limits in distance, as the time expended in travelling is just so much taken from the intellectual part of the proceedings; and in like manner the indispensable duty of refection should be brought within the narrowest possible limits.

On more than one occasion I have alluded to the necessity which exists in Liverpool for Education of a higher class, such as Manchester and Durham possess, or even Birmingham; such as Wales has recently vindicated her claim to; and such as in countries of less national importance than England, or in districts far below Lancashire is found, as at St. Andrew's in Scotland, and Galway in Ireland. As population increases and material wealth is multiplied, the want is felt with increasing force; and what is worse still, there are too few intellectual men and these too little united to make any important impression on public opinion. Two important opportunities have been lost, viz., in 1854 and 1870; the second and third occasions on which the British Association for the Advancement of Science visited our town. On the first occasion of its visit, viz., in 1837, there was great popular enthusiasm, but Literature and Science had then scarcely obtained a hearing among the resident population. It was when men's minds had been awakened to the importance of sound learning, when Science in its widest sense was popular, that means should have been adopted for finding it a permanent home. The tide was not taken at the flood; the prestige has been lost; and such an opportunity may be long in returning.

It is true that an attempt was nominally made to collect our *disjecta*

membra ; that the persons forming our various societies and institutions were invited to send deputies for consultation, and that a consultation such as it was took place. But the promoters of the movement seemed incapable of looking beyond the Prospectus of the British Association : they aspired to form a College of Science only, but with an immense number of subdivisions ; while other branches of human study, of at least equal importance, such as Philosophy or the Literature of ancient and modern times, were not for a moment thought of. Instead of beginning at the beginning,—like Owens College, which was at first limited to three primary Professorships and three secondary ones, embracing with more or less completeness the whole area of intellectual research—these gentlemen wished their project, like Adam, to start into adult manhood at once. And they would have had one limb larger than the whole body ; one branch or section of study costing more than that for which a framework for the whole course of education could have been constructed, like the German or Scottish Universities or like the Queen's Colleges in Ireland. As a matter of course, the project collapsed without any further result than a few meetings and much discourse ; so, as on many previous occasions in Liverpool, we have sown the wind and reaped the whirlwind. On the one occasion when all appeared to possess the same general idea and there was no one in opposition, the failure has been unusually complete ; chiefly because the movement had a sectional origin and sectional aims, and because the extravagance of the scale on which the castle was proposed to be built almost invited ridicule. For, Liverpool is not yet London or even Manchester.

But to conclude. I think I am justified in presenting congratulations to the Society on the following grounds :—that a new and better spirit has recently been stirred up among our members,—that there is a visible and appreciable increase of industry and order,—that there is an extended and growing prospect of intellectual support,—and that there is an improved condition of the Society's income and property. And I close with the expression of an earnest hope that when I lay down the sceptre which your kindness has entrusted to me now for the third time, I may be able to introduce my successor in this chair to a Society of which he will have no reason to be ashamed, and in which he may place unqualified confidence.
