

The following Gentlemen were also elected Honorary Members of the Society: Mr. E. L. Stephens, Borough Surveyor; the Rev. C. Boutell.

The REV. J. H. HILL exhibited rubbings of a brass of Sir John de Wantyng, of Wimbish (1347); of a fragment of a brass at Bodiam, Sussex (1360); of a brass in memory of Robert Kervile, Wiggenhall, S. Mary's, Norfolk; and of another in memory of Peter Denot or Devot.

SIR H. L. DRYDEN, Bart., presented to the Society a lithograph of Copplestone Cross, North Devon.

MR. GEORGE COWDELL NEALE read the following paper on

TREASURE TROVE.

I BEG to trespass upon your time this morning whilst I make a few observations on the appropriation of Treasure Trove, a subject which I consider so important as to affect the interests of this and other archæological societies, all local museums, and especially every private collection of antiquities. My few remarks will refer principally to the numismatical department of archæological science.

In the early historic ages of our country, we find that in the absence of peaceful pursuits, the love of conquest and the desire for plunder so occupied the attention of neighbouring nations, that Britain was not likely to, neither did she, escape the scourge of the invader's sword. Conquered and reconquered for many centuries, much of her soil was saturated with the blood of her brave defenders and never-tiring foes. In the presence of, or close proximity to, such enemies, with but a thinly-scattered population, little agricultural development, and less of manufacturing skill, it became a necessity that almost every man should be a warrior, should buckle on the sword and learn the art of war. Although in succeeding ages the invader never landed on our shores in any force to devastate the land and pillage the homes of our ancestors, yet records of wars more cruel, of a civil and intestine character, fill pages of our history with melancholy details of desperate conflicts; as examples, those of the Roses, and of the seventeenth century, stand out most conspicuously. To these frequent sanguinary contests, combined with accidental causes and the absence of public depositories for wealth, the coin collector of the present day is indebted for those interesting relics after which he industriously seeks, and places from time to time in his cabinet, as fresh links in a chain, which he is ever anxious to extend, although he may never be able to complete. The bank of deposit to the soldier and man of wealth, in the troublous times to which we have alluded, was a

secret little chamber in a chimney, an opening in a beam, a crevice in a wall, or more generally a hole in the ground. Before he went forth to the battle-field, he secreted his hoards of silver pennies and groats, his golden nobles and broads; but often the too well directed arrow or pointed spear prevented his return to disinter his hidden wealth, where concealed for centuries it lay, with no other visitant than the spider or the worm—until the pick of the navy, the hammer of the mason, or the saw of the carpenter, unexpectedly struck upon the precious deposits. We think this view we have taken is corroborated by the fact, that the coins of Charles I., and those in circulation during his reign, are so frequently discovered in such places, and in such quantities, as to leave no doubt of their being secreted wealth.

The discovery of these treasures has often given rise to serious dispute, and even litigation. The finder, the owner of the soil, the lord of the manor, and the Crown, have each, I believe, endeavoured to substantiate a claim. A few little difficulties and distinctions, more nice than wise, such as whether the objects were discovered on the surface, or an inch or two below, have rendered decision on these matters somewhat perplexing. But Government has lately instituted such an active inquiry after, and demand upon, relics of antiquity, that we are led to conclude it is supported in its claim by some ancient right, which, like many obsolete laws and customs, more honoured in their breach than in their observance, has not hitherto been rigorously enforced. As archæologists, we naturally and interestedly ask—can this be a right, or is it an assumption? The purchaser of a house concludes that the whole of its materials are his own, *de facto*, as well as *de jure*; and if, during its demolition, any treasure should be discovered, who in equity has so great a claim to it as himself? The proprietor of a Welsh mountain, for example, concludes the mineral wealth it may contain is indisputably his own; and if he be so fortunate as to find in its surface-soil a coin of Edward I., which some attendant was less fortunate to lose, as he escorted his Queen to Carnarvon castle, such by right should be his—to decide otherwise would be making a distinction without a difference. In appropriating these treasure “finds,” Government purchases what it appears to claim, at about their intrinsic or natural value. Every one at all acquainted with ancient coins knows, that in many cases their intrinsic value is not their worth—there is a fictitious price far above this. The value of a coin or medal depends upon its rarity, condition, beauty of execution, or its association with any interesting circumstance, person, or event. Rarity is exemplified in such coins as the gold penny of Henry III.; the petition crown by Simon; the quarter florin of Edward III.; the George noble and rial of Henry VIII., and many others. Condition is estimated according to the legibility of its type, freshness and freedom from abrasion. Beauty of execution

is observed in the coins of Cromwell, which were never in circulation, and during the Protectorate were treasured up as works of art. The five shilling piece of the present reign is a work of such exquisite skill, that a proof realizes five times its metallic value. Under this head we cannot classify, though of recent production, the new bronze coinage. The value of a coin or medal, estimated according to its association with any historic event, is exemplified in the medal which Captain Knight exhibited at the late soirée. Its intrinsic worth is perhaps two shillings, but being associated with the history of a most unfortunate monarch, in times most eventful, it is deservedly and highly prized by its fortunate possessor.

During the last and present generation, the rapid increase of wealth, and the facilities for acquiring knowledge, have naturally been followed by refinement of taste, and a due appreciation of the rare and beautiful. Objects of antiquity of every description have found many admirers, who have become diligent students of their various merits, and of the department of science to which they belong. Ancient coins, as they have been discovered, have found their way into the cabinets of private collectors, where they have been carefully classified and arranged. Many, no doubt, have been melted down; and one-third of those discovered in the present day, from their imperfect condition, deserve no better fate. We are told Government is instituting its present active enquiry after, and demand upon, Treasure Trove, to prevent this destruction: but we cannot accept the plea. Almost every village now has its virtuoso, and every town its jeweller, to whom coins are consigned; and the collector is well acquainted with these depôts of the objects of his cherished pursuit. There is little danger now of coins of value being cast into the melting pot or refiner's crucible. We believe the private collector to be quite as safe a guardian of the objects of antiquity, as museum curators, or government officials. So far as the numismatical department is concerned, the British Museum is little better than a condemned cell; where, most securely kept from the visitor's eye, are objects professedly for "public view." As we are told these are not the days for silver keys to unlock museum doors and government offices, we refrain to apply them. To visit the coin-room of our national museum, we must procure an order, not always easily to be obtained, from some official. A visitor too feels a delicacy in asking to see ten different coins, which perhaps have to be selected from as many different cabinets; however courteous the curator may be, he regards his visit almost as an intrusion. Surely, in this age of iron and glass, when the former can be made of any strength, and the latter of any necessary thickness, and of crystal purity, coins need not be exhibited in opaque cabinets. To dispute the value of museums would be folly, but in the department which we have been considering, we think more general information is distributed by the one thou-

sand little collections in our own country, than by this gigantic system of centralization. The private collector regards with a very jealous eye the government appropriation of Treasure Trove; he must henceforth relinquish his pursuit, or study his subject deprived of his alphabet, grammar, and rules; for such to him are his coins.

Two recently discovered hoards, one at Barrow, the other at Kibworth, have been removed from the county; two pages, as it were, rudely torn from the history of our local antiquities. Some we know would have been lodged in our local museums, their proper destination, if to be publicly displayed; others have passed by purchase into the possession of a gentleman fully capable of appreciating their worth. The Nunburnholme (Yorkshire) "find" does not appear to have been demanded by the Lords of the Treasury. Lord Londesborough, the owner, states, that he divided the coins equally, and presented them to three different Institutes, two belonging to the county of York. The claims of local museums and private collectors should not be disregarded in the discovery and distribution of relics. The British Museum is indebted for her choicest specimens to the private collectors, the contents of whose cabinets from time to time, from various causes, have been distributed under the hammer of the auctioneer. Owing to the labour and taste of the local archæologist, many a costly gem has been snatched from oblivion, and the accumulated dust of ages has been removed from objects which have proved valuable accessories to the study both of history and chronology. If the Government appropriation of Treasure Trove be rigorously enforced, even under the active surveillance of the police, archæological societies must necessarily decline, local museums may close their doors, and private individuals must cease to collect. The subject was named to Lord John Manners at our late meeting. Several members of Parliament have also promised to give it their attention, and to introduce it where it will obtain a fair and candid discussion.

It appears especially desirable that a Society like this should discuss the question, record its opinions, and enter a formal protest on the minutes of its proceedings. My own conviction is, that the diffusion and not the centralization of objects of antiquity is the way to advance science; that Treasure Trove should be allowed to take its accustomed and accidental course, as in an age of taste and refinement like the present it will not be overlooked or misappropriated. We need no Act of Parliament now to prevent the destruction of relics; it would be well indeed if more vigilance was exercised to prevent their manufacture. We do not wish to form an Archæological Protection Society; we would rather have all unnecessary restrictions removed, which prevent the free distribution of objects of antiquity. Treasure Trove is described by an old but excellent authority to be, "Money, which being found, and not owned, belongs to the King; but in the Civil Law to the finder."

How far the present interference of Government accords with this, is a subject of considerable interest and open to grave criticism.

28th January, 1861.

THE REV. J. H. HILL in the Chair.

The following resolutions, &c., were passed in Committee:—

That Mr. G. C. Bellairs be treasurer in the room of the late Mr. Isaac Hodgson.

That the Rev. E. W. Woodcock be a member of the committee.

That Mr. Goddard be auditor for the year.

A letter from the Rev. J. M. Gresley, announcing his resignation of the office of joint honorary secretary, and of his retirement as a member of the Society having been read, it was resolved, "That the thanks of the Society be presented to him for his able and indefatigable services, and that he be elected an honorary member of this Society."

That Mr. North be elected Honorary Secretary of the Society in the room of the Rev. J. M. Gresley.

Mr. JOHN THOMPSON was elected a member of the Society.

Mr. VINCENT WING exhibited some fine and interesting photographs from the church of S. Chad, Stockton, Salop, which has been lately restored from that gentleman's own designs.

Mr. GODDARD exhibited an ancient iron stirrup and a spur.

Mr. VINCENT WING called the attention of the Society to the bad and dangerous state of the fine church at Melton Mowbray, and to the absolute necessity for extensive repairs being made to the fabric. He also referred to the limited supply of funds, and the great difficulty of raising money for the purpose.

25th March, 1861.

THE REV. ROBERT BURNABY in the Chair.

Mr. NORTH (Honorary Secretary) presented and read the following Report of the proceedings of the Society for the past year, which was adopted, and ordered to be printed in the next annual volume of the associated societies:—