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**An Address Delivered at Oxford**

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## PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I accept the office which you have conferred upon me, with gratitude and humility. I return my sincerest thanks to the retiring President, the honoured President of my old college, for the generous and undeserved kindness of his words of welcome. I assure the Society that I feel quite unworthy to follow the distinguished Presidents of the past. Doubly do I feel this when I see three of them before me. And first is Canon Bazeley, without whose commanding and genial figure we of this Society should indeed feel lost wanderers in a wilderness of Gloucestershire archæology and history ; he, who more than anyone else I ever met, realises my ideal of those sovereigns during the last quarter of the eighteenth century on whom I have so often lectured in this hall, the benevolent despots, who took for their motto "Everything for, and nothing by, the people," and conferred far greater benefits on their subjects (as Canon Bazeley does on his) than all the revolutionaries of the next thirty years put together. Then there is Charles Oman, Fellow of All Souls' College, Chichele Professor of Modern History in the University of Oxford, Fellow of the British Academy, Honorary Doctor of Laws, within the last week, of the University of Edinburgh, the amazing extent of whose knowledge is only equalled by the generosity and the modesty with which he places it at the service of everyone who wishes to learn. And lastly there is my own immediate predecessor in this office, who combines in an association which is, perhaps, unique the pursuits of a scholar, a ruler of men, a critic, a man of business, and a poet ; and who holds the position which certainly in modern times is unexampled, of being

at once head of a great college and Professor of Poetry in a great University. As President of our Society he has exemplified in all that he has said to us how well he has taken to heart that line of Horace :

“Nec satis est pulchra esse poemata, dulcia sunto;”

of which we all remember the felicitous translation he himself gave to Tennyson. Of all that he has said to us we may indeed echo, *dulcia sunt*—“it has charm.”

I have no doubt that if now I had time I could remind you of many other eminent Presidents of our Society whom you and I remember ; but at least I cannot refrain from saying how deeply I, and all of us, deplore what seems to us mortals the untimely death of Mr. Gardner Sebastian Bazley — in whose house of Hatherop Castle, as I well remember, I first joined a meeting of this Society — whose loss is a severe blow not only to his family (to whom we offer our sincerest sympathy) but to the whole county.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—When I undertook to accept the office with which you have honoured me, I had little idea of the work which would be thrown upon me at this time from other quarters : I had none that I should be called upon to accept new work which would take me away from the county on whose borders I have lived for nineteen years, whose history I have tried to study, and whose beautiful scenery I have learned to love.

I had planned to prepare a paper on the Houses of the Hospitallers in Gloucestershire, which I had begun to study in the *Quo Warranto* rolls of Edward I, printed (without note or comment) in 1828. In these you will find mention of a large number of houses in Gloucestershire, or on those borders of it which we visit this year, such as Barrington, Broughton, Calmonden (Calmsden ?), Down Ampney, Guiting, Lower Guiting and Temple Guiting, Quenington, Siddington, Southrop, Wsangre (?) and Broadwell (near Stow-on-the-Wold). Some modern books would have helped me very much in the task

I had set myself, notably the second of Professor Vindgradoff's *Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History*, the *Essay on Customary Rents*, by Miss Neilson, and the Camden Society's volume of 1857 on *The Hospitallers in England* (the Report of 1338). But to my very great regret, owing to the unexpected change in my work to which I have alluded, I have been unable to accomplish what I had intended, and I must ask your attention merely to a few rather random remarks on a subject which is only too familiar to us all, I mean—

#### RESTORATIONS.

Our annual excursions bring us so frequently into contact with what I may, perhaps, be permitted to describe as at once ancient and modern, that I am tempted to inflict upon the Society a few suggestions on the only too familiar subject of "Restoration."

The remarks which I have to offer will certainly not be novel; but there are some things which cannot be said too often, and among them are many on this subject which are frequently forgotten. As we go about the country we continually come across object-lessons: perhaps we may enforce some principles by illustrations which we have just seen, or shall see.

The first principle which, I think, should commend itself to every Archæological Society is this: *there should be no confusion between ancient and modern*. It should be possible for every person with an elementary knowledge of architecture to know what is old and what is not old. Into an old building there should not be introduced modern work imitative of the old; or if such is absolutely necessary, it should in some definite way be shown to be modern imitation: it should not be capable of being mistaken for original work. I may explain what I mean by recalling to your minds what you saw last year on the seventeenth-century garden front of St. John's College, Oxford. There it has been necessary

to clean the whole surface, and to wash it with baryta water, with the object of preserving it; but, with one exception, no stone has been removed and none inserted. The exception, a corbel under an oriel window, is of a slightly different sharpness and colour, which enable it to be easily recognised. On the other side, let me give two examples where historical and architectural confusion have been the result of indistinguishable modern work. In Burford Church the arches of the nave are decorated with charming fifteenth-century heads of citizens in their habits as they lived. The most eastern on the south side represents a priest in a biretta. In freshness and in workmanship it is indistinguishable from the rest, for all the others were "restored" by Mr. Street. For many years I was accustomed to point out this head as a proof that the biretta was worn in England in the Middle Ages, and I triumphantly confuted the late Bishop of Ely (who knew much more about the subject than I did) with this example. But, alas! one day the late Vicar of Burford, hearing me explain this to some visitors, was driven to admit that when the restoration was in progress one of the heads was beyond repair, and the workmen asked him to allow them to replace it by a portrait of himself in his nineteenth century habit as *he* lived. The head ought to be labelled with name and date.

Again, during the restoration of Burford Priory, for the most part admirably done, the base of a fourteenth-century pillar was discovered in the thickness of a wall. It was removed; and at first it was proposed to place it in the garden and use it as a sun-dial: but eventually it was brought back into the house, put a few feet from where it was found, and a series of arches and pillars were made in imitation of it, into which it was inserted, and now a fine mediæval arcade forms an impressive feature in a Tudor house.

One further illustration from our experience of last year. It shows how the very cleverest archæologists may

be deceived when a skilful architect wishes to deceive them. You will remember that Professor Oman, last year, called our attention with enthusiasm to the skill with which the beautiful drawing-room at the Manor House of Yarnton had been restored by the late owner. As a matter of fact, the owner had designed it and built it himself from the ground. It is a delightful piece of work. I should have said it was "suspicious," if it had not taken in Professor Oman. As it has, I can only say that it ought to have been conspicuously, but ornamentally, labelled with its date.

A second principle I should like to remind you of is that *restoration should not involve destruction*. A familiar instance of the infringement of this principle in this district is the way in which architects have stripped the walls, within and without, of plaster and whitewash. Chipping Campden without and Burford within are horrible examples. A work outside our scope is the great tower of St. Alban's, where the chronicler had actually declared that the whole looked like a single stone. It had ceased to do that, of course, with time. But one could tell what the monk meant till Lord Grimthorpe took it in hand. As for Coln St. Aldwyn Church, I do not know in what category to place it. It looks entirely new. It pretends to be old. A great deal may have been destroyed. In default of record I am at sea. And nearly as bad is Bampton, where a surface has been produced which can only be the result of wholesale washing away.

Roofs have been treated with equally criminal violence. The roof of the chancel at Burford was replaced by Mr. Street, who substituted for the beautiful and characteristic flat oak surface intersected by fine ribs, a hideous high-pitched abomination in some cheap wood beloved by the Middle Victorians. Happily the vigorous language of William Morris preserved the nave from a similar fate.

I would plead for the retention of monuments, however

ugly or uninteresting they may seem to us to-day. They are a link with the past which in most cases it is impossible to replace. To take a monument from inside a church (as has often been done by "restorers") and put it outside is generally an inexcusable cruelty; and to move tablets and brasses and glass about a church is barbarous and foolish. It often makes identification impossible. I am a little doubtful about the insertion of ancient glass to-day into an old church with which it has no original connection. There should surely be some note of explanation for fear of puzzling students. A great deal of time may be wasted in historical investigation, and a great many clever suggestions be proved futile, in discovering why the arms of Westminster are in the fourteenth-century window of an Oxfordshire parish church, when the reason is simply that a generous man bought some old glass in the twentieth century and put it there.

I will mention only one more principle. It is intimately connected with the others; it may even be said to combine them both. *The history of the church or house that is to be restored should be allowed to tell its own story without confusion.* History is much more important than what architects have called "architectural propriety." A Norman church, with Early English additions, with a Decorated sanctuary, or a Perpendicular nave, should be left as it is. A Perpendicular window in an Early English wall should not be taken out. A Caroline or Georgian screen should not be destroyed that it may be replaced by a "Gothic" one. What terrible instances there are of the breach of this rule! On the wall of a house we shall see there is now a fine stone royal coat of arms. Three years ago this stood on the north wall of the private chapel, answering to the west wall in a church properly orientated. An expert thought that it had not originally stood there. No one, I believe, fancied that it had ever stood on the wall of the house. However, it has now been placed there, and it has been suggested that it

may have been put there as a memorial of the visit of James I. The arms seem to me to be those of Charles II. The wall in its present aspect appears to be later than that date. And has anyone the right to place the royal arms on his house without permission? I very much doubt it. Certainly no one has a right to falsify history. Leave things where they are; let history speak for itself.

And a good word can be said even for high oak pews (they are at least Pre-Reformation, as readers of Sir Thomas More will remember) and galleries. Look at the parish church of Whitby. It is certainly an amazing memorial of our forefathers' taste; but none of their barbarisms could equal his who would endeavour to restore it to its mediæval condition. And let us think with tears of what happened at Canterbury. I cannot bear to express it myself, and will borrow the words of the late Mr. J. J. Stevenson: "One of the western towers was Norman. The authorities thought that the two towers should be of the same design, so they pulled down the Norman tower, thus destroying the evidence it gave of the length of the original Norman church, and built a copy of the later tower, which they scraped and altered to look like the new one, so that the symmetry might be perfect."

It is one of the worst dangers of "restoration" that it affords so much opportunity for skill. An architect is trained by studying the past; he learns to copy before he learns (if ever) to create. He looks at an ancient building with the eye of an artist; he is confident that he can bring it back to what it was three or four hundred years ago. Thus the beautiful old "tolsey" at Burford has undergone a transformation, in which the old barge-boards have been replaced by new ones, imitating them; the old glass of a delicate green tint and each pane slightly convex has been replaced by new glass entirely uninteresting; a fine shield, brand new, with the town badge, has been set up; and the

rough-cast has been replaced with appalling completeness. All this is, from the historical point of view, simply forgery.

One last point needs to be considered. When new work, in the nature of addition to existing building, needs to be done, *how* should it be done? I think that, at least in the case of a private house, it is lawful to copy the old, if the fact that the work is of the nineteenth or twentieth, not of the sixteenth or seventeenth, century is in some way made quite clear. But far more usually something is added which in copying introduces some lamentable error. The beautiful Elizabethan Manor House of Asthall, near Minster Lovel, has within the last twenty years thus been spoiled by the addition of a new porch, and—far worse—of battlements. Some modern architects have a craze for battlements, especially if they can place them quite low down, not much done above a man's head. You will see a gross instance of this in the twentieth century. Can anything be more foolish? <sup>1</sup>

How are we, let me say briefly in conclusion, to restore? One method is simply to preserve. That is shown in its very severest form in Widford Church, where there is absolutely nothing new. Inglesham a few years ago was the same. <sup>2</sup> Another method is merely to clean, and to replace what is absolutely necessary by an exact copy of the old; to insert what is new, but to let that be simple, dignified, unadorned. To enrich a church is certainly lawful, but this should not be by replacement, but by addition.

I hope the Society will forgive the vigour of my language. I fear some will consider that what I have said is quite unneeded by ourselves. I am sorry to say that, just as the worst book-thieves have generally been librarians, so the worst restorers are usually members of architectural societies.

<sup>1</sup> In regard to the craze for battlements. To a house near Inglesham church a porch with *wooden* battlements has actually been added!

<sup>2</sup> *Inglesham Church*.—I have visited this since the meeting of the Society, and I find it just as I described it. It is admirably kept—clean, orderly, in good repair, but not "restored" in any way.