

CONVERSAZIONE AT IPSWICH.

The third Annual Conversazione was held on Wednesday evening, November 6th, 1901, at the Ipswich Town Hall. When it was proposed that a conversazione should take place at the county town the Mayor (W. F. Paul, Esq.) and the Mayoress heartily responded to the suggestion. It was by their invitation that the company assembled, and under their direction, assisted by the Town Clerk (Mr. W. Bantoft), excellent arrangements were made for the occasion. The Council Chamber was set out and furnished in drawing-room fashion; refreshments were provided in the library, in which an exhibition of objects of interest was displayed; and St. Mary-le-Tower Glee Singers were engaged to give variety in a programme which was of great archæological interest.

The members and friends of the Society were welcomed by the Mayor and Mayoress. Amongst those present were Mr. F. S. Stevenson, M.P., who had kindly consented to take the chair, and Mrs. Stevenson; Lord John Hervey and Mr. H. C. Casley (members of the Committee); and many leading townspeople and visitors from other parts of the county, the latter including the Rev. Dr. Raven. Miss Nina F. Layard, who was also on the Committee, was unable, through a recent bereavement, to be present.

The Chairman, in opening the proceedings, said this was the first occasion on which he had had the pleasure and privilege of being present at one of the conversazioni of the Suffolk Archæological Institute, and he felt that, under the circumstances, he should offer some sort of apology for the position he was then holding. Whilst on the one hand he was very glad to have that opportunity of being amongst them, on the other hand he could not make any special claim to be considered one of themselves, except in the sense that he had always taken a very active and keen interest in the Society. He could not claim himself to be an archæologist, though he was deeply interested in the results of archæology. All those who had had any share in historical or biographical work must feel what a very deep debt was due to the labour of archæologists. Archæology had been sometimes called the "raw material of history." He did not think that was altogether complimentary, for it seemed to him that it was a good deal more than that. Archæologists did not carry on their work merely for the purpose of enabling historians and biographers to profit by their labours. There

was an interest attaching to it which was independent of any result which might follow their labour. While he demurred to the phrase "raw material," however, he should be a little inclined to adopt another phrase which was used a good deal by economists at the time when the sugar tax was under discussion; they spoke of sugar as raw material in its second stage—material which had been to some extent prepared and refined. That applied to the results of archæology. The information thus obtained was not presented to the public in the precise form in which it was discovered; it passed through the hands of the archæologist, and underwent a certain refining process which enabled it to be subsequently used to greater advantage by the historian and the biographer. Like the sugar, too, this raw material in the second stage had a merit and sweetness of its own, quite apart from any subsequent use to which it might be put. As it gave him pleasure to attend the meeting, so he was glad that it was being held in Ipswich. Not only had a great deal of thought and labour been devoted to archæological research by eminent local men whose names were well known, but the town itself had contributed largely to the materials of archæology. Seven hundred years ago last year the first charter of municipal government was bestowed upon Ipswich. That evening they were graced by the presence of the Mayor, who formed the connecting link between the 19th and 20th centuries. He (the speaker) did not say that municipal life came into existence *de novo*, as it were, 700 years ago. No doubt there had been some sort of municipal life before the charter was then granted, for they found, on looking back, that the discussions and debates began almost immediately, the people being evidently quite used to the forms of conducting their own business. With such a long past record as that, and with such a variety of documents relating to the past and preserved in the town, Ipswich might well claim distinction, both in the making and recording of local history. Mr. Stevenson showed the absolute necessity for specialisation nowadays in archæological study, and, referring to the projected "Victoria Histories of the Counties of England," said the plan of its production was that each contributor should undertake his own particular work with which he was most familiar, but to do so in conjunction with his colleagues, all acting together in the light of certain common principles and for a certain common purpose. In conclusion he made happy reference, by way of anticipation, to the papers that were to be read.

After glees had been sung Mr. A. W. Doubleday, editor of the work, read a paper, in which he sketched the objects and scope of the projected "Victoria Histories of the Counties of England." His statements showed that this will be a gigantic undertaking, running to 160 principal volumes and supplements, which will alone be sufficient to form a library. He invited the support and co-operation of all who are interested in the subject.