

James Roger Bramble, F.S.A.

BY JOHN E. PRITCHARD, F.S.A.

FROM the time of his school days James Roger Bramble was an antiquary, for a MS. book found in his library after his decease shows that when—at about the age of 14—he was copying in his translation of Horace he was also writing descriptions of the various architectural styles, as well as making lists of monumental brasses and effigies.

This early fascination developed into a life study of church architecture, armour, costume and effigies, and especially of heraldry, in all of which he became an excellent authority.

He was born at Devizes in 1841, being a son of James Roger Bramble, whose family had previously long been settled at West Parley, in Dorsetshire. He was educated at Marlborough Grammar School, and on leaving entered the law office of Mr. James George Hobbs at Bristol, being admitted a solicitor at the age of twenty-one. He commenced practice immediately (1862) in the same city, only retiring in 1900.

Before he had concluded his articles he enrolled in the Bristol Artillery Volunteers, receiving a Commission in 1865; but subsequently retired, as Lieut.-Colonel Commandant of the 1st Gloucester Engineers, in 1881.

He also became enthusiastic in Freemasonry. As his portrait to these notes depicts him as a mason it is well to record that he was initiated in 1863, and at the time of his death was holding the highest local rank of Grand Master of the Province of Bristol, to which he was installed in 1906.



LIEUT.-COLONEL JAMES ROGER BRAMBLE, F.S.A.,

Hon. Genl. Secretary of the Som. Archæol. and Nat. Hist. Society, 1891-1905;
President of the Weston-super-Mare Meeting, 1905; V.P., 1906-8; Trustee, 1897-1908.

From a Photograph by L. R. Protheroe, Bristol.

It is, however, as an antiquary that we have to speak of him. As far back as 1867 we find him joining in the welcome given to this Society in Bristol ; in which year he was elected a member.

He was appointed a Local Secretary for the district of Yatton, where he resided, in 1888 ; and in 1891 he became one of the General Secretaries of the Society, a post for which he was naturally suited. For several years he directed the annual summer meetings with consummate skill. He was an excellent guide and always by his delightfully chatty descriptions of the antiquities visited charmed those who were fortunate enough to be in his party ; in particular was his power felt when describing the churches of Somerset.

Owing to ill-health he resigned his secretaryship in 1905, but happily was well enough to accept the annual Presidency for that year, when the Society visited Weston-super-Mare, where he had been residing for sometime. In proposing Colonel Bramble as President the Dean of Wells (Dr. Jex-Blake) said : " He thought no man had done more for the general interests of the Society than Colonel Bramble, and his well-known business facility, his knowledge of law, his peculiar grasp of all that belonged to armour and heraldry, his keen interest in our churches and ancient buildings, made him not only a fit but a most distinguished president."

He had been elected a Trustee in 1896 and was made a Vice-President on retiring from the Presidency in 1906. He was also President of the Axbridge Branch of the Society for the year 1902.

The Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society claimed him as an original member, and he acted as Treasurer for one year, but his studies and sympathies were undoubtedly directed to the Somersetshire side of the Avon. He was one of the first members of the Clifton Antiquarian Club, and President from 1894 to 1899.

Colonel Bramble was elected a fellow of the Society of

Antiquaries in 1887, and was a local secretary for some years. He was also a fellow of the Huguenot and Royal Numismatic Societies, and a member of many other learned societies.

He had the distinction of being an honorary associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects, being elected in 1894, and had contributed to their journal.

His earliest paper, contributed to the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, in 1877, was on the "Recently-discovered pavement at the Abbey of Old Cleeve." For the Clifton Antiquarian Club he wrote on Mediæval Armour (1885) and on various subjects of local interest. He also contributed an attractive paper on Mediæval Bristol to the Axbridge Branch in 1897.

But his principal literary work was the compilation of the "Heraldic" section of the valuable Index to Collinson's *History of Somerset*, upon which he was engaged a long time.

In strong contrast, however, to his all-round knowledge his written contributions were not numerous; but as the writer and many others can testify, it was one of his greatest pleasures to help younger students in Archæology—no trouble was too great; besides which much of his leisure was taken up in archæological correspondence. It will thus be seen that he was a man of many parts and strong personality: remarkably well-read he could instantly give an opinion on most subjects submitted to him.

He possessed a good library which was at the service of all students in archæology, and in his later years he collected local coins and tokens. His Bristol section has been generously presented to the Bristol Museum by his widow.

Colonel Bramble was greatly interested in the old churches of St. Mary-le-Port and St. Nicholas, Bristol, and his loss archæologically will be keenly felt.

He was appointed a Magistrate for the County of Somerset in 1902, and was elected a County Councillor for Somerset in

the same year, but retired in 1906. During that period he served on the Education Committee, and also on the Elementary Schools Management Committee, of which he was chairman. He died at Seafeld, Weston-super-Mare, on February 3rd, 1908, leaving a widow, one son and four daughters.

Rev. Murray A. Mathew, M.A., F.L.S.

THE Rev. Murray Alexander Mathew, formerly vicar of Bishop's Lydeard, and of Buckland Dinham, passed away in July last, after a long illness. He had been an ardent naturalist and a keen observer from boyhood. As a lad he formed a fine collection of butterflies and moths, and, later on, he was equally successful in getting together a large and valuable collection of British birds and eggs, including some of the rarer specimens found in Somerset during recent years. He was an active member of the British Ornithologists' Union. He read extensively and had a splendid memory ; and made good use of his knowledge when he became joint author (with Mr. W. S. M. D'Urban) of *The Birds of Devon*. Subsequently, during a residence in South Wales, he wrote *Birds of Pembrokeshire and its Islands*, and also contributed numerous articles to the volume of *British Birds*, published by Messrs. Horace Marshall and Son.

Mr. Mathew was a member of our Society for some years, and, in 1893, he contributed a paper to the *Proceedings*, entitled "A Revised List of the Birds of Somerset," which formed an admirable supplement to Mr. Cecil Smith's well-known work. It was carefully and charmingly written, and gave ample evidence of thorough knowledge of the subject and of the county. Moreover, it contained many hints that may yet be useful to young and zealous naturalists, as to fields of research that still require investigation. This list gave the names of thirty birds not recorded by Mr. Cecil Smith, details as to locality and other valuable notes being given in each case.

Although Mr. Murray Mathew was born in Middlesex, and lived in Devon during his early years, he dearly loved Somerset and its people, and he was buried at Buckland Dinham, where he had passed some of his happiest and most useful years.

C. T.

Edwin John Rawle.

MR. E. J. Rawle, who came of a good old West Somerset stock, and had been a member of our Society some years, died at Streatham on October 10th, 1908. He had spent his leisure hours during many years in looking up the historical and literary associations of Exmoor and the immediate neighbourhood. The principal results of this loving labour were embodied in a volume issued in 1893, entitled *Annals of the Ancient Royal Forest of Exmoor*. In this he deals with the extent of the forest, and its administrative system in feudal and later times; and quotes extensively from documents in the Record Office. In the preface Mr. Rawle says: "My father, who was born at Oare in 1805, was the representative of the eleventh generation, in direct line, of a yeoman family which had settled in that parish before the Reformation, and was continuously located there down to the second decade of the present century." This most interesting chapter of family history was carefully followed up in *Records of the Rawle Family*, a portly volume of over three hundred pages, which he published in 1898. Five years later he gathered together the facts and theories respecting the Doones, who have become so familiar to us through R. D. Blackmore's delightful romance, *Lorna Doone*. These details he embodied in *The Doones of Exmoor*; and, as a result of his study, he ventured to suggest that the tradition respecting the famous outlaws had its origin as far back as the reign of King Alfred the Great. In 1894, Mr. Rawle contributed a paper to the *Proceedings* of our Society, on the "Final Perambulation of Exmoor."

C. T.