

In Memoriam.

The Rev. J. A. Bennett.

The Society issues its Report this year under the shadow of great losses—Mr. F. H. Dickinson in June, the Rev. Prebendary Scarth in August, the Rev. J. A. Bennett, our honoured Secretary, in December, and lately Mr. J. D. Sedding, the Cathedral and Diocesan Architect, have passed away since our last volume appeared.

On a bright afternoon of the late gloomy winter, December 11th, 1890, James Arthur Bennett was laid to rest in the churchyard of South Cadbury, under the shadow of the little Church which his father had served before him—the Church where he had been baptized 55 years before, and where he had faithfully ministered for 26 years.

It stands on the last slope of Cadbury Castle—the hill of “Camelot.” Three months before, at the Society’s autumn meeting, he had welcomed a large gathering of members of the Society in the green meadow just below the Church. He had led them up the earthen ramparts, which ring round the hill he knew so well, where he had played and wandered as a boy, and then taking his stand overlooking that unrivalled view of the amphitheatre of hills enclosing the great plain of Somerset, had charmed his hearers by the enthusiasm with which he told his ‘tale of Camelot,’ skilfully woven together from tradition and history, and brought out the importance of the great hill-fort in the early history of the county. In full health and vigour, and with happy elasticity of spirits, he was then the soul of the party, making the day delightful by his able guidance, his geniality and courtesy.

James Bennett had not taken up archæology merely as a
New Series, Vol. XVI, 1890, Part II. aa

pastime. He was a thorough and laborious student, who, for years with steady patience and tenacity of purpose had, step by step, laid a solid basis of knowledge, not merely on second-hand material, but from study of original records.

Placed in charge of his little parish of some two hundred souls, in 1864, he set himself to do all he could for the parish, by personal care for the people, by a thoroughly efficient school, by restoration of the Church, and by simple, hearty services.

At the same time, feeling the need of fuller occupation, he threw himself into research and study of all that bore on the history of his own parish, neighbourhood, and county, gathering many a tradition or legend from the lips of his cottage friends, to be retailed with eager glee when he reached home.

The present writer can remember his coming to Wells, more than twenty years ago, to ask the loan of Domesday from the Cathedral Library, and Mr. F. H. Dickinson's genial greeting of him then as one of the rising generation of archæologists. Alas! both have passed away in the same year. So he began with a careful digest of the Somerset Domesday, and then of Glastonbury history, in Adam of Domerham, and John of Glastonbury.

It was characteristic of him, that not being able, at that time, to buy the rarer work of John of Glastonbury, he borrowed a copy, and made a literal transcription of the whole book for his own use and annotation.

When he had mastered the difficulties of mediæval writing, he voluntarily undertook, in his wish, as he phrased it, for "a big job," the laborious work of calendaring the Registers of the Dean and Chapter, the Fabric and Communa Rolls, and the Ledgers in the Cathedral Library. For three years, with extraordinary patience, he employed himself upon these MSS., until he had drawn up and made a calendar of every charter and entry, and had put the work in order for publication by the Historical Manuscripts Commission.

Elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, and put

upon the staff of the Hist. MSS. Commission, he was gradually extending his researches. While alive to every subject of antiquarian interest in his own county, and contributing papers to the Somerset Archæological Society and the Society of Antiquaries, he worked hard also in the libraries of Badminton, Lowther Castle, Tissington, Castle Howard, and others, examining and indexing the family papers for the Commission Reports. He had been an active district Secretary and Member of Council for our Society for some years, when in 1887 he was requested to undertake the office of Honorary Secretary, for which he was so well equipped. The success of the meetings held under his direction in the last four years,—at Bristol, Wells, Minehead, Castle Cary,—and the interest and importance of the papers which he edited for the volumes of the Society, bear testimony to the zeal and tact, industry and labour, which he gave to the work of the Society.

His sense of the importance of the publication of original records as the true basis of a county history led him, in 1885, to start the Somerset Record Society, for the purpose of seeking out, editing, and printing such documents as would aid the future historian. The whole of the correspondence which ensued before this plan was brought into successful operation fell upon him. He cheerfully undertook it, and worked it through the preliminary stages single handed, with characteristic pertinacity and perseverance, aided by the counsels of Bishop Hobhouse and Mr. Dickinson. The greater part of the labour of successive publications, in choice of subjects, in gathering subscriptions, in correcting proofs, fell upon him as Secretary, but no one was more forward in acknowledging that the successful launching of the Society was mainly due to the judgment and labour of Bishop Hobhouse, editor of the first record published, Bishop Drokenford's Register.

As work grew upon him, his interest in it seemed to grow also, and to animate him to undertake what was perhaps almost too much for his health and strength, though he delighted in it

to the end. He was occupied in revising proofs for the present volume of the Society's *Proceedings* on the last morning of his life, and his papers after his sudden death show how much besides he had in hand. The genuine sorrow which his death called forth on all sides is the best witness of the respect, attachment, and affection he had inspired, and of the value and loveableness of his life.

The Society deplores the loss of their Secretary, who, from his social position in the county, love of his native Somerset, full knowledge of its history, and wide sympathies, was so admirably fitted to take a lead in the councils and working of the Society. Uniting decision and power of command with modest deference to the judgment and knowledge of his elders, he always discharged its duties with generous self-devotion and unflagging energy. To those who knew him only on the excursions of the Society, his vivacity and eager interest, readiness to receive and impart information, sunny good humour, with occasional vigorous thrust, and smart retort, but ever genial sympathy, will leave a long and pleasant remembrance of the friend who has been taken from us.

C. M. C.

Francis Henry Dickinson of Kingweston.

It would be undutiful towards one of the nursing fathers of this Society, if this volume went forth without a grateful notice of the services of our late Vice-President to the cause of Somerset Archæology. His services to the Church, to liturgical study, to the various departments of county administration, to all his surrounding social interests, have been noticed elsewhere. Here, in these pages, he must be remembered as one of the founders of the Society in 1849, as a frequent speaker at its meetings, as President more than once, and as a contributor of learned papers.

There have always been in this county some students of its antiquities, but before 1849 they were working in isolation, and without any of the helps that combination creates—such as mutual instruction, mutual inspiration, interchange of ideas, the exposure of crotchety theories, the collection of overt aids to science, such as books, specimens, relics, and the preservation of perishing fragments. Mr. Dickinson and his comrades felt this great need of combination, and addressed themselves to its remedy by first founding the Society, with its frequent meetings for discussion; secondly by founding a Library and Museum, and ultimately securing a permanent abode for them, in the Castle of Taunton, where the student of 1891 finds an archæological apparatus unattainable in 1849.

Mr. Dickinson's own attainments in archæology were, like his attainments in other researches, very varied, well nigh universal. Had he centered his research on some department, as he did just at the end of his life upon the military tenures of Somerset, he would have made himself a most thorough master of the subject, for he was possessed by nature of all the most helpful gifts—ready observation, keen acumen, un-failing memory, the power of comparison, and of fetching contributions from his varied stores of knowledge in aid of his matter-in-hand. As it was, he was ever compiling fresh matter, and drawing fresh deductions; led hither and thither by the friends who resorted to him as to an encyclopædia for the solution of their various quests. His range of information was so wide, his aptness and willingness to impart it so great, that it tempted the inquirer with the certainty that if he did not get the exact solution of his question, he would get a leading towards it, or some contributing help.

He has left to us not so much as he might have done by centred effort, but still some solid results of industry. The largest is vol. iii of the Somerset Record Society's publications, issued in 1889. The preface shows how much more he had collected on the subject, viz., the distribution of land in

the shire for military service and taxation, and how fully he purposed to contribute it to the public, had the time been vouchsafed to him.

Another valuable contribution was an "Index to the Record Books of the Chapter of Wells," with notes and preface, published in the Society's volume of 1875. The bulk of the notes, etc., ill represents the labour which they cost him. He had made himself a thorough master of the Chapter history.

His archæological collections have been kindly deposited by his family in the Taunton Museum, but as yet they have not been examined, and their available values is therefore unascertained.

E. H.

The Rev. Harry Mengden Scarth, M.A.

The Rev. Harry Mengden Scarth, M.A., Rector of Wrington, Rural Dean of Portishead, and Prebendary of Combe the Fifth, in Wells Cathedral, was for many years a constant attendant at the meetings of the Society, and although of late, failing health and increasing age had prevented his being with us as often as formerly, his interest in the objects of the Society remained unabated to the last. While entirely unobtrusive in his character, his readiness to impart information on subjects in which he was an acknowledged authority, will be gratefully recognised by many.

Mr. Scarth was a son of Mr. Thomas Freshfield Scarth, of Staindrop, county Durham, where members of the family have now for some generations taken an important part in the management of the estates of the Duke of Cleveland. He was born in 1814, and was educated at the Edinburgh Academy, and Christ's College, Cambridge, taking his B.A. degree in 1837, and M.A. in 1840. In 1837 he was ordained Deacon, and in the following year Priest, both by the Bishop of Lich-

field, and for a short time held the Curacy of Eaton Constantine, Shropshire. Subsequently he held in succession the Rectories of Kenley, in the same county, and Bathwick with Woolley (1841 to 1871), and Wrington (1871 till his decease). He may, perhaps, be best described as an old-fashioned High Churchman, and that from a time when the Church was only slowly emerging from a slumber of some centuries, and when it required much firmness of character to maintain, in a town parish, those ordinary decencies of ritual which would now universally be considered as proper and becoming in Divine worship.

For many years Mr. Scarth held the position of one of the Local Secretaries, for the county of Somerset, of the Society of Antiquaries, but he never applied to be admitted a Fellow of that Society. He was also an active Member and Vice-President of the Royal Archæological Institute, and of the British Archæological Association. In this Society he was, as Local Secretary for Wrington, an *ex-officio* Member of Council.

Mr. Scarth's principal separate works were *Aquæ Solis; or, Notices of Roman Bath*, and *Roman Britain*, one of the series of volumes published by the S.P.C.K. He was, for upwards of thirty years, a constant contributor to the *Proceedings* of this and other Societies, of which he was a Member, and an important communication, by him, to the Society of Antiquaries, on the "Camps on the River Avon, at Clifton," is printed in the *Archæologia*. The President of the Society of Antiquaries, in referring to Mr. Scarth's decease, says of him:—"His knowledge of Roman antiquities was wide and varied, and he ranked among the highest English authorities on the relics of the period of the Roman occupation of this country."

Mr. Scarth, who was a widower, with three surviving children, died at Tangier, on the 5th April, 1890, and was buried at Wrington. *Requiescat in pace.*