

William Francis Rose, D.A.,

AND

His Dialect Studies.

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BY CHARLES TITE.

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THE REV. WILLIAM FRANCIS ROSE, M.A., rector of Hutton, who died on January 17th, 1916, aged 73 years, was the son of the Rev. Henry John Rose, rector of Houghton Conquest, Beds., and Archdeacon of Bedford; and a nephew of Dean Burgon. He was born at Houghton Conquest Rectory in 1842, and educated at Radley, and at Worcester College, Oxford. He took his B.A. in 1866 and M.A. in 1871, was ordained deacon in 1867 and priest in 1869. After holding a curacy at Windsor and a chaplaincy at Eton College, he became vicar of Worle in 1874, and remained there until 1896, when he removed to Hutton. For some years he was Assistant Diocesan Inspector, and took an active part in the local and diocesan conferences. He was a zealous and devoted parish priest, deeply interested in the well-being of those committed to his care. By the simple consistency of his life and Christian character, he won a large circle of friends, and exercised a benign influence throughout the district in which he lived. Mr. Rose was a man of wide sympathies and considerable learning, and did some good literary work which brought him into touch with many eminent men. Moreover, he was a devoted student of natural history, and took unbounded delight in trying to inculcate a love of nature and a spirit of reverence in the children of his neighbourhood. He was also interested in meteorology, and regularly published his records during a considerable period.

Mr. Rose was a member of our Society for nearly thirty years, and was a collector of such local objects as help to illustrate the manners and customs of a past or passing generation, some of which have now found a place in our Museum. He was also keenly alive to the necessity of securing as full a record as possible of the Somerset dialect. He made this a matter of careful and regular study for about forty years, and eagerly noted any word or form of expression that was likely to throw light on the subject. He thus accumulated a considerable mass of material, which was freely placed at the disposal of those who were likely to be able to make good use of it. This brought him into correspondence with Professor J. Wright, the originator and editor of the *English Dialect Dictionary*, and various members of his staff. The result was that Mr. Rose sent them a collection of nearly twelve hundred words which he had heard used in North-East Somerset. This assistance was most gratefully acknowledged, Professor Wright assuring Mr. Rose that his was undoubtedly the best contribution he had received for a long time.

The two volumes of manuscript which contain the result of Mr. Rose's labours in this direction have been presented to the Council of our Society by Mrs. Rose. They comprise several hundred pages of clearly written notes which contain a considerable store of most interesting and valuable local lore. Not only did Mr. Rose jot down every provincialism used by his neighbours, but he endeavoured to ascertain its full and exact meaning, and took great pains to compare it with similar words used in other counties. The mass of information he collected by way of illustration includes much that will be of great interest to local historians, folk-lorists, naturalists, and others. For instance, in dealing with the word *Hang-veier* (an execution), he gives an account of the hanging of three men at Kenn in the early part of last century, for setting fire to a rick, the details of which had been given to him by two of his parishioners, one of whom witnessed the execution. Again, in explanation of the word *serch*, *sarch*, or *sarge*, a small hair sieve, he reminds us that, in early Victorian days, farmers and others sent their wheat to local millers, when they required flour for their own consumption,



and adds: "The flour was sent back roughly ground, and all the sifting was done at home. Now such a thing is unheard of. A farmer's wife, however, told me that when she first came to Worle, a *sarge* was among her household implements." The word *Revel* (a village feast or wake) produces this little note: "Worle Revel is held on the Thursday in Whitsun-week (the Church is dedicated to St. Martin). The Revel was formerly an occasion for an exhibition of back-sword play, a stage being erected for the purpose; but the glories of Worle Revel have departed." These are but simple samples of a goodly store. The books also contain quaint and curious proverbs and rhymes, some dialect verse, and many cuttings from the advertisement and news columns of local papers to illustrate the use of words recorded.

The success of Mr. Rose's labours as a zealous student of the Somerset dialect suggests the desirability of the formation of some organisation for carrying on such work. In Devon, much has been done for nearly thirty years past by "The Committee on Devonshire Verbal Provincialisms," and it is quite clear from their recent report that their labours still bear good fruit. Such studies have not been neglected in Somerset, but there has been no combined effort to make the most of them. Mr. George Sweetman, of Wincanton, who issued a Glossary some years ago, has since then occasionally published a paper that has helped to keep up interest in such matters. Mr. R. R. C. Gregory, formerly of Castle Cary, Mr. A. S. Macmillan, of Yeovil, and Dr. John Reed, formerly of Sparkford, have also rendered admirable service in various ways. But, it is now more than a quarter of a century since Mr. F. T. Elworthy's great work on "The Dialect of West Somerset" was completed, and it seems that the time has come for a combined effort to follow up his labours. It may be that a certain number of pages in each volume of our *Proceedings* could be devoted to the purpose, and that ultimately the peasant speech of the whole county would be worthily represented, if those who are able to do so will undertake the necessary organisation and work.