

Richard Hensleigh Walter, M.B., F.S.A.

MOST country places have its premier collector,—a highly-respected person who collects more methodically and selectively than his neighbour, and who frequently becomes the philosopher and friend of those who seek information in abstruse matters. Those who assist such collectors get interested in their work, and make it their business to see that specimens acquired go into the hands of those collectors—to their mutual satisfaction. When the local physician is the chief collector his opportunities in obtaining the specimens he desires are obviously greater than in almost any other class of the community.

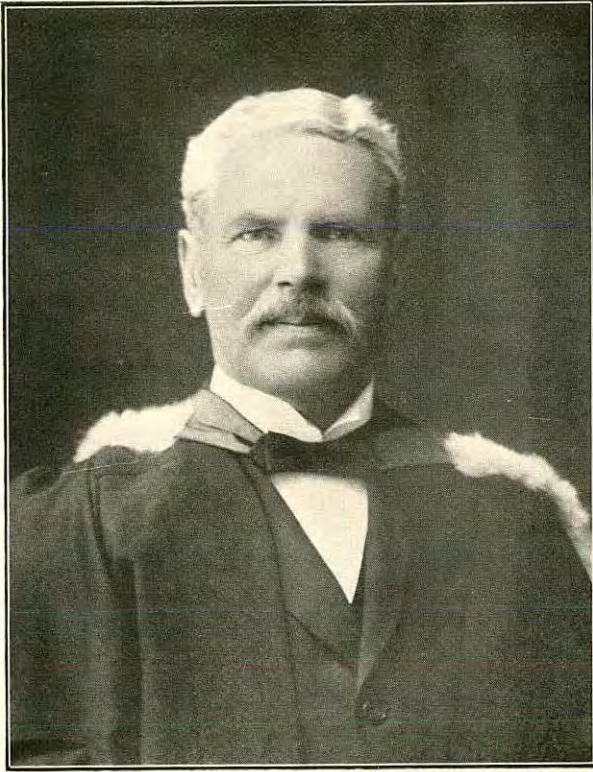
Dr. R. Hensleigh Walter came into this category, and like his father, Dr. Walter Winter Walter,¹ and his grandfather, Mr. Richard Walter, his chief hobby for many years had been the acquisition of antiquities, chiefly from Ham Hill, and of 'bygones' and other ethnographical objects such as he had been able to secure and sometimes save from destruction when on his professional visits. He often had to wait his chance in persuading acquaintances to part with household and agricultural appliances or implements from factories which had become obsolete and therefore of importance to the County Museum at Taunton Castle, which was generally the institution that benefited from Dr. Walter's labours as a collector. Unless he had a very special attachment to particular objects he never retained them long, but passed them on to the Museum with which his name and those of his father and his maternal uncle (Dr. Hugh Norris)² will always be associated.

But in the antiquarian world Dr. Walter was best known for his keen efforts to acquire the archæological remains found from time to time by quarrymen and others on Ham Hill (some seasons were much more productive than others). In these efforts he had the congenial task of interviewing workmen sometimes at the place of discovery, and one has reason to think that few antiquities dis-

1. The collection made by Dr. W. W. Walter, and presented to the County Museum by him in 1901, was described by the writer in *Proceedings*, XLVIII, pt. ii, 24-78.

2. The collection made by Dr. Hugh Norris, and bequeathed to the County Museum, was described on its arrival by the writer in 1914-15 (*Proceedings*, LI, 136-159).

PLATE XIV.



RICHARD HENSLEIGH WALTER, M.B., F.S.A.

From a Photograph by Messrs. Witcomb & Son, Yeovil.

covered in the 'heading' of the quarries and elsewhere left the county, for the finders, many of them the doctor's patients, were always eager to report their discoveries to him and relate the circumstances in the requisite detail. Dr. Walter not only collected the objects but also such information as was procurable. Moreover when in any doubt as to purpose of certain specimens, period, etc., he was often in correspondence with those who were constantly in touch with similar antiquities; and the most important of the material acquired was incorporated with the neat labels he attached to the chief 'finds' from the Hill.

This type of antiquarianism occupied a good proportion of Dr. Walter's spare moments,—which were few owing to his extensive practice; and his archaeological work, especially in connection with Ham Hill, was recognized by the Society of Antiquaries of London when he was elected a Fellow in 1918, and one of the Local Secretaries for Somerset in 1921.

On July 23rd, 1918, Dr. Walter presented to the Society for the Somerset County Museum the antiquities added to the Walter Collection during recent years, but previously only as deposits on loan. He was cordially thanked on that occasion on the proposition of the Rev. Dr. S. J. M. Price (Chairman of Council), seconded by the President for the year, the late Professor F. J. Haverfield, and was elected on that date an honorary life member of the Society. In returning thanks, Dr. Walter said that having been born under the shadow of the Hill, he was nurtured in the atmosphere of its romance and history (*Proc.*, LXIV, xxi-xxiii).

Dr. Walter wrote a few papers and illustrated notes on Ham Hill for the Society's *Proceedings* and *The Antiquaries Journal*, and these are listed in the bibliography of the Hill on page 105 of this volume. In addition he published a note on the "Discovery of Roman Remains at Stanchester, in the parish of Stoke-sub-Hamdon," in the Society's *Proceedings*, LXV, 86-87. He was also a contributor to the *Western Gazette*. In the excavations Dr. Walter carried out in 1907 near Bedmore Barn, at the east end of the Hill, he discovered the foundations of buildings of the Roman period.

Dr. R. H. Walter joined the Somerset Society in 1902 and became Local Secretary for Stoke-under-Ham in 1908. In 1896 he obtained his M.B. and C.M. (with silver medal in pathology) at Edinburgh University, and in the following year joined his father in practice at Stoke. In 1898 he married Miss Mary Beatrice May Hillier, daughter of Commissary-General Hillier. He died at Stoke-under-Ham on April 2nd, 1924, aged 62 years.

H. ST. GEORGE GRAY.