

JOHN WALLACE WATTS

"Multis ille bonis flebilis occidit."

The Rev. John Wallace Watts, a prominent and respected member of this Society, died at South Croxton rectory on the Saturday before Christmas, 1922, and was buried in Gaddesby churchyard on the following Thursday. The funeral service was conducted by Archdeacon Macnutt, assisted by Canon Winckley, Canon James and the Rev. C. E. Jenkins, vicar of St. Paul's, Leicester, and in the large and representative congregation were Mr. Farnham, Mr. Fosbrooke, Mr. Routh, Mr. Stephenson and Mr. Albert Herbert, all colleagues of Mr. Watts upon our Committee, and several other members of the Society. Though Mr. Watts had for several months been in a grave condition, his death came as a surprise to us all, for about the beginning of December his illness had taken an apparently favourable turn, which gave delusive hopes of recovery. The demise of so capable a member, always ready to give of his best, at the comparatively early age of fifty-four, is a serious loss to the Society, and a personal grief to everyone associated with him in forwarding its aims and maintaining its efficiency.

When Mr. Watts, after serving for about ten years as curate at Hoby and Rotherby, was appointed to the rectory of South Croxton and the vicarage of Gaddesby in 1919, it was felt that a most judicious selection had been made. The remarkably fine church at Gaddesby had been allowed to fall into a deplorable state, and the mediæval church which crowns the hilly street of South Croxton also needed attention. Mr. Watts's knowledge of architecture and archæology made him a most suitable custodian of these buildings, which he intended thoroughly to repair, so that they might be protected, as far as possible, from the further ravages of time and weather. It was characteristic of Mr. Watts that he had already employed his skill as a craftsman in restoring the dilapidated rectory at South Croxton, which he turned into a seemly and comfortable home. It would be wrong, however, to leave the impression that architectural knowledge and artistic

aptitude, admirable as these are, were our friend's sole qualifications as a clergyman. He was a diligent parish priest, who carried out his parochial duties with commendable devotion, and those who knew his quality as a lecturer will not be surprised to learn that his preaching was greatly esteemed.

As a member of the Archæological Society, Mr. Watts was extremely useful and energetic, and he had a happy knack of inspiring others with his own enthusiasm. His pleasant disposition endeared him to those who worked with him, and he was always willing to impart knowledge to persons younger or less experienced than himself. In early life he had acquired a good general knowledge of the history and antiquities of Leicester, and when he settled in the country he visited and took photographs of most of the interesting village churches and other archæological objects, whose significant details he studied and interpreted in the light of a wide knowledge gained by careful reading and patient research. When journeying to places of interest, it was his habit to take a camera, and his judgment and skill as a photographer enabled him to build up a collection of lantern-slides that for historic value and artistic charm cannot be surpassed in many counties. The possession of these slides made him a standing resource as a lecturer at our bi-monthly meetings; on these occasions, as on the Society's summer excursions, he always showed a good-humoured willingness to employ his talents for our pleasure and enlightenment. He also did excellent service as a popular lecturer, and a genuine feeling for the past has been aroused in many, who made no claim to be learned students of archæology, by his unusual faculty for explaining difficult subjects to the uninitiated. It was perhaps because he so obviously felt himself to be a learner, as do all teachers intelligent enough to be modest, that he gained the confidence of those who depended upon his powers of exposition.

Of Mr. Watts's scientific attainments, and of his labours in the cause of education, the present writer is not qualified to speak. He is informed, however, by a friend whose judgment may be trusted, that Mr. Watts was deeply interested in natural science, and that when he lived in Leicester, he took an active part in the work of the Literary and Philosophical Society. He was an enthusiastic member of that Society's Entomological Section, and

was for many years honorary secretary of the Section for Zoology. His skill in the use of the microscope and in the preparation of slides, and his willingness to communicate knowledge and to give practical instruction, made him a real friend and helper to all whose studies and interests were akin to his own.

The loss of a man of such good qualities and various attainments can hardly be exaggerated, but the inspiration of his example remains. Though he is no longer here to help and hearten us, it will be long before his friendly face and the tones of his voice are forgotten. In another part of this volume will be found the resolution of sympathy passed at the January meeting, and duly forwarded to Mrs. Watts by Major Freer.

S. H. S.