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REV. W. S. SYMONDS, M.A., F.G.S.

Born 1818; Died 1887.

Forty years ago, the promotion of Natural Science throughout the country was mainly entrusted to the agency of the various local Field Clubs and Natural History Societies, amongst the most active and useful of which may be mentioned the Malvern Natural History Field Club, the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club, and the Cotteswold Club. It was in the districts over which these clubs held sway that the subject of our present notice passed the best years of his life and carried on those geological labours with which his name will always stand associated.

Mr. Symonds was born at Hereford in 1818, being the son of William Symonds, Esq., of Elsdon, Herefordshire. After passing through his schooldays with Mr. Allen at Cheltenham, and reading with the Rev. J. P. Sill, he was sent to Christ's College, Cambridge, where Sedgwick was then in the height of his popularity as a geological lecturer. He took his degree in 1842, and in 1843 he was appointed Curate of Offenham, near Evesham, where he became acquainted with Mr. Hugh Strickland, from whom he received many of his first lessons in Natural History. In 1845 he was presented to the Rectory of Pendock, near Tewkesbury.

Mr Symonds married, in 1840, Hyacinth, daughter of Samuel Kent, Esq., of Upton-on-Severn, and had issue three sons and one daughter; the latter only now survives him, and is married to Sir J. D. Hooker, K.C.S.I., F.F.S.

From an early date Mr. Symonds became the friend and associate of sir William Vernon Guise, Bart., of Elmore Court, near Gloucester, and it is significant that the two attached friends died within a few days of one another, viz. 15th and 24th Sept. (see GEOL. MAG. Nov. 1887, p.528).

Mr Symonds assisted in the foundation of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club, and was elected as its President in 1854. He was also President of the Malvern Naturalists' Field Club from 1853 and for many ears subsequently.

In 1857 he visited Dublin, in order to attend the Meeting of the British Association, and availed himself of the opportunity to make a geological tour through Ireland (see Geologist, 1858, pp. 292-296 and 330-335). In this year he also published a work entitled "Stones of the Valley."

In 1858 we find him busy in the field exploring the bone-bed of the Upper Ludlow rocks and their characteristic fossils (Geologist, 1858, p 15). Mr Symonds examined in 1859 the reptiliferous sandstone near Elgin (see Edinburgh New Phil. Journ. 1860, vol. xxi. P.95), and in the year following he was watching the results of the geological sections exposed in the Malvern and Ledbury Tunnels with

Mr. A. Lambert (Geologist, 1861, p. 148). In 1863 he made a geological ramble through Wales, an account of which he communicated to the Worcester Nat. Hist. Soc. Trans. 1864. A new edition of his book entitled "Old Bones, or Notes for young Naturalists," was issued in 1864, the first having appeared in 1859.

In the summer of 1866, accompanied by his friend Sir W. V. Guise, Bart., Mr Symonds visited Belgium, and under the guidance of Prof. Dupont, explored the Bone-Caverns of the Valley of the Lesse, and gave an interesting description of the same to the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club (GEOL. MAG. 1866, pp. 564-570).

In 1871 Mr Symonds published, in Dr. H. Woodward's Monograph on the Merostomata, some interesting Notes on Silurian localities in the West of England where these fossil Crustacea occur (see Pal. Soc. Mon. Brit. Foss. Crustacea, 1871, part iii. Pp. 92-104). In the same year Mr. Symonds explored the Hyaena-Den (known as King Arthur's Cave) on the Great Doward, Whitchurch, Ross (see GEOL. MAG. Vol. VII. P.433).

In the year following (1872) he brought out his "Record of the Rocks," an excellent and readable handbook for students of the Geology of the West of England.

The autumns of 1874, 5, and 6, were spent in company with Sir Wm. Guise, Mr. Lucy, and others, in exploring the volcanoes and tracing the ancient glaciers of Auvergne and those of the Haute Loire and the Ardèche (see the Pop. Sci. Rev. vol. xv. 1876, and N. Ser. Vol. i. pp. 1, 250, 329, 1877).

In 1880 Mr Symonds published a second edition of his book entitled "Old Stones," and also his romance of "Malvern Chase," which reached a third edition in 1883. In this year he issued two more works, namely, "Hanley Castle," a romance; and the "Severn Straits," a geological work. Altogether (sic) he was the author of more than forty papers which have appeared in various scientific journals. The main object of Mr. Symonds' active and useful career, and to the furtherance of which all his best energies were directed, was the promotion of a love for Geological, Botanical, and Archaeological pursuits and studies, amongst the very large circle of educated people in the West of England by whom he was surrounded, whose tastes he strove to elevate and direct, and whose leisure hours he endeavoured to occupy with healthful and intellectual pursuits.

Although a clergyman and a Justice of the Peace for the county of Worcestershire, he was above all things an ardent Naturalist and Geologist, and he was never so happy as when conducting the members of his own Naturalists' Field-clubs over some classical region in "Siluria," with every spot of which he was familiar.

For several years before his death he had been compelled by ill health to withdraw from his parish duties, but he remained as full of interest in all scientific matters as ever to the last. Mr. Symonds died on the 15th September, at Cheltenham.

His loss, like that of his friend Sir W. V. Guise, will long be felt in the West of England, where the services and presence of both had exercised so beneficial an influence over a very wide and intelligent community for nearly half a century. -¹H.W.

[Added footnote]

We regret to record the death, on October 4th, at Tonga, of Mr. H. F. Symonds, only remaining son of the late Rev. W. S. Symonds. He was Consul at Samoa and Deputy Commissioner of the Western Pacific. He was only 32 years of age and a man of great promise.

¹ Henry Woodward?

1889 September 24: The Gloucester Journal

THE REV. W. S. SYMONDS.

By the death the W. S. Symonds which took place Cheltenham on the Thursday of last week while on a visit to a friend in the "garden town England," the parishioners of Pendock have lost a good and kindly rector, and the world a man who was at once a geologist, antiquary, archeologist, and author. He succumbed to heart disease and other oomplications, attributed in no small degree to the great and fatiguing exertions be underwent in pursuit of geological and natural history sciences. The Rev, William Samuel Symonds, of Pendock, Worcestershire, was born in Hereford in December, 1818, and was the eldest son of Mr. William Symonds, of Elsdon, in Herefordshire (who died 1840), by Mary, daughter of Mr. Samuel Beale, of Upton-on-Severn. The deceased gentleman took his degree at Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1840, and was appointed to the living of Pendock in 1845, which he retained till death, and where he was also Lord of the Manor and patron. In 1868 he was appointed a Justice of Peace for the county of Worcester by the late Lord Lyttelton.

It is not so much in connection with his long pastorate of the little village of Pendock, where he spent the best part of his life, as a geologist that the late rev. gentleman will be long remembered. He belonged to the early school of geologists which included such names as Sir Roderick Murchison, Sir Charles Lyell, Professor Phillips, Mr. Prestwich, and others. Mr. Symonds was their fellow workman in many of the discoveries and much of the research with which their names will ever be remembered, and also numbered them amongst his intimate friends. It was not always Mr. Symonds' good fortune to hold views entirely accord with his fellow geologists, and as one remarkable instance of the extent to which he relied upon his own conclusions the episode in connection with the discoveries many years ago during diggings Kent's Cavern is mentioned. Discoveries were then made which gave evidence that man was contemporaneous with certain animals long since extinct, and that he lived in glacial or pre-glacial times. Mr. Symonds left no stone unturned literally, in searching for evidence in support of his theory, and though the doctrine savoured of heresy to some of his clerical colleagues he had the courage of his convictions, and before the British Association in full council assembled expounded his theory to the remote antiquity of man. The theories were opposed, but Mr. Symonds did not retreat from his position. A book from his pen entitled "The Severn Straits" was mainly composed of local evidence in support of his views on this question, and the geologist had his reward in ultimately winning over to his side many eminent scientific men prepared to support his contention. The rectorv of Pendock is in the diocese Worcester, but few meetings of the Field Clubs were hold in this county at which he was not present. He had been president of the Woolhope and Malvern Club, and was an honorary member of the Cotteswold Field Club, the annual meetings of which he regularly attended, until fading health made it no longer possible. The British Association, too, had few more active members, and he was a frequent contributor of papers on geological and antiquarian subjects to that eminent body. In addition to being a facile and picturesque writer, as evidenced particularly in the companion volumes lately prepared for the press, "Malvern Chase," and its sequel "Hanley Castle," Mr. Symonds possessed the valuable gift of being an excellent speaker. "Malvern Chase," which was rendered doubly interesting by the valuable original illustrations supplied by his friend Sir William Guise, and written during a protracted illness, treated, as our readers are aware (both books were reviewed in the Gloucester Journal), of episode the Wars of the roses and the battle of Tewkesbury, and into it was worked a complete and interesting description of the Severn Vale and its flora and fauna at the time. Those who have read the book and are acquainted with localities in which the incidents related took place cannot have helped being struck with the wonderful correctness and picturesqueness with which the scenes are described. Places and characters were invested with life, and the dry bones of history and science were by his pen re-vivified in a manner that at once charmed and interested the reader. Its general popularity is attested by the fact that it soon ran through several editions. "Hanley Castle," which

followed "Malvern Chase," was a story of the stirring times of the great Civil War, and is distinguished for many of the characteristics which made the latter famous. In addition to the above-named works, he wrote a "Record of the Rocks," "Old Stones," and "Old Bones;" and in the transactions of the Cotteswold Club there are two papers by him, "Drifts of the Severn, Avon, Wye, and Usk," and "Geology and Archaeology of the South Malvern District." His presence was invaluable at meetings of the Cotteswold Club, for the entertaining and facile manner in which he discoursed upon all subjects that came under the notice of the members in their excursions and at their meetings. Indeed, he will long be remembered for the earnestness and eloquence with which he expounded the facts and principles of geology and kindred subjects. An ardent admirer and appreciator of the marvels and beauties of the world in which he lived, he possessed the invaluable faculty of infusing the enthusiasm he felt into those who were fortunate enough to be his listeners. The study of science he looked upon as a sacred duty, expressing the opinion that man was exercising his highest functions when sitting at the feet of Nature. Gloucester, he from time to time delivered many lectures upon scientific subjects, one remarkable lecture being that before the members of the Literary and Scientific Association, during the year Mr. J. P. Wilton's presidency, on the "Marvels Science." But Mr. Symonds was seen perhaps at the best advantage when in charge of a party of naturalists discoursing freely, and in very pleasant manner, as he explained some favourite section, in which pleasurable task, one who knew him well assures us, few could equal him.

As a clergyman and friend he was respected far beyond the narrow confines of the little parish of Pendock, and there was a large gathering as he was laid in his last resting in the family vault there on Sunday. The deceased gentleman had what Shakespeare tells us in "Macbeth" those whose way of life has fallen into "the sere, the yellow leaf" must not look to have— "honour, love, obedience, troops of friends;" and nowhere will this kindly-hearted man be more missed than amongst his many acquaintances in this county. Of no one can it be more truly said than of the late Mr. Symonds that he found

"Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks
Sermons in the stones, and good in everything."

Mr. Symonds married in 1840, Hyacinth, daughter of Mr. Samuel Kent, of Upton-on-Severn, and he leaves two children - Henry Francis, who was born in 1847, and who is a Commissioner in the Pacific, and an only daughter, who was married in 1876 to Sir Joseph D. Hooker, Bart. The late respected gentleman was a frequent and valued contributor to the Gloucester Journal.