



Person: Thompson, Joseph Hesselgrave (1811 – 1889)
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DEATH OF THE REV. J. H. THOMPSON.

The small band of ardent scientific workers in Worcestershire has sustained a distinct loss in the death of the Rev. Joseph H. Thompson, Vicar of Crawley, which occurred suddenly from syncope early on Thursday in last week. Mr. Thompson was born in 1811 at Hull, Yorkshire, where his father was engaged in business. When he was about 30 years of age he entered Magdalen Hall, Oxford, and gained a fourth class in the Classical Honour list in 1845. Mr. Thompson was a good classical scholar, and so familiar with Horace and Virgil especially, that if a word or two of either of these poets was given him, he could go on and repeat the subsequent lines to any extent. Only a few weeks before his death, at the house of Dr. Fraser, in Wolverhampton, a line of Horace was quoted, when he repeated the whole ode. In 1845 the late Canon Havergal was appointed by Bishop Pepys to the rectory of St. Nicholas', Worcester, and Mr. Thompson was ordained deacon in that year, and became his curate. Mr. Havergal at that time had private pupils, and Mr. Thompson assisted in their tuition, one of his pupils being Mr. Childers, the late Secretary of War. Mr. Thompson remained in Worcester for nearly ten years, and had some wish to go abroad, but was invited by the late Archdeacon Hone to be his curate at Halesowen. Mr. Hone subsequently presented him with the living of Cradley where he remained 33 years. He was in the habit for many years of passing his summer holiday on the Continent. He visited France, Switzerland, Carinthia, South Italy, &c.; but for the last ten or twelve years he went to Spain and Portugal. He was well acquainted with Spanish, Portuguese, and French; and nothing gave him greater pleasure than to visit the small Protestant congregations in those countries. He would frequently preach to them in their own language. He gave a lecture on his travels annually for about sixteen years before the Worcester Young Men's Christian Association. Mr. Thompson was an excellent geologist, but was perhaps more ardent as a botanist than even as a geologist. His knowledge of the British flora was accurate and extensive. He was a keen observer of the different habitats of plants, and of the minute distinctions which separate species and varieties. He had made an extensive collection of foreign as well as of British plants, all of which he has bequeathed to the Hastings Museum, Worcester. He was one of the oldest members of the Worcestershire Naturalists' Field Club, and was president in 1880. He was an ex-president of the Dudley Club, of which he was one of the chief resuscitators about the year 1863. Mr. Thompson was at one time a member of the general council of the British Association. He was unmarried. It is stated that he has bequeathed £3,000 to the Church Missionary Society.

A correspondent writes : — The Rev. J. H. Thompson was curate of St. Nicholas, Worcester, about 35 years ago, under the Rev. Mr. Havergal, and was distinguished by his earnest evangelical principles, and his kind attentions to the schools and the poor of the parish. In 1856 he was appointed to the living of Cradley, Brierley-hill, which he held to the time of his death. His example and affectionate solicitude for his parishioners endeared him to all, and exercised a very beneficial influence throughout that part of the Black Country. The rev. gentleman associated with the poorest of his flock, and hesitated not to descend the mines to preach the Gospel to the poor miners. He also organized a parochial machinery which produced admirable results in the working of various excellent institutions, charitable, educational, and religious. Deceased was a good botanist and geologist, and a great lover of Nature; he was a member of the Worcester Naturalists' Field Club, also of the Malvern, Cotswold, Woolhope, and other clubs,

whose field-days he frequently attended, and imparted most generously to all present the results of his research and extensive knowledge. It was likewise a habit of his to make an annual excursion into Spain, Portugal, Italy, Germany, or France, not only as a botanist, but as a Christian philanthropist; and on his return home some good and worthy institution (chiefly the Young Men's Christian Association) was sure to be benefited by a gratuitous lecture on his travels. His original and eccentric style as a lecturer afforded great pleasure, not unmixed with amusement, to all his hearers. He was a thoroughly good, earnest, and self-denying man, and his loss will be felt deeply and widely, for he died beloved and respected by all who knew him. The naturalists of this district have now, within a short space of time, lost nearly all their leading men - Rev. W. S. Symonds, of Pendock, Rev. J. Thompson, Messrs. E. Lees, Haywood, and Reece - men whose vacant places will not be readily filled up.

THE FUNERAL

The funeral of the late Rev. J. H. Thompson, took place on Monday afternoon at Cradley Church. A large number of parishioners were present, and the school children formed part of the gathering at the grave. A ¹brother and nephew of the deceased attended as mourners, and the following gentlemen were present on behalf of the Dudley and Midland Geological Society- Mr. Horace Pearce (president), Dr. Fraser (Wolverhampton), and Messrs. A. Freer, E. B. Marten, and G. F. Bland (Stourbridge). A beautiful wreath was sent by the Worcestershire Naturalists' Club, who would have been personally represented but for ignorance of the time of the funeral.

INQUEST.

An inquest was held at the Talbot Inn, Cradley, on Saturday morning, by Mr. A. H. Hebbert (Deputy- Coroner).

Mrs. Shuck, of Church-street, said that for eleven years she and her husband had lived at deceased's house. He would have been seventy-eight years old on the next Sunday, and was a bachelor. On the previous Thursday morning at eight o'clock, witness saw Mr. Thompson, who was then in bed. He complained of being rather weak. He had previously complained of being weak. He attended to his duties as usual during the week, and preached on the Wednesday evening. Witness rapped at the bedroom door several times about ten o'clock on Thursday morning, and as she could get no answer she sent for her husband and Mr. Jacquiss, the schoolmaster. In answer to Dr. Fraser, of Wolverhampton, a friend of the deceased, witness said that deceased had been quite well, and had only complained of being weak. There had been a great many services lately, of which the deceased had taken a share. He preached on the Wednesday evening.

John Shuck, husband of the last witness, stated that on the previous Wednesday Mr. Thompson said he wished the weather would take up so that he could get out. He had been a little feeble during the last fortnight. At about ten o'clock on Thursday morning, his wife sent for him and told him Mr. Thompson had not answered her call. Witness told her to rap at the door again and she did so. Witness then went into the room with Mr. Jacquiss, the schoolmaster. They found Mr. Thompson lying on his side on the floor. He was nearly naked, and there was a little blood about his nose. They found that Mr. Thompson was dead, and at once sent for Dr. Thompson, who arrived in a few minutes. Mr. Joseph Jacquiss, schoolmaster, corroborated this evidence. Mr. W. H. Thompson, surgeon, stated that he was sent for to deceased's residence, and on arriving there found that Mr. Thompson was dead. His body was lying at full length on the floor in his bedroom. Witness examined the body and found no marks to account for death. There was a very slight bruise on the forehead, caused probably by the fall. Witness knew deceased well, but had never attended him professionally. He attributed death to failure of the heart's action through extreme weakness. The bleeding from the nose was post mortem. He considered death had taken place nearly two hours before he saw the body. The jury at once returned a verdict of "Death from natural causes."

¹ William French Thompson was his brother and Joseph French Thomson, his son, the nephew.