



HERBERT MAXWELL WOOD, B.A., F.S.A.



V.—A MEMOIR OF THE LATE HERBERT
MAXWELL WOOD, B.A., F.S.A.

BY FREDERICK WALTER DENDY, D.C.L., F.S.A., A VICE-
PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

[Read on the 30th October, 1929.]

On October 3, 1929, died at his residence Rokers, Shackleford, Godalming, Herbert Maxwell Wood, B.A., F.S.A., a most assiduous and helpful member of this society.

He was the son of Matthew Wood by his wife Fanny Maxwell, was born at Westoe village, South Shields, on September 23, 1869, was educated at Oundle school and Durham university, married on June 15, 1904, to Ada Elizabeth, daughter of John Forster, practised as a chartered accountant at Sunderland, joined our society in 1896 and acted for twenty-two years as one of its auditors. He was elected a Fellow of the London Society of Antiquaries in February, 1929, and he was also recently elected a Fellow of the Society of Genealogists in recognition of his work as a transcriber and of his generosity in putting information at the disposal of that society.

He retired from business in 1922, and, living first at Newcastle upon Tyne, then at Alnmouth and lastly near Godalming, he employed his leisure increasingly in antiquarian pursuits.

He edited a volume containing *An Index of Durham Wills: 1540-99* for the Newcastle upon Tyne Records Series, and two volumes, one *Durham Protestations* and one *Wills and Inventories: IV*, being numbers 135 and 142 of the publications of the Surtees Society. Several articles by him on varied subjects appear in *Antiquities of Durham*, in *Archæologia Aeliana* and in the *Proceed-*

ings of this society. At the request of its editors he contributed much information about north country Cambridge graduates to Venn's *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, and he also helped Messrs. Hills & Co. of Sunderland, who re-issued the Sunderland, Gateshead and Hartlepool sections of Surtees' *History of Durham*, in 1908, 1909 and 1910, with many notes and corrections to the pedigrees in those sections. He was a member of the Northumberland County History Committee and many of the pedigrees in the latest volumes of that history were compiled by him.

But his chief interest lay in the preservation, transcription and printing of local parish registers, and his achievements as regards those main original local records of the period between 1538 and 1837 were so important that they merit narrating at some length.

Mr. Chester Waters in his interesting book on the subject says :¹

"The parish registers previous to 1837 are every year becoming of greater value as national records. They are not only indispensable to the local historian and invaluable to the biographer, but they have been for a long time the only public documents in existence for determining questions of inheritance."

To this might be added that they are every year being increasingly consulted by English-speaking people across the seas who desire to trace their forefathers in the old home of their race.

A writer in *The Times* for the present month of October says :

"Desire to see all church registers carefully preserved must be shared by us all. But the important thing is to preserve and render accessible the information which they contain. Every such unique document should be copied by a competent person—and where possible printed, and the copy kept in a different place from the original."

Actuated by the like convictions, Mr. Wood formed about 1898 the Durham and Northumberland Parish Register Society for the purpose of printing as many

¹ Waters, *Parish Registers in England*, new edition, 1883, p. 94.

of the local registers as the members' subscriptions would allow. The list of original subscribers to that society contains many familiar names; amongst them those of Canon Baily (who edited for it the Ryton marriage register), Cadwallader Bates, Robert Blair, Joseph Cowen, William Greenwell, Crawford Hodgson and Richard Welford. Mr. Wood was honorary secretary and treasurer for that society, and he transcribed or edited for it most of the thirty-seven local registers which it printed and published. He also edited for that society a useful *List of Parochial and Non-Parochial Registers relating to the Counties of Durham and Northumberland*. That work not only gives a complete list of all registers for the two counties with their dates, but also records which of them, up to 1912, had been transcribed or printed. When that local register society was wound up in 1926, Mr. Wood presented its remainder stock to this society. That stock consists of over-prints of twenty-eight of the thirty-seven registers printed by the local register society and of over-prints also of his above-named "List" of local registers. They have been roughly catalogued amongst the particulars of this society's publications appended to the last issued volume of the *Archæologia Aeliiana* (4th ser., vol. VI) and can be had at the prices per volume there stated.

He has now by his will bequeathed to the Newcastle Public Library transcripts (principally but not entirely made by himself) of about one hundred and twenty local registers; and in addition thereto a typed transcript of Boyd's Indexes of Marriage Licences for Durham and handwritten transcripts of Raines' *Testamenta Eboracensia* and Raines' *Testamenta Dunelmensia*. That provision for the deposit of those transcripts with the Newcastle Public Library is a great gain to the local and general public. For it enables searches to be made in one central place, and it makes the possible loss of any of the originals by fire or carelessness to be less disastrous.

Within the last thirty years about a dozen other local

registers, transcribed by different hands, have been printed; some by our own society, some by the Durham Historical Society and some by private enterprise. Amongst them is that of Dinsdale, which has the distinction of being the oldest parish register in the two counties. It goes back to 1556, which is only eighteen years later than Cromwell's ordinance of 1538 providing that registers of weddings, christenings and burials shall be kept in parish churches. In it under the entry of the baptism in 1711 of Margery Hudson is the note "This register proved of importance in 1796."

The librarian of Newcastle Public Library has now prepared a manuscript list of :

1. The local parish registers printed by the Durham and Northumberland Parish Register Society.
2. The local parish registers otherwise printed.
3. The local parish registers of which there are transcripts in the Newcastle Public Library.

It is to be hoped that this list will be published. It would be very useful both to our own members and to the general public.²

It should be observed that both the printed registers and the transcripts of those unprinted have generally been brought down only to 1812, because in that year provision was made by statute for the better preservation of later registers.

Mr. Wood leaves his widow, an only son, George Maxwell Forster Wood, and many friends to mourn his loss. He was a companionable man, unassuming, and always helpful and unsparing of time and trouble when others sought his skilled aid. His industry was extraordinary, his transcripts are accurate and reliable and his notes thereon are illuminating. The work to which he devoted so much time and attention has conferred a benefit on others which will keep alive their grateful memory of him.

² The volume of the Records Committee of this society for 1930 will contain this list, amongst others. (Editor.)

