



CHARLES W. F. Goss, F.S.A.

## CHARLES WILLIAM FREDERICK GOSS, F.S.A.

THE London and Middlesex Archæological Society lost an old and valued friend in the death of Charles Goss at the age of 82 on 10th September, 1946. He was born a Londoner in 1864, but his early work as a Librarian was done in Birkenhead and in Newcastle-on-Tyne. Leaving the north to become first public Librarian at Lewisham, he was appointed in 1897 to Bishopsgate Institute, and continued there until his retirement in April, 1941, carrying on long after the normal age for retirement. When Charles Goss took office at Bishopsgate the open access system was at work. After four or five years he was able to introduce the Cotgreave Indicator, which lasted until 1946. The change-over was due to some mismanagement before Goss's arrival, and for many years librarians were divided in their views on the open access system. Goss was a vigorous opponent of this system, against which he wrote and spoke very vigorously. But, as the *Library Association Record* says, "he was much more than a controversialist, being also a very able Librarian, who built up a splendid library in the Institute, issued a masterly catalogue, in dictionary form, which was packed with valuable annotations, made a magnificent collection of London prints, besides writing many stimulating papers on various aspects of library activity."

Perhaps his most useful contribution to a study of London's history was a very thorough Bibliography of *The London Directory, 1677-1855*, with a careful survey of 285 volumes and an excellent introduction. This was published in 1932. and had very attractive end-papers of "Londres, Capital de l'Angleterre." It provides much useful material for "the student of sociology and topography, the antiquary, the historian, the biographer and the genealogist." His earlier researches resulted in the publication of *Crosby Hall* (1908); a *Bibliography of the Writings of George Jacob Holyoake* (1908); *Methods of Producing and Preserving Prints* (1915); and the story of several London parishes. For our Society's *Transactions* he wrote a *History of the Parish and Church of St. Martin Outwich, Threadneedle Street* (1929); *Sir Paul Pindar and his Bishopsgate Mansion* (1930); *A History of the London and Middlesex Archæological Society, 1855-1930* (1931); *A Tribute to John Stow*, which he

delivered at the Stow Commemoration Service on 28th April, 1936; *Parish Registers for London and Middlesex* (1938); and *St. Mary the Virgin of Aldermanbury* (1945).

An interesting comment or two on Charles Goss occur in the Diary of John Burns, another keen researcher into London's Story. On 10th February, 1916, Burns writes: "To Bishopsgate Institute, a really great institution, conducted on human and intelligent lines by that best of all directors and book lovers, Mr. Goss. With him a feast of London literature, prints and London histories."

On 12th October, 1917, Burns records a return visit of Goss to see the famous collections which are now housed at County Hall. "Whilst finishing our daily work on the garden, Mr. Goss, the Bishopsgate librarian, called to see our display of More's books. Our largest table was covered with the exhibit. With great knowledge of London literature, Mr. Goss was greatly surprised to see our collection. Frankly he envied it for his Institute, and he derived much pleasure and interest in going from book to book to examine their merits and to become acquainted with what was in many cases information about books. I was pleased at his delight in seeing such a large collection of treasures in such condition. To the National Liberal Club for lunch, and again an agreeable talk with him upon London. Certainly Mr. Goss should be at South Kensington or the British Museum."

He was a member of our Council for many years; Honorary Librarian and Chairman of Council; and was elected a Vice-President in recognition of his long services to the Society. He had a remarkable collection of *Londiniana* in his own possession; and he helped to make the Society's collection and that belonging to the Bishopsgate Institute as complete as possible. His wide knowledge and experience were at anyone's disposal, and an extremely valuable talk was one given during the war on "Grangerising" or extra-illustration, of which he was a past-master. For many years he was Honorary Secretary of the Society of Public Librarians, and one of them describes him as "a kindly, generous-hearted and good-natured man, with an extremely active mind and tremendous energy." Our Society, with which he was associated for almost half a century, pays a tribute of respect and affection to his memory. We have lost by death a number of loyal and valued members during the last few years, including Walter Bell, Arthur Bonner, Sir

Edward Braybrooke, G. J. B. Fox, F. Marcham, William Martin, Philip Norman, Garraway Rice, Harold Sands, Sir Montagu Sharp, and now Charles Goss. So fine a list of past supporters of our work should be a great stimulus for the present and for the future.