

Edward William Prevost, Ph.D., F.I.C. By Dr Henry Barnes,
O.B.E., M.D.

(Read January 9, 1922.)

By the death of Dr Prevost, which took place at his residence, The Sandiway, Ross-on-Wye, on 7th October 1920, the Society loses one of its oldest Fellows and one keenly interested in its welfare.

Dr Prevost was born at Carlisle in 1851, being the elder son of Colonel T. W. Prevost, at that time Staff Officer of Pensions in the district. His early education was under private tutors and at Glenalmond, which school he left in 1864 for Rugby, where he remained till 1867. After two years on the science side at Edinburgh University he proceeded to Leipzig and Heidelberg, where he studied chemistry under Bunsen and graduated Ph.D. Returning to England, he worked for two and a half years at the Royal College of Science and Art, South Kensington, undertaking chemical research for Norman Lockyer. For several years he was a tutor in chemistry at Oxford, where he was employed under Odling as teacher of quantitative chemistry. He carried out in Oxford an investigation into the nutritive value of the turnip grown in (*a*) unmanured, (*b*) manured, soil. From May 1879 to the spring of 1881 he was Professor of Chemistry at the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester. On leaving in 1881 he retired into private life and took up farming, first at Elsmere, near Tamworth, and afterwards at Elton, Newnham, where in 1890 the first part of the Cumberland Dialect Glossary was written. In 1882 he received the Gold Medal of the Royal Highland Agricultural Society for a paper on the cultivation of potatoes. In 1878 he obtained the Fellowship of the Institute of Chemistry of Great Britain and Ireland. While living at Newnham he joined the Gloucester Garrison Volunteers, afterwards attaining the rank of major. He became a Fellow of the Society in 1875, one of the proposers being Professor Piazzzi Smyth, then Astronomer Royal for Scotland, and a paper by him on "An Ammonium-Cupric Zinc Chloride" appears in our *Proceedings*, vol. ix, 5th February 1877. It is the analysis of the substance which grows on the brass binding screws and carbon of a Leclanché cell.

It is, however, by his Glossary of the dialect of Cumberland that Dr Prevost will be best remembered. He began his study of this subject nearly thirty years ago, taking for groundwork the Glossary formed by the late Mr William Dickinson of Workington, published by the English Dialect Society (1878-81). The first results of his labours, in which he received assistance from many correspondents throughout the country, was

the publication in 1899 of *A Glossary of the Words and Phrases pertaining to the Dialect of Cumberland*, by W. Dickinson, F.L.S., rearranged, illustrated, and augmented by E. W. Prevost, Ph.D., F.R.S.E. The amplifications and fresh matter contained in this volume constituted practically a new work, which would in itself have made Dr Prevost's reputation as a painstaking and persevering compiler, but from then to the time of his death his labours in search of unrecorded words, elucidations of meanings, and illustrations of dialect usage were unceasing. In 1905 he published a supplementary volume which, like the earlier volume, contained a comprehensive Digest of the Phonology and Grammar of the Dialect, by Mr S. Dickson Brown, M.A. Lond., F.R.G.S. Continuing his efforts with undiminished ardour, Dr Prevost has for the last fifteen years been adding to the stock of information already garnered; and when he learned how fragile was his hold upon life, he devoted all his energies to complete his work while he still had power to do so. The application that this has involved has been continuous and close. Many pages of correspondence were devoted to discovering the exact significance of a single word, slight shades in difference of meaning being cleared up, and illustrative quotations sought for. New words kept cropping up constantly, for in the compilation of a glossary there is no finality.

Dr Prevost just lived to draw to a close the task he had set for himself of compiling a second supplement of the Glossary; and it was his last wish that, should he himself be prevented from finishing this supplement and seeing it through the press, the duty should be undertaken by Mr James Walter Brown of Carlisle, who had been in close collaboration with him upon dialect work for more than twenty years.

The cost of publishing this supplement has been assured by the Philological Society of London, and it will be issued at an early date. Dr Prevost was deeply interested in music, and was a skilful organist. He had explored and inspected the mechanism and equipments of many of our cathedral organs, and in a letter to a friend three days before his death were the words, "I am off to Gloucester to see how the reconstruction of the organ is getting on."

In December 1918 Dr Prevost was found to have an ailment which might cause his death at any moment, and from that time he was condemned to a life of physical inactivity. For the last few weeks he had been able to take more exercise, and so recently as last September he was well enough to go to Devonport to see H.M.S. *Hood*, in which his younger son is a midshipman. Soon after his return the threatened seizure occurred, and ended in his death at the age of sixty-nine years.