

Obituary Notice

William Paley Baildon.—By the death in London on 14th March 1924 of William Paley Baildon at the age of 64, the Society has lost one of its most familiar and distinguished Fellows.

For several months his health had given rise to anxiety, and he had borne much suffering with cheerful courage. The wide scope of his knowledge, which had won for him a leading position in more fields than one, and the services which he had rendered to the Society and his Inn during a long range of years, are but a small measure of the loss which archaeology has sustained. A large circle of friends will remember his kindly humour, the soundness of his judgement, his unflinching readiness to place the results of his own researches at the disposal of others, and his power, inspired perhaps by his association with F. W. Maitland, of putting life into what some may regard as merely the dry bones of law and history.

In one of his lectures on Maitland, the late Master of Balliol had occasion to remark, speaking as an historian, that 'a converted lawyer is peculiarly welcome'. Baildon was not a convert to history in this sense; indeed, he continued his practice as a Chancery barrister until the end. But he brought to bear on his archaeological pursuits the careful training of the lawyer; and the precise historical fact which he could often deduce from a medieval document of unusual character, was due to his exact knowledge of medieval law.

Descended from a Yorkshire family, he had more interests in that county than elsewhere; and certainly his acquaintance with the medieval families of the West Riding was unrivalled. But genealogy was not with him an end in itself; it was a branch of knowledge through which the human life of the Middle Ages could be illuminated. And his treatment of genealogy proceeded on definitely scientific lines. No pedigree could be accepted which not only did not stand the test of careful scrutiny, but which could not actually be proved in the light of documentary evidence. In a passage in *South Yorkshire*—an example of topographical history to which Baildon was wont to give his highest praise—Joseph Hunter expresses the wish 'that Dodsworth had written dissertations upon the descents of the old families in Yorkshire rather than given us pedigrees'; and Baildon's constructive work on Yorkshire genealogy, based largely on the Plea Rolls, would have been after Hunter's own heart. His published work was almost invariably the result of original research; and the permanent value of his contributions to the Selden Society and the Yorkshire Record Series—to speak almost at random—bears witness to this.

His connexion with the Society of Antiquaries dated from his election in 1892. He made frequent communications to the Society, which have been published in *Archaeologia* and *Proceedings*, and took a constant part in the discussions. On eleven occasions he was elected a member of Council, for many years he had been on the Library Committee, in 1906 and again in 1920 he served on a special committee for the revision of the Statutes, and in 1922 he was nominated to the office of Vice-President, an office which he was holding at the time of his death.

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