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DEATH OF MR. EDWIN LEES.

On Friday Mr. Edwin Lees died at his residence, Green-hill, London-road, having attained the age of 87 years. For some months he had been in a precarious state of health, suffering from natural decay, aggravated by internal ulcers, which were the immediate cause of his death.

Nearly the whole of Mr. Lees' long life was passed in Worcester. He was born here, in the first year of the century, and his longest absence from his native city seems to have occurred in his boyhood and youth. Having spent some time at school in Worcester, his education was continued at Birmingham, in a school the principal of which was Mr. Hill, who was assisted by his two sons, both afterwards distinguished, the one as Recorder of Birmingham, and the other as the founder of the penny postal system. Among the contemporaries of Mr. Lees at this school was Mr. H. H. Lines, who settled in Worcester many years later, applying his pencil to the illustration of his adopted city, as his old schoolfellow applied his pen and his knowledge of natural history.

Having left school Mr. Lees entered upon the business of a stationer and printer, learning his trade at Wellington, in Shropshire, and being afterwards engaged in the establishment of ¹Mr. Eaton, of this city. In a few years he began business for himself in High-street as a printer and stationer, and evidence still exists that while yet a young man he was engaged in those pursuits in Worcester, and that he was also making unambitious excursions into the field of letters, which he never wholly abandoned down to the time of his death. In 1828, just 60 years ago, writing under the nom de plume of Ambrose Florence, he produced a strangers' guide to the city and Cathedral, "printed by Edwin Lees, 87, High-street." The book was illustrated, and is particularly interesting now as showing that already Mr. Lees had begun that study of the flora of Worcestershire which he was destined so long to continue with valuable results. At the end of the guide is "a catalogue of plants growing wild in the vicinity of Worcester." The list includes about one hundred and forty varieties, the locality of each being mentioned, with the intimation that "the plants here enumerated have been nearly all observed in the habitat described by the publisher of this volume, of whom practical botanists may obtain dried specimens." With the local sympathy which always characterised him Mr. Lees dedicated this, his earliest book, to the Mayor of the city for that year, Mr. Thomas Best. In the following year, 1829, he began a small publication in pamphlet form, called the Worcestershire Miscellany, which was issued quarterly, and had only a short existence. He re-issued the numbers, bound together, in 1831, by which time he had removed his business to Broad-street. Among the brief chronicle of events which the miscellany contains, is an account of the formation of the Worcester Literary and Scientific Institution, of which Mr. Lees was appointed one of the secretaries, and it is a forcible illustration of the mutation of human affairs, that of the score or more of persons named in connection with the formation of that institution, Mr. Lees was the last survivor. It was in connection with this institution that Mr. Lees, soon after its inauguration, gave perhaps his first, or at all events one of his earliest lectures, dealing with geology as his subject. With the constitution of the Worcestershire Natural History Society, in 1833, a congenial field was presented to Mr. Lees for the exercise of his knowledge and energy. He became the first

¹ Mr T. Eaton, College-street, Worcester.

honorary curator of the infant society, and one of the first donors to its museum, giving a number of botanical specimens. During the first year of its existence he was joined with the late Mr. Jabez Allies in a regular geological examination of the hills from Mathon to Old Storridge, and thence to Knightwick. Soon afterwards we find him lecturing for the society on zoology and botany, on the affinities of plants with men and animals; and in 1834 he published a book on the same subject. To the Natural History Society he also contributed a paper "On some striking meteorological phenomena lately observed in this county," and became secretary to the botanical and meteorological sub-committees. In 1847 he assisted in the formation of the Worcestershire Naturalists' Field Club. He was appointed its first president, did much interesting work in connection with it, and remained a vice-president down to the time of his death. He occupied a similar position in relation to the Malvern Naturalists' Club and to the transactions of these clubs, to the Cotswold Field Club, and the Worcestershire Diocesan Architectural and Archaeological Society he was a frequent contributor. To the latter society he contributed papers of especial interest "On the convent of the White Ladies" in 1866, and "On the hospital of St. Wulstan, commonly called the Commandery," in 1867. In 1869 the Worcestershire and Malvern Field Clubs made a presentation to Mr. Lees of his own portrait and a service of plate. In accepting the testimonial Mr. Lees spoke then of the "narrow margin of life" which still remained to him, though he was to live through more than half of another generation. He spoke also of the time "when as a schoolboy I first gazed upon the blue range of the Malvern Hills and wondered what lay beyond their mysterious line; and when, with the romance of a youngster, I stole a truant's day to climb the mossy banks and explore the trenches of those inspiring hills, I little thought that I should ever describe and catalogue their plants, or examine their rocks and adjoining Silurian strata with a grave scientific eye ... In my younger days it was difficult to obtain instruction in any department of natural history, for illustrative works were rare and inaccessible, and there existed no popular teacher as at present. And yet a taste for this kind of knowledge may be developed without teachers and the future man portrayed in the whims of the boy. I remember a schoolfellow who need to fill his desk with stones of various kinds collected in his walks, and his pockets broke down with the weight of the pebbles he gathered that left a simulated Northern drift behind him as he walked, though then unable to distinguish a mineral, or know a granite pebble from a sandstone one; and while I myself collected leaves and flowers as pretty objects, none could tell me how to name them."

The early bent towards natural history which existed in the ease of Mr. Lees is sufficiently indicated in this quotation from himself. The result was that while still comparatively a young man he altogether relinquished business and devoted himself to his favourite pursuits. The fruits of his rambles and researches appeared not only in fugitive pieces, but in such works as "The Botany of the Malvern Hills," "Pictures of Nature around the Malvern Hills and vale of Severn," "The Botany of Worcestershire," and "The Forest and Chace of Malvern." His works are authorities on local botany, and in his descriptive sketches he adopted a racy style, with a remarkable command of poetical illustration and allusion. He contributed also much to current literature, writing a series of papers under the name of the Old Surveyor for Barrow's Journal; and 19 years ago he produced for the same paper a Christmas story, "The Dark Lady of the Marsh." His essays in verse were not infrequent, and in his 80th year he published a volume called "Scenery and Thought." A little later, upon the opening of the Worcester Free Library, he was made a member of the committee, and continued to be so till his death. Mr. Lees was for many years a Fellow of the Linnean and Geological Societies.

Among minor objects of interest which occupied him was the preservation of ancient ways, and ten or twelve years ago he was one of the foremost to take an active part in support of the rights of the public in regard to Cruckbarrow Hill, stimulated no doubt by early associations; for in the list of plants published in his first book, already mentioned, occurs the lesser periwinkle, described as growing "at the base of Crookbarrow Hill in a beautiful manner."

Mr. Lee's manner was extremely genial and hearty, even down to his latest years. He was twice married. His first wife died several years ago and was buried at

Pendock, in the parish of his old friend and fellow naturalist, the Rey. W. Symonds. About four years ago Mr. Lees married again, Mrs. Matthews, widow of the late Mr. J. Matthews, auctioneer, of Worcester.

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The Rev. J. H. Thompson, of Cradley, writes of Mr. Lees: — He has by his writings done perhaps more than any individual of this age in promoting the study of botany in this county as well as other departments of natural history. He was the founder and the mainspring of the Worcestershire Naturalists' Club, and laboured incessantly in its service for very many years. His numerous reports of its meetings, so graphically described in Berrow's Worcester Journal, his "Botanical Looker-out in England and Wales," his numerous admirable papers in the "Phytologist" and other scientific periodicals, his volume of poetry, his "Pictures of Nature" in especial reference to the clubs' operations in the immediate neighbourhood of the Faithful City, his "Botany of Worcester," the result of close observation in the field during a long life, and his "Botany and Geology of the Malvern Hills" will be esteemed as lasting records of his unwearied zeal, careful study, extensive travels in various countries, high attainments, and continual desire to benefit his fellows, especially in the elucidation of his favourite science.