

## OBITUARY.

RALPH STOCKMAN, M.D., LL.D.

The death of Ralph Stockman in Edinburgh on 27th February, removes one whose memory will remain fresh for many years wherever Glasgow men come together. He was born in Leith in 1861, the second son of a merchant of that town, educated at the Royal High School, from which he proceeded to the study of medicine at the University of Edinburgh, where he graduated M.B., in 1882. At that time German medical schools were among the most progressive in the development of the biological sciences, and Stockman, interested from his early days in the scientific approach to medicine, spent two years at the Universities of Vienna and Strasbourg before he returned to Edinburgh, to become an assistant in the department of materia medica. Immediately he commenced his researches on pharmacology and even in these early days he published important work on the opium and coca alkaloids, the camphor group of drugs, and the vegetable astringents. In 1886 he graduated M.D., with high distinction, being awarded a gold medal for his thesis, and in 1889 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. From then till 1897 when he moved to Glasgow, he was engaged in researches, the results of which have since been amply confirmed, and showed the importance of faulty nutrition in the etiology of chlorosis or microcytic hypochromic anaemia. The papers detailing the results of these investigations give evidence of the critical scientific approach of the author to clinical problems. In Edinburgh he established a reputation as a teacher and this was enhanced after his appointment to the Chair of Materia Medica and Therapeutics in the University of Glasgow, which he held till his retiral in 1936. On his arrival in Glasgow he was appointed a visiting physician to the Western Infirmary and in the following year he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. During his stay in Glasgow he continued his pharmacological investigations and published papers on the iodides, arrow poisons, myelotoxic substances and lathyrism. His chief contribution, however, was the monograph on Rheumatism and Arthritis, published in 1920. This volume has done much to get rid of some useless hypotheses and to put some order into the classification of the so-called rheumatic disorders. This outstanding work laid the foundation for future pathological and therapeutic studies in this difficult field.

In Glasgow he had no small share in the development of the medical curriculum, a subject in which he maintained a great interest to the very end of his life. In the early years of this century there was a great expansion in facilities for the teaching of the basic sciences and Stockman



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played a prominent part in directing this development. With it all, however, he was essentially a physician and for him the study of disease commenced with the patient. In the words of Marcus Aurelius he looked at 'things as they are, discriminating matter, cause and tendency.' During the period when therapeutics was emancipating itself from empiricism and superstition and when pharmacology was slowly being established as a science, the main aim of a teacher was to get rid of the accumulated chaff of centuries. Inevitably therefore Stockman's teaching tended towards scepticism which rather overwhelmed those students who liked dogma. The stronger minds, however, were attracted by the wit and enthusiasm of one who had himself contributed to human knowledge and approached hypotheses and opinions with the keenest of critical faculties. For him the purpose of education was 'to get a relish of knowledge.' Careful observation and accumulation of facts was always stressed but Stockman interpreted experimental and clinical findings in the light of his own experience.

Knowledge dwells

In heads replete with thoughts of other men ;

Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.

Most of us who had the privilege of sitting at Stockman's feet came away with the feeling that for the physician as for members of other professions, 'without history a man sees only the things which almost touch his eyes.' The qualities of mind defined by Hippocrates as indispensable for a physician are learning, sagacity, humanity and probity. These Stockman possessed in full measure. If at times the student was unduly sensitive to his Socratic method of instruction, he felt that he was in the presence of a physician and teacher with outstanding clinical acumen, scientific training and with general reading combined with an appreciation of the patient as an individual possessed of hopes and fears.

He took an active part in the communal life of the University believing as he did that a University exists for 'the communication of knowledge and also the relation and bond which exists between the teacher and the taught.' For many years he was senior vice-president of the Union which derived great benefit from his wise and kindly supervision. On the Union wall to-day there is a tablet commemorating the respect and affection in which he was held by many generations of students.

In 1936 he retired and moved to Edinburgh where he continued to be interested in men and affairs. Till the very end he remained mentally alert. We from Glasgow mourn the loss of a great figure and are grateful for the life of Ralph Stockman who gave so much to the citizens of this University. Our sympathy goes out to his sister who was his companion and counsellor.

N. M.