

OBITUARY.

ROBERT PEEL RITCHIE, M.D. (Edin.), F.R.C.P.Ed., F.R.S.E.

By the death of Dr. Robert Peel Ritchie, the medical profession in Edinburgh has lost a much-esteemed member, and the city a useful citizen. Born in 1835 in Edinburgh, where his father was a civil engineer and for some time a magistrate of the city, he was educated at the Academy. Choosing medicine as his profession, he studied at the University, and graduated M.D. in 1856. Just before graduating he was for some time Assistant House-Surgeon at the Perth Infirmary, when Sir John Sibbald was House-Surgeon. After taking his degree he acted as Resident Physician to the Bethnell House Asylum.

Resolving to practise his profession in his native city, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in 1863. He joined the staff of the Old Town Dispensary, and acted as one of the obstetrical physicians, under the late Dr. Matthews Duncan. In this institution he took a life-long interest, and was at the time of his death, as he had been for many years, on the board of management. Elected one of the Physicians of the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, he threw himself heartily into the work, and lectured on diseases of children. Having served his full time, he was placed on the Consulting Staff. Various charitable and philanthropic organisations received his attentive care, and he was Honorary Physician for the Rescue Home, St. John's Hill, and also for the Night Asylum for Vagrants.

He became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and was a member of its club. He was one of the founders of the Microscopical Society, was formerly a President, and at the time of his death was one of the Vice-Presidents. As President of the Harveian Society, he delivered an address on the founders of the Edinburgh Medical School. After much research and painstaking labour, this address was expanded into a handsome volume, entitled "The Early Days of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh." This book was most favourably received by the public and the profession, as it gave a careful and interesting account of the beginnings of the College, and the negotiations for getting a Royal Charter, as well as biographical notices of some of the early fathers of the College.

Dr. Peel Ritchie was a member of that most select of Edinburgh medical societies—the Æsculapian—and at its festive board showed the sociable and cheery side of his character.

He acted for nearly five years as Treasurer of the Royal College of

Physicians, and was an ideal treasurer, displaying great business capacity and power of organisation. He demitted office in 1887 to become President of the College, the duties of which he discharged with much acceptance to the Fellows. He served for five years as one of the College Representatives on the Board of Management of the Royal Infirmary.

A member of the Church of Scotland, he served in succession as an elder in the Tron and St. Cuthbert's parishes. He took a keen interest in all church work; and, being a Conservative in politics, he was Chairman of the St. Cuthbert's Church Defence Committee. He also discharged the duties of Chairman of the Medical Committee of the Church of Scotland's Deaconess Hospital.

As a member of the old Parochial Board, the claims of the poor engaged his attention, and the experience thus gained led to his being elected to the second Parish Council formed in Edinburgh, of which he was one of the most active members. The Public Health side of the tuberculosis controversy received his especial care, and he represented the Parish Council in the recent Congress on Tuberculosis in London.

Amidst all these public duties he had a considerable practice, and was much appreciated by his patients as a physician and for his sterling worth. For many years he was an Examiner for the Royal College of Physicians, first on Midwifery, and latterly on Medical Jurisprudence and Public Health.

The loss of his wife some years ago told greatly upon him. He suffered from rheumatic arthritis, which made locomotion difficult; but he was always pleasant and bright. A shock of apoplexy and a short illness brought his life to a close.

He is survived by two sons, one a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, the other a member of his own profession.

His funeral was largely attended by his professional brethren and the members of the various organisations to which he belonged, testifying to the esteem he enjoyed as a physician and as a citizen.

Dr. Peel Ritchie was a most thorough and painstaking man. Whatever his hand found to do he did it with all his might. Holding strong convictions, he had the courage to declare them; but if the vote went against him, he bore no grudge. A man of unostentatious piety, he was courteous to all, and, having done his day's work faithfully and well, he has entered into his rest.