

OBITUARY.

SIR ARTHUR MITCHELL, K.C.B., M.A., M.D., LL.D.

THE most many-sided man in Scotland died at the good old age of eighty-three in Edinburgh on 12th October 1909.

Arthur Mitchell was born in Elgin in 1826. He came of a professional stock. He was educated in the Aberdeen University, where he took the degrees of M.A. and M.D. After studying in Paris, Berlin, and Vienna, he engaged in practice in Glasgow for a short time, where his health threatened to break down from lung disease. He then travelled in Egypt, where he made the acquaintance of various persons of influence who were of service to him in his future life. On his return to this country he received the appointment which determined the chief work of his life, in the shape of one of the Deputy Commissionerships in Lunacy, as provided for by the new Act for the Treatment of the Insane, of 1857. He threw himself enthusiastically into that work, which consisted in the supervision of the idiots, imbeciles, and chronic harmless insane who were boarded with their relatives or others throughout the whole extent of Scotland and its islands. It seemed an uninteresting and monotonous employment for an able and original-minded doctor, but Mitchell soon showed it to be a work of unusual importance. He found the unfortunate subjects of his inspection, to a large extent, neglected and unsupervised. He saw being built in Scotland new hospitals for the insane, and great enthusiasm arising for the hospital treatment and study of mental disease. The idea, then, was that every mentally afflicted person should, as a matter of course, be sent to those asylums when they were ready to receive them. He had the penetration and originality to see that there was scope for another mode of treatment which would be far more suitable and far cheaper for a certain class of the mentally defective. He set himself to devise a system of right treatment and care, to arrange for regular official inspection by the local doctor, the inspector of poor, and the Deputy Commissioner in Lunacy. He first had to convince his own Board, of which he was not a member, that this system was a good one for the country, as well as for the patient, and that it should be encouraged. His Board backed him up thoroughly, largely through the efforts of Sir James Coxe and Dr. Browne, the Medical Commissioners. He had to convince the public authorities too, and create a public opinion in favour of his system. All this he did by patience, enthusiasm, and his unusual powers of persuasion. In 1864 he wrote his classical work on *The Insane in Private Dwellings*, which, with the practical success of the system he advocated, helped

to make Scottish Lunacy Administration the envy and the admiration of the world. In 1870, on the resignation of Dr. W. A. F. Browne, he was promoted to be a Commissioner in Lunacy. In that capacity he helped to advance, extend, and consolidate the whole work of Lunacy Administration in Scotland. He gradually acquired the confidence of the District Boards of Lunacy, of the medical profession, and, above all, of the physicians to mental hospitals who were ever ready to seek his advice, and for the most part to follow it. He showed himself to be a man of an admirable judgment, of enthusiasm in his work, ready to receive and consider new ideas, and of an innate sympathy for the most afflicted class of humanity.

Dr. Mitchell did much for the purely medical and scientific side of mental disease and defect. He wrote valuable papers on "The Effects of Consanguineous Marriages," "The Statistics of Insanity," "The Diseases of Early Life," "The Effects of Difficult Labour and Plural Births on the Production of Idiocy," "Dreaming, Laughing, and Blushing," and he was the Morison Lecturer on Insanity to the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh for the years 1867-71. In his travels through Scotland—and he used to say that he had been in every parish in the country—he brought into use perhaps his most striking mental quality of observing and noting everything that he saw. He not only had antiquarian tastes, but a true scientific instinct of the relation of antiquarian facts to human history and progress. When the Rhind Lectureship was established in connection with the Scottish Society of Antiquarians, of which he was Secretary, Dr. Mitchell was appointed the first lecturer. He then showed that he was an archeologist of the first order. He marshalled and arranged his observations and the results of his reading, he passed them all through the crucible of his own mind and drew conclusions from them that were of real service to the history of civilisation. When he wrote his work, *The Past in the Present: What is Civilisation?* it placed him in the first rank of those in this country who have studied the history of the race. His literary style was an easy and popular one, so that vast numbers of people read his work. It secured him popular fame. He has steadily worked in that department ever since, and in connection with it he naturally took up the work of the "Scottish Text Society" and the "Scottish History Society," being on the Councils of both. His last antiquarian work was an exhaustive *List of Travels and Tours in Scotland*.

Sir Arthur did admirable work too in meteorology and its relation to disease, publishing valuable observations on the subject, alone and in conjunction with the late Dr. Alexander Buchan. As late as 1908 he read a paper before a large meeting of doctors and scientists on the subject of "The Seasonal Incidence of Scarlet Fever." This by a man of eighty-two was a remarkable example of his zeal for science.

He received many honours and distinctions. He was made a K.C.B. in 1887; he was placed by the Government on the Scottish Universities Commission, and on the English Criminal Lunacy Commission. He was the Chairman of a Commission to inquire into the Lunacy Administration of Ireland.

Sir Arthur Mitchell was one of the best examples in the present generation of a man who made the very most of his innate capacities and of his opportunities. He had an instinctive knowledge of human nature in a high degree, and had the faculty of systematic observation markedly developed. He was indefatigably industrious; his mind was many-sided; his sympathies were wide; he had personal tact and suavity, and he had in all his work the spirit, not of the amateur, but of the professional. His personality was charming in the highest degree. He had troops of friends among men of all classes and professions, and at his death he was universally mourned.

T. S. C.

DR. HARRY DOUGLAS HAY,
LESLIE, FIFE.
DIED SEPTEMBER 1909.

EVERYONE who knew Dr. Hay's work respected him and valued his work, but those who knew Harry Hay could not but love him. He was a man of remarkable character and conduct. After a quiet and quite uneventful undergraduate career, he went to Kennoway, where he practised with success in a small way for some three years. When, thirty-six years ago, the writer of these lines asked Dr. Ferguson of Leslie to go to England to take up a valuable partnership or senior assistantship in a very large practice, he advised Hay to succeed Ferguson in Leslie. For all this time Dr. Hay conducted a large practice in a very characteristic manner. A large, quiet, dignified man, slow of speech, and absolutely ignorant of any devices, he gradually let the public see what a great physician they had among them. In time he secured all the best work of the district, and was beloved and trusted by all the great houses. With all this he never neglected anyone. He was adored by the poorest, though he said little to them, and never asked them for fees.

A very curious thing was that, with all his silence and apparent dullness, his fellow-citizens first made him a town councillor, and then provost, and provost he was till the end. He did an immense deal of hard work; rarely, if ever, took a holiday. A bad accident two years ago gave him a shake, but it was only a fortnight before his death that he confessed to being ill. He made his simple will, took to his bed, and died as quietly as he had lived in his house of Bingartree, which he