

OBITUARY.

ADAM ROBERT TURNBULL, M.B., C.M.(EDIN.).

It is with great regret that we record the death, at Colinton, on November 17th, in his 63rd year, of Dr. Adam Robert Turnbull, late Medical Superintendent of the Fife and Kinross District Asylum.

Dr. Turnbull had a conspicuously brilliant course as a student of medicine at the University of Edinburgh. He took a high place in all his classes, gained eleven medals with over 90 *per cent.* of the marks attainable, graduated, in 1875, as M.B. and C.M. with first-class honours, and was awarded the Ettles Scholarship as the most distinguished student of his year. His fellow-students showed their appreciation of his talents and character by electing him Senior President of the Royal Medical Society.

The subsequent career of a "distinguished student" is always an interesting subject for speculation on the part of his friends and contemporaries; but their prognostications are more often wrong than right. With such natural endowments as Turnbull possessed, and so many prizes won in the intellectual Campus Martius, it might have been expected that he would have found his avocation in the prosecution of scientific studies and made a name for himself in the literature of medicine. But his mind was not mainly scientific; he read little when he no longer was required to read, and he wrote less. He was a singularly level-headed man, cautious and judicious, but not bookish. Essentially practical, he delighted in all forms of bodily activity and was never idle: diligent in business and diligent in play, whatever his hands found to do he did with all his might, for he was persuaded that whatever he was doing was the one thing worth being done. Accident directed his footsteps into one of the by-ways of medical practice, and fixed the course of his life in a calling for which, as time proved, he was peculiarly fitted. It is one of the anomalies of the profession of medicine that those physicians who are entrusted with the control of the most delicate and important of all the bodily organs, and have for their cure that faculty which proclaims a man a man, must not look for any popular acclamation of their humane labours. The fame of their good works does not extend beyond the little circle of their associates; their smallest failures are visited with a prompt parochial reprehension; if they acquire a reputation, it is for eccentricity; and the best they can hope for is a sort of notoriety, helped by advertisement. It was not in Turnbull to advertise, and he never sought applause; but, in the cure and treatment of the insane, he found the proper field for the exercise of his gifts, his common sense, his happy pragmatist-philosophy, and his conscientiousness: and the practice of these contained for him its own reward.

After a period spent as Resident Physician in the Royal Infirmary, he was appointed, in 1876, Assistant Physician at the Royal Edinburgh Asylum, Morning-side, under the late Sir Thomas Clouston. Here he remained for five years, an example to everyone of industry, readiness to learn, courtesy, and goodness of heart. There never was an "Assistant" more popular than Turnbull, "little Turnbull" as he was called with a unanimous affection; he was loved by all who came in touch with him, patients and officials alike. The most exacting of patients' kinsfolk, the most critical of parish functionaries, were disarmed by his genial smile, his ready assumption of all blame, his innocent cajolery, the honesty of his desire to righten wrongs. He entered into all the affairs and interests of the establishment with an equal enthusiasm, and played his many parts on the strange and crowded stage of asylum life as if the success of the tragi-comedy depended on his efforts. Whether he was presiding over a meeting of the patients' literary and debating society, or occupying the chairman's seat at a curling supper, or acting as master of ceremonies at the weekly dances; whether he was disseminating cheerfulness and physic for the mind in his frequent visits to the wards, or bringing a case-book up to date, neglected of a less scrupulous colleague, or bowing his head, in seeming consciousness of guilt, under the righteous wrath of "the chief," and taking upon himself the sins of others; whether, with all the glee of youth and the earnestness of age, he threw or "sooped" the curling stone, or smote the cricket ball, or made good play with his racquet, he seemed always to be in his

element, and he always "played the game." Always and everywhere he found something to do, something to enjoy, some one to serve, some one to play the first fiddle while he delightedly played the second. He rejoiced in all sports and pastimes, and was good at most, but cricket was his favourite. The present scribe can see him now, in his mind's eye, as, crouching behind the stumps, in gloves and pads that always looked a size too large, he "kept" wickets as seriously as if he were keeping a frontier fort, and reduced the record of byes to zero; or, armed with a bat whose proportions almost exceeded his own, swiping ball after ball into the remotest bushes of the demesne, while a deprecatory smile approached his ears as his score surely approached the half-century.

He was so modest, so tender of the feelings of others, so absolutely devoid of "side," so respectful of all opinions, however absurd, so deferential to his manifest inferiors, that strangers sometimes doubted his sincerity, and the unrighteous sometimes took advantage of his abnegation. It only needed a more intimate acquaintance to prove the genuineness of this self-effacement, and to show that behind that apparent weakness there was a firmness and determination which, in matters of principle or where injustice was threatened to others, it was not wise to cross. Those who knew him best knew how sensitive he was and how easily wounded in spirit, but he never resented a wrong to himself; there was no animosity in his soul, and it was impossible for him to harbour malice. "The gentlest man I ever met" was the verdict of one who had been associated with him only in business. If he had an enemy, and he had not more than one, it was himself, and he was too often the victim of his own depreciation; but, excessive as it was, his modesty was as sincere as his kindness, as blameless as his geniality and the child-like joy that he took in all wholesome and innocent doings.

After five years of an active and profitable apprenticeship under the most stimulating of chiefs, Turnbull was appointed, in 1881, Superintendent of the Fife and Kinross District Asylum at Springfield, in succession to Dr. Brown. Springfield was at that time in a transition stage. With the great increase in the population of the district it was rapidly being transformed from a quiet little country asylum for 300 patients into one of the largest and busiest institutions for the insane in Scotland. Able predecessors had laid the foundations well, but they were too narrow for the great works that it was now necessary to construct. With his usual earnestness and unwearied industry, and in his usual quiet and unassuming manner, Turnbull set about the business in hand, and when, at last, he was compelled by bodily weakness to abandon his cherished post, it was to leave a hospital for sufferers in the mind second to none in the country, and renowned beyond these shores. Springfield under his care came to be regarded as the model of Scottish District Asylums, and visitors from other lands were directed thither as to the place where Scottish lunacy administration was to be seen at its best. All his energies were devoted to the betterment of the insane, all good old methods to that end he retained and strengthened, and all better new ones he consistently adopted, in spite of difficulties and discouragement. At Springfield the insane were deprived of none of those liberties and social pleasures which they could be trusted to enjoy without detriment to themselves or others; there it was not considered necessary to place a man in an asylum merely because his mental condition differed from the normal; there hospital treatment was provided for the insane sick as elsewhere for the sane; the poor "lunatic" was nursed by trained women with as much care and as much efficiency as a Royal Infirmary could supply, and asylum attendants were taught that their calling was as worthy of honour as that of any other class of nurses. Either as a begetter or as a confirmer of beneficent reforms, Turnbull's name will always be associated with the introduction of hospital methods in the treatment of mental disorders, with the training and education of asylum nurses, and with the extension of the "boarding-out" system. Of greater value and greater effect, perhaps, than any of these was his personal attitude towards his patients. He recognised that the insane were to be treated as individuals and not as types or in classes, as human beings each with his own feelings to be considered, his opinions to be respected, his separate soul, as much as that of any sane man, to be saved. His patients learned to look upon him as their friend, their counsellor, their own private physician, and in his ministering to minds diseased it may confidently be averred that this intimate relation, this personal sympathy and consideration effected as many cures as could

have been brought about by more "scientific" methods or by all the resources of the laboratory, and gave more comfort where they did not cure.

Turnbull held his appointment in Fife for thirty-four years, mostly happy years, for it was his disposition to be happy. He had his troubles and his deprivations, it is true, like other men—even Springfield was not heaven—and he met with not a few rebuffs and undeserved affronts; but nothing could ruffle the native serenity and sweetness of his temper, his patient continuance in well-doing overcame all obstacles, and the malicious found it a poor sport to attack a man who would not defend himself. For several years he acted as Secretary to the Scottish Division of the Medico-Psychological Association of Great Britain and Ireland, an office which involved the expenditure of considerable time and energy, but he could always find time and had the will to do something more. In 1910 that Association conferred upon him the greatest honour at its disposal by electing him President; but, greatly to the regret of all the members, ill-health prevented him from undertaking the duties.

A man of remarkably sound mind, Turnbull had always enjoyed the blessing of sound health. He continued to play cricket as long as he could get down to the ball, and then he took to the gun, and shooting became the chief occupation of his holidays, many of which he spent near his native hills in Northumberland. But, as he drew near his sixtieth year, his health suddenly failed, and it was found that he was suffering from a painful and incurable malady for which little relief could be obtained. He had suffered long before he asked for medical assistance, and he stuck to his post long after it was plain to his friends that he was unfit for active duty. The visiting Commissioner discovered him going about his work as usual, with all his wonted cheerfulness and thoroughness, at a time when any other man would have been lying helplessly in bed. Repeated surgical operations were performed upon him, his holidays were spent in nursing homes, he was seldom free from torturing pains, and never from discomfort; but he was never heard to murmur or complain, and with each small return of strength he went back to his work at the asylum. When the present writer visited him during his periods of sickness, Turnbull's hopefulness and self-forgetfulness were such as to put the ordinary man to shame. He was reluctant to speak of his sufferings, though he seemed to think that he owed his friends an apology for being ill, and he would, as soon as was polite, begin to talk of the concerns of other persons, whose light afflictions he honestly thought were heavier than his.

When at last, in February, 1915, he felt that he could carry on no longer, his good and faithful service was recognised in uncommonly appreciative terms in the official records and the public prints, and he bore away with him into his retirement the affection and the esteem of the whole local community. It had been his desire to spend his declining years among the foothills of the Cheviots, under whose shadow he was born; but his precarious condition and the necessity of his remaining within reach of his medical advisers prevented the fulfilment of this wish, and he very contentedly chose instead to make his new home at Colinton, where in a short space of time he was already making new friends. On sunny days he was still to be seen from time to time in Princes Street, little changed in outward appearance, save for his grey hairs, not at all changed in his old-fashioned courtesy, his youthful outlook on life, his happy submission to whatever might befall.

He lived only for a year and nine months to enjoy his pensioned leisure. Death came suddenly and mercifully to him in the end. A hæmorrhage in the brain deprived him of consciousness, and, though he lingered for some days, his sufferings were over and, we may believe, his spirit was at rest.

No one who knew Adam Robert Turnbull will find anything of exaggeration in these lines (written by one who knew him intimately for nearly forty years); those who knew him best well know how inadequate is this tribute to the memory of a blameless soul, the gentlest of creatures, the kindest of men, and one of the bravest.

J. C. J.