

Obituary.

DR. WILLIAM VALENTINE BROWNE.

"THIS gentleman, who was assistant medical officer of the *Sussex Lunatic Asylum, Hayward's Heath*, died on the 17th May. In early life he had been engaged in general practice, and during part of the Crimean war he served at *Scutari*. The last five years of his life were assiduously devoted to lunacy practice in the *Sussex Asylum*. He died in the fortieth year of his age, and his remains are interred at *Cwm, North Wales*. His unremitting fidelity and soundness of judgment in discharging the responsible duties of his trust, rendered him invaluable as a colleague. His courteous and unassuming demeanour, genuine sympathy with suffering, singular modesty of character, delicacy of feeling and uprightness gained for him more than the respect of those who knew him. As a Christian gentleman, a judicious and attentive physician, a courteous and faithful colleague, and a kind friend, his memory will be long affectionately cherished in the recollection of those among whom he so lately lived and laboured.—'Lancet,' June 10th.

Dr. Browne was a graduate of the University of St. Andrews, and a member of the Association of Medical Officers of Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane.

The Commissioners in Lunacy paid an official visit to Hayward's Heath the day Dr. Browne died, and they made the following entry in the Visitors' Book regarding this sad event:

"We yesterday made an official inspection of this asylum, and we are sorry to report that Dr. Browne, the Assistant Medical Officer, died early in the morning of that day from an attack of paralysis. It is feared that his death was hastened by his unceasing attention to the duties of his office. Many of the patients expressed to us their regret at his loss, and said that he had always shown them the greatest kindness. The attack of paralysis, of which Dr. Browne died, took place on Sunday last, the 14th instant, and as it most unfortunately happened that Dr. Robertson was absent on leave, it became necessary at once to secure medical supervision for the patients, and Dr. Maudsley, of London, was soon after in attendance.

The following *extract* from a sermon preached by the Rev. H. Hawkins, in the Sussex Asylum Chapel, on the Sunday following Dr. Browne's death, and which, at the request of the household, has been printed for private circulation, may not be deemed out of place here:

"Last Sunday afternoon, in the midst of that work of charity which it is well to do on the Sabbath day, was smitten down by a stroke of that malady which daily he sought to ward off from, or to relieve in, others around him, one whose name and memory will be long cherished here. In the place where he was accustomed to prepare healing medicines for his suffering brethren, his weary body sunk down to that rest to which his God summoned him. His sun is gone down while it is yet day, but when it was setting it found him at his work. He failed on a Sunday when the collect's prayer is that 'among the sundry and manifold changes of the world our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found.' For a brief interval he lingered, long enough to give evidence of his patience, remembrance of others, sense of sin, thought of God—and then his quiet spirit returned to the Father who created it, the Son who redeemed it, the Holy Ghost who sanctified it. . . .

"Perhaps nothing was more remarkable in our departed friend's character than his *trustworthiness*. He was, in a very marked manner, true to his trust. He

was (ourselves being witnesses) scrupulously faithful to his stewardship. Duty was his first object. Nothing tempted him to neglect or to slur it over. Ever at his post, no emergency, however unexpected, could arise for which he was not instantly ready. Denying himself even those brief intervals of rest which he might fairly have claimed, he was to be found, month after month, at his station, prepared for each successive demand of duty. His was no eye-service. He could thoroughly be relied on. With unvarying regularity and careful attention he discharged each day's obligation with a precision on which those about him could always depend.

"Another noticeable feature in his disposition was his *unassuming modesty*. His nature was very retiring. In days when self-assertion is considered to be a necessary condition of success; when, if a person wishes to get on in the world, as it is called, it is thought that he must have a good opinion of himself, and push his way, it is not common to meet with one who spoke so little of himself, and kept so much in the shade. He that is gone, though of mature years and much experience, was unpretending and diffident, almost to a fault.

"A word as to his *kindliness and sympathy*. There is probably no one here, who came under his charge, who has not received at least a considerate, feeling word from the good physician whose place among us knows him no more. And how many here have recalled not kind words only, but gentle attention and benevolent deeds at his hands! Much, it may be said, was in the way of his duty; but how much there is in the manner of doing things. Real sympathy is beyond price. He always spoke as one who not only knew about the cases of the sick and suffering, but felt for their condition. Even at the last, in intervals of consciousness, he showed that he was not unmindful of others.

"But, after all, 'one thing is needful.' Unless a true religious principle influence what we do, our natural good qualities are nothing worth. Now, there is good and comfortable ground of hope that our departed brother was guided and governed by a principle of sound yet unobtrusive piety. The root of the matter appeared to be in him. Motives higher and purer than those of earth directed his way. He lived in remembrance of his accountability to God. We are witnesses of the regularity with which he was in the habit of frequenting this afternoon Sunday service, and his devotional behaviour in the Lord's House testified to his recollection of the Divine Presence in which he was standing. On the very last occasion when the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered, he joined his brethren in Holy Communion.

"And now, suddenly, his living presence has departed from our midst. His earthly life has gone by like a shadow. To-morrow his body will be laid in his own distant native land. We might have wished that his remains could have been placed where sometimes we might have looked upon his grave. However, the remembrance of his example will remain. Not soon will the name of one who was singularly faithful in trust, unassuming and modest, feeling and considerate, and ever open-handed, be unremembered.

"The Christian gentleman, the trustworthy public servant, the faithful colleague, the kind-hearted physician, fellow-worker, and friend has gone, we humbly trust, to his rest.

"You, my friends, are judges if anything that has been said has savoured of flattery, or has exceeded the proportions of sober truth. What is earthly blame to him now, or earthly praise? He has passed beyond the reach of both. His sensitive spirit in life was not indifferent to either. But now man's opinion is nothing to him. 'To his own Master he standeth or falleth.' And for ourselves, let us be warned by this fresh instance of life's uncertainty. What a forcible comment has the sad event of the past week been on those words of the sacred writer—'Ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.'"

At a meeting of the visitors held at Hayward's Heath, on the 24th June, it was determined to place in the Asylum Chapel, at the cost of the county, a mural tablet, in memory of Dr. Browne's tried and faithful services.