

John Chiene, C.B., M.D., F.R.C.S., LL.D. By Dr Alexander James.

(Read October 22, 1923.)

ALTHOUGH Professor Chiene had retired from his professional work in 1909, and had as it were ceased to be an Edinburgh citizen since then, it was always a source of pleasure and satisfaction to his old friends and former pupils to know that in his retirement at Barnton he was still well, and enjoying the happiness which in the declining years of a well-spent life predominates over all others, that is, the happiness which is drawn from memory and recollection. The news of his sudden death there on 29th May last came as a real shock to many.

Born in Edinburgh in 1843, and getting his schooling at the Edinburgh Academy, Chiene studied medicine at the University, and graduated M.D. in 1865, taking about the same time the licence of the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh. Alike in his degree examinations and in his graduation thesis on "Diseases of the Breast," he gained distinction. After a period of further study in Paris he returned to Edinburgh, and having made surgery his aim, he strove to fit himself for it, in the first place, by acting as Demonstrator of Anatomy in the University Anatomical Department. Next he obtained the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons, and joined the staff of the New Town Dispensary in 1868. In 1870 he began teaching operative surgery at the old Minto House, and there as in the Dispensary, and as formerly in the anatomical rooms, he showed himself a born teacher.

In 1871 he was appointed Assistant Surgeon to the Royal Infirmary, and having given up his dispensary work, he shortly started as an extra-mural teacher of surgery at Nicolson Square. In 1878 he became one of the ordinary Acting Surgeons to the Infirmary, and continuing his work at Nicolson Square, he soon proved himself one of the foremost teachers of surgery in the Edinburgh school. In 1882 he was promoted to the Professorship of Surgery in the University.

He resigned this chair in 1909, so that, as extra-mural teacher, as member of the Infirmary staff, and as Professor in the University, he was actively engaged in the teaching and practice of surgery in Edinburgh for thirty-eight years.

He served in South Africa during the Boer War, and was appointed

Consulting Surgeon to the Field Forces. He was mentioned in dispatches, awarded the medal, and gained the C.B.

He was President of the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh, in 1897–99, and during his long life he had many honours conferred upon him. These were, notably, the LL.D. of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities, the D.Sc. of Sheffield, and the honorary memberships of the surgical associations of Paris, of America, and of Finland.

Chiene was fortunate in having had as his teachers and associates some of the foremost men of their day. Goodsir, Bennett, Syme, Simpson, Christison, Laycock, Heron Watson, and Spence were all at work when he started on his career, and were all men who could inspire their juniors. But he was also fortunate in living at a time when the need for further developments in the science and practice of the healing art was beginning to make itself manifest. In his student days the practical value of Pasteur's work on organisms was becoming recognised, and its special and immense importance in connection with the treatment of wounds was being demonstrated and developed by Lister in Glasgow. Chiene at once recognised all this, and put himself in the van of those who adopted and practised the antiseptic treatment in its entirety.

Furthermore, at a time when in the University the professors of physiology, pathology, materia medica, medical jurisprudence, and public health were all physicians and clinical teachers in the Infirmary, Chiene was one who recognised that if scientific medical progress was to be hoped for, much greater specialisation of work among the teachers would be required. Later on, when he had succeeded to the chair of Systematic Surgery, one of the first things he did was to institute a laboratory, in which senior students or young graduates could obtain facilities for research work. In the investigations of the various problems in clinical pathology and bacteriology presented there, he always took intense interest.

As a teacher, Chiene was one who threw his whole soul into his work. The conceptions which he had to impart he first carefully and conscientiously thought out in his own mind, and, having arrived at the conclusion, he laid this honestly and plainly before his students. In the plethora of new theories and views he was ever mindful to enjoin care, lest in the tree of knowledge of the healing art the foliage should obscure the stem and branches. In his iteration and reiteration of the maxim "Pain is a splint," he not only inculcated the importance of bearing in mind the "*Vis medicatrix naturæ*," but impressed upon his hearers the necessity of directing their own individual intelligence, keenly and diligently, upon each problem as it presented itself. He imbued his students with the understanding that knowledge

was infinite, and that if they were to be of any use in the world they must remain students, in the real sense of the word, all their days. Honest, upright, sympathetic and approachable, it goes without saying that he had the affection, as well as the respect and esteem, of all with whom he came in contact. To him patients and students were fellow-creatures who had put their trust in him for help and for guidance; it was correspondingly his aim to help and to guide them as zealously and truthfully as was humanly possible. Moreover, as is well known, his human interest in the students took a particularly human and practical shape in his establishing for several years in his own ancestral town of Crail a rest dwelling for such of them as had been ill or required rest and fresh air.

But outside the class-room and hospitals Chiene's associations with student life were in every way intimate, pleasant, and beneficial. As an old athlete, and an old President of the Football Union, his presence was always warmly welcomed in the playing fields, and at their social meetings his addresses, his sayings, and his stories were always delightful.

Golf, curling, and fishing were his acknowledged recreations, but Chiene was also a great general reader in his leisure hours. Whilst he lived the life of one who was endowed with sound and practical common sense, he always took pleasure in literature, philosophy, and in thought of all kinds. His students used to say that he went about with "Marcus Aurelius" in his pocket, and to him the memories of his old and close friendships with such men as Goodsir, Dr John Brown, and Lister—friendships which were warmly reciprocated—were a life-long source of pleasure. He was an ardent admirer of Burns, and amongst his possessions his copy of the Kilmarnock edition of Burns' works was highly prized.

He contributed largely to the Edinburgh Medico-Chirurgical Society's *Transactions* and to other scientific journals, and he published a work on *Surgical Anatomy* in 1878, and on *The Principles of Surgery* in 1882. A little brochure, entitled *Looking Back*, which he published in 1907, goes far to reveal that character and personality in him which will be remembered with gratitude and affection by his old students all over the world.

He was elected a Fellow of this Society in 1874, and served on the Council from 1884 to 1886 and from 1904 to 1906.