

OBITUARY.

LEWIS CAMPBELL BRUCE, *M.C.*, *M.D.Edin.*, *F.R.C.P.E.*

DR. BRUCE died on December 3, 1945, in his 79th year. The following account of his work and life reaches us from Dr. Henry Yéllowlees.

The death of Lewis Campbell Bruce severs almost the last link with the supreme period of Scottish psychiatry in the closing years of the last century and the early ones of this. There were giants in the land in those days, and it is strange to reflect that Bruce was regarded by many of them not only with respect as an original thinker and worker, but also, and even chiefly, as a dangerous innovator and something of a revolutionary.

He qualified at Edinburgh in 1894 and had an Army career as his goal. He had the great misfortune in those days of few vacancies and severe tests to fail to gain entrance either to the Royal Army Medical Corps or to the Indian Medical Service. In the examination for the former he was the seventh candidate for six vacancies, and he was rejected for the latter on account of an old fracture-dislocation of the elbow which produced a very trifling limitation of movement. He turned his attention to psychiatry, and joined the staff of Morningside under the late Sir Thomas Clouston. Here he developed that combination of clear scientific thinking with intense energy and enthusiasm which characterized his whole life. In 1899 he was appointed Medical Superintendent of the 400-bed Perth District Mental Hospital at Murthly in succession to the late Prof. G. M. Robertson, who had been appointed to Larbert. Six or seven years later he suffered the crowning disappointment of his career when, to the general surprise, Robertson, and not he, was appointed to succeed Sir Thomas Clouston at Morningside. As it happened this apparent setback was the proverbial blessing in disguise, for Bruce, with all his brilliancy, would have been miserable in the post. He was without doubt rather embittered for a time, and one or two further opportunities of promotion were practically thrown away by him, apparently by his completely offhand "take it or leave it" manner, but perhaps actually because he was already realizing that he was the ideal man for Murthly and Murthly was the ideal place for him. Into that small country hospital beside the River Tay, 12 miles from Perth, he threw all his abilities and energies, and for 35 years made it a model of efficient and enlightened administration, a place of humane and skilful psychiatric treatment, and a source from which proceeded first-rate scientific work. He established and equipped a small laboratory which was his constant joy and pride. He trained members of his staff to do the work of laboratory technicians, prepare media, look after the animals for experiment, and so forth, and was one of the first medical superintendents, if not indeed the very first, to put out his own original work from the hospital of which he was in charge. He was fond of recounting that, in his early days at Murthly, he made contact with only one superintendent in England who took an interest in his researches, but that this gentleman wrote a couple of years later that, as the member of his staff who prepared his media had resigned, he had had to close down his laboratory!

It was Bruce who introduced the thyroid treatment of the insane. He was an enthusiast on vaccine therapy, and one of his chief lines of research was on blood changes in the manic-depressive psychosis—the subject he chose for his Maudsley Lecture in London in 1935. His scientific work never received all the recognition it deserved, partly because of the advances in knowledge and change in outlook during the last 20 years, and partly no doubt because he worked in isolation and not in association and collaboration with others. But the memorable thing about his work is not its value and results so much as the amazing pertinacity and skill with which it was carried out in a tiny laboratory, often with improvised or home-made instruments and apparatus, without the stimulus of colleagues, and in the teeth of obstruction and misunderstanding from an uninformed hospital committee.

Bruce was a devotee of scientific method and clear thinking, and his other ruling passion was the open air and every form of outdoor life and activity. He was an excellent shot, an enthusiastic curler, a keen tennis player and a very competent

medium-paced bowler. His knowledge of animal and bird life and of woodland lore was profound, but it was as a fisherman he excelled, and he can have had few equals in the gentle art in all Perthshire. He combined his scientific and sporting instincts in a uniquely delightful fashion, and the morning walk round the grounds, which was the invariable preliminary to the day's work, was a fascinating and instructive experience. In the cricket season the walk was varied three or four times a week by bowling practice in the garden. Single stumps were set up with white-wash lines at varying distances from one of them, and at these the "Chief" would bowl for half an hour on end, nominating the one on which the ball was to pitch, his assistant acting as wicket-keeper. This led to an accuracy of length which made him a really dangerous bowler, who could often be devastating to the later batsmen of the opposing team.

He had one assistant medical officer, and, as a rule, liked a change every 18 months or so. Fortunate indeed were the men who had a period at Murthly as their introduction to psychiatry. The first practical result with most of them was the completion of an M.D. thesis, more often than not up to gold medal standard.

Bruce was forthright and outspoken to a very great degree. He was often the reverse of tactful, he was matter-of-fact and unsentimental, and he not merely could not suffer fools gladly—he could not suffer them at all. Doubtless, especially in his earlier days, he antagonized those who did not know him, and certainly very few people whom he disliked remained in ignorance of the fact; but a short acquaintance with him made it clear that his impulsive ways and his sometimes caustic words were expressions of a loathing of cant or affectation and a flaming scorn of anything mean or insincere. He had no use for "sobstuff" and a bitter contempt for the shirker, but his kindness to anyone who was sick or in trouble, and his understanding and toleration of human frailties and lapses, were unbounded. His administration was strict, and his discipline may have seemed stern and even harsh at times to outsiders; but few, if any, medical superintendents can have been held in such affection by their medical and nursing staff as he. No one who worked for him could fail to realize that he was a man with whom fair play was a passion, and to whom one could safely confide one's inmost secrets and deepest troubles.

Bruce's mental and physical energy were alike amazing. The day's routine at Murthly, with its altogether delightful mixture of work and play—both at full pressure and express speed—may perhaps seem a little old-fashioned to modern neuropsychiatrists; but it was a uniquely pleasant and beneficial experience to the succession of assistants who enjoyed it year after year, until, as he characteristically remarked, the time came when they became more trouble to train than they were worth, and he carried on the work of the hospital single-handed.

Bruce never forgot that his assistant was without colleagues and somewhat isolated. The assistant was always welcome on the morning walk, if he could rise in time to join it, and also at precisely 2 o'clock every afternoon when, summer or winter, rain or shine, there were a couple of hours of outdoor activities of a remarkably varied kind. There was a standing invitation to tea at the "Chief's" house, a place at that meal being always laid for the assistant.

After the outbreak of war in 1914 he gave his committee no peace until he obtained their permission to join the Forces. He went to Gallipoli at the age of almost 50, acquitted himself gallantly and was awarded the Military Cross. On his return he ran Murthly as a war hospital for a year or two and then settled down again, with characteristic lack of fuss, to civilian life.

Bruce was a born teacher, concentrating on the physical aspect of mental disease. He had no use for psychopathology, nor did it interest him. As a clinician, however, he was in the first rank. He had many friends in the medical faculty of Edinburgh University, and made a point of keeping in touch through them with every development in clinical medicine and biochemistry. Above all he insisted upon the great principle, which is in such danger of being neglected in present-day psychiatry—namely, that it is impossible to understand the psychoses, or even to talk sense about the psychoses, unless one has lived among psychotic patients. Slovenly work or muddled thinking he abhorred, and few people would willingly risk his displeasure twice. On the other hand, few indeed of those who ever worked for Bruce left his service without feelings of gratitude and affection and none without feelings of respect. To have made himself generally recognized during so many years in that small country hospital as one of the keenest scientific minds, and certainly the most vivid personality, in Scottish psychiatry was a supreme achievement.

He retired in 1936 and carried on his country pursuits near Lockerbie in Dumfriesshire, where the local people, once they appreciated that here was a man whose knowledge of country life was unsurpassed, made him very welcome. The old impulsiveness and irascibility had become mellowed, but the clear-thinking brain was alert to the very end, and his interest in every psychiatric development was as keen as ever. The last time one of his old assistants visited him, the "Chief" put him through a gruelling examination upon the details of electric convulsive therapy, and asked a number of pertinent questions about electro-encephalography, which resulted in his giving more information than he received.

He leaves a widow, a daughter and two sons, one of whom is in the medical profession. Both saw active service abroad in the recent war, the elder being awarded the Military Cross like his father before him.

H. Y.