

**Sir Robert William Philip, M.A., M.D., LL.D., F.R.C.P.E.**

ROBERT WILLIAM PHILIP, who died on January 25, 1939, was born at Govan on December 29, 1857. His father, the Rev. George Philip, D.D., was later called to a charge in Edinburgh, and there Philip received his early education at the High School and University, where he took a degree in Arts before entering on the study of medicine. In 1882 he graduated M.B., C.M., with honours, then spent some further time in post-graduate study at certain of the great Continental schools, and served for a period as house-physician in the Royal Infirmary. Shortly thereafter he was appointed Assistant to the Professor of Medicine in the University and started in private medical practice. His appointment gave him an introduction to teaching besides affording opportunity for research work, and on his promotion to M.D. in 1887 his graduation thesis was awarded a gold medal and the Gregory Prize. In 1890 he was elected to the honorary medical staff of the Royal Infirmary, to which he gave life-long service as physician and clinical teacher. During this time he became an independent lecturer in the Medical School, devoting his teaching to general medicine and largely, but by no means exclusively, to diseases of the chest. He also associated himself with the affairs and activities of the more important medical associations and took a prominent position in their discussions. Koch's discovery of the tubercle bacillus in 1882 had, however, made a profound impression on Philip, upsetting the tenets in which he had been educated, and its corollary of the unity and infectivity of all the various manifestations of tubercular disease had opened up a completely new conception of the whole subject. Much thinking over it led him to conclusions which determined the principal activities of his life. At that time in this country tubercle exacted a higher death rate than any other single disease, its victims were drawn largely from the poorer section of the people, and its chronicity kept the number of sufferers at a very high level. The theory of its hereditary origin still held sway, little importance was attached to social conditions as a factor in causation, its prevalence was regarded as a matter of course, and no public provision existed for dealing with it. To abolish an evil of this magnitude was a stupendous task involving years of missionary and constructive work which he started in 1887 by establishing "The

Victoria Dispensary for Consumption." Philip's survey of the whole situation had led him to the conclusion that the great source of infection and spread lay in the homes of the people and that early cases must be sought out there and suitably cared for and supervised as long as necessary. To accomplish this the "Dispensary" was planned and conducted on an entirely novel basis as the co-ordinating centre of all the activities of the campaign, and to it were added as funds allowed the other elements of the scheme—sanatorium, farm colony, hospital for advanced cases, nursing, home supervision, charitable help, suitable employment, and so on. The organisation is known throughout the world as the "Edinburgh Tuberculosis Scheme" and has been adopted by all the more progressive countries. Its inception, development, and success stamp its author as a great physician and an outstanding benefactor of his time.

In recognition of his public services he received the honour of knighthood in 1913 and the appointment of Honorary Physician to the King in Scotland. In 1917 he was elected Professor of Tuberculosis in the University of Edinburgh and in 1932 Chairman of the National Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis. He was President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (1918–23) and of the British Medical Association (1927), besides being the recipient of many honorary degrees, fellowships and other distinctions from universities, colleges, and medical societies at home and abroad. He became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1889 and served as Vice-President from 1927–30. Apart from the medical side of his life Philip's personality was of unusual interest—hospitable, well read, widely travelled, a collector and connoisseur of objects of art, an interesting talker, and an effective public speaker almost equally fluent in English, French, or German.

R. S.