## OBITUARY NOTICES.

Robert Munro, M.A., M.D., LL.D. By Dr George Macdonald, C.B.

(MS. received July 4, 1921. Read October 24, 1921.)

ROBERT MUNRO was born at Assynt, in the Ross-shire parish of Alness, on 21st July 1835. After spending some years at the Free Church School of Kiltearn, he was sent to finish his education at the Royal Academy, Tain. Though he was alert and observant from the first, his intellectual powers seem to have developed somewhat slowly: it was not until his career at Tain was drawing to a close that his capacity for University work was realised. The financial difficulty was serious. But his own mind was definitely made up, and with characteristic determination he set himself to overcome all obstacles. As a means to the end, he took to teaching, and in 1860 he found himself a graduate in Arts of the University of Edinburgh. His original intention had been to proceed to the New College, with a view to entering the Church. In 1859, however, his whole outlook in life had been changed by the appearance of Darwin's Origin of Species, which he read with avidity, and which made an immediate appeal to his scientific instincts. In the Free Church of those days there was no room for a Darwinian, and there was nothing for it but to abandon all thought of the profession at which he had been aiming.

For two years after obtaining his degree he remained doubtful as to how he should shape his future. Ultimately, with great courage and also (as the event proved) with great wisdom, he resolved to face the discipline of the medical curriculum. In 1862, at the age of twenty-seven, he matriculated once more at Edinburgh. Even then his course was not destined to proceed on normal lines. What should have been his third winter of medical study was spent on the Riviera, in charge of a semi-invalid. At his time of life the interruption might well have seemed serious. But he never saw reason to regret it. His receptive mind derived real profit from his sojourn abroad. The fauna, the flora, and the geology of the Mediterranean all had an interest for him. And in various other ways his horizon was appreciably widened. If, however, the interlude was educationally valuable, it had the incidental effect of postponing for a whole year the accomplishment of his immediate purpose. He did not

finally "qualify" till 1867. He was then thirty-two, and had no resources behind him save the priceless assets of ability and character.

His first appointment was as assistant to a busy doctor in a colliery district of Ayrshire. He at once became deeply absorbed in his everyday duties, utilising to the full the opportunities for instruction which they His own description may be quoted: "The sudden transition from a scholastic atmosphere and the teaching of medical science in lecture-rooms and well-equipped hospitals to the practice of the healing art among a mining population was to me like going into a new world. Therapeutic theories and book-learning had to be tested by action there and then." The sound knowledge thus acquired of the origin, progress, and correct treatment of disease stood him in excellent stead when he aspired to a position of greater independence. This he did after an apprenticeship of some two years' duration. Looking round for an opening, he decided upon a partnership in Kilmarnock. Before settling down, however, he received an invitation to make an extended tour in the Near East as companion to the son of a well-known Ayrshire proprietor. The offer came at an opportune moment, and he gladly availed himself of it. Doubtless he was ultimately responsible for the comprehensive itinerary which, beginning with the more important cities of France and Italy, led through Sicily and Malta to Egypt and the Nile, the Holy Land, Baalbek, Athens, Constantinople, Rustchuk, Budapest, Vienna, and thence home by Munich and the Rhine.

There followed sixteen years of arduous general practice, diversified by short holidays abroad. No figure in Kilmarnock was better known in those days than Dr Munro's. His regular patients were as numerous as he could wish for, and the reputation he had won during his assistantship brought many miners from Cumnock and its neighbourhood to his consulting-room. At the same time he was in great demand as a popular lecturer on scientific and social subjects, invariably speaking his mind with a singularly refreshing frankness. His influence in the community grew steadily, and to outsiders it must have seemed as if his highest ambition had been satisfied. There was, therefore, general surprise and regret when, in 1885, he announced that he had made up his mind to retire. Friends came to remonstrate. But he was inflexible: "I divide my life into three periods: during the first I struggled hard for my education, during the second I served the public to the best of my ability, and for the rest of my life I mean to please myself." Ten years earlier he had married Miss Anna Taylor, a lady of singular charm, who was to be his devoted companion for thirty-two years in all, and in 1879 the death of his 160

father-in-law had made him a shareholder in two local engineering companies, then on the threshold of a prosperous career. In 1880 he became chairman of one of them, and he was subsequently elected chairman of a combine that included both. The income from these undertakings, added to what he had been able to save from his professional earnings, had put him in possession of a comfortable competency.

His decision to relinquish his practice was more immediately prompted by a threatened breakdown in health. But there was a larger reason "I began to realise that I was gradually becoming enslaved to a monotonous existence of mere routine work, with the prospect of premature decay. My real object in joining the medical profession had no higher motive than to secure an honourable livelihood, an object which had now, in a small but efficient way, been attained; but yet worldly prosperity did not bring with it the realisation of my earlier ideals of an intelligent human existence. The preliminary studies on which the laws of organic development of the human body, both in health and disease, are supposed to be founded, are most fascinating; but the art of healing, which in practice is largely based on empiricism, soon engenders in the mind of the conscientious physician doubts as to the efficiency of many so-called remedies. In many instances of serious illness it is often as clear as noonday to the skilful physician that palliation of symptoms is all that can be done; but yet, if the doctor expressed a hint of this truth, he would in all probability instantly lose his patient. Here lies a dangerous pitfall which sometimes leads to quackery and hypocrisy." This outspoken confession throws a curious and interesting light on the writer's own temperament. He can hardly have been one of those medical men "whose visits make it a pleasure to be ill," as R. L. Stevenson puts it. Rather, he must have resembled Chaucer's "Doctour of Phisyk"---

"He was a verrey partit practisour.

The cause y-knowe, and of his harm the rote,
Anon he yaf the seke man his bote.

. . . . . . . .

His studie was but litel on the bible."

As soon as he was free, he set out for Rome, where he rapidly threw off the painful illness that had attacked him. His physical vigour restored, he devoted all his energies to a line of research which he had resolved to make his own. In 1877 he had been enrolled as an original member of the Ayrshire and Galloway Archæological Association. Hitherto his interest in antiquities had been very detached, although during a holiday in

Switzerland his scientific curiosity had been aroused by the fine series of objects from lake-dwellings displayed in the museum at Zurich. By a fortunate chance, the very first piece of work undertaken by the Association was the excavation of a crannog, or artificial island, whose remains had been accidentally discovered on the farm of Lochlee, familiar from its association with Robert Burns. The late Mr Cochran Patrick, who was the mainspring of the organisation, promptly enlisted Munro as a helper, and a magnificent recruit he proved. Several other crannogs were explored during the next two or three years, Munro taking a prominent part in every case, and ultimately becoming leader. In 1882 the results were brought before the public in his Scottish Lake-dwellings, a performance which made it clear that he had laid a firm grasp on the essentials of the subject.

The writing of the book had, however, convinced him of the importance of extending the scope of his inquiries by the study of analogous phenomena on the Continent. The great collection of relics from the lake-dwellings and terramara settlements of the Po Valley, preserved in the Museo Preistorico at Rome, was systematically examined as soon as his health was sufficiently recovered, Mrs Munro lending invaluable assistance through her deftness in sketching. Then followed a series of visits to public and private collections elsewhere in Italy, as well as to every locality in which lake-dwellings or relics of their inhabitants were to be found. On returning to Scotland in the summer of 1886, he received an invitation to deliver the Rhind Lectures for 1888, the subject suggested being "The Lakedwellings of Europe." These lectures were issued in book form in 1890, and with their appearance his reputation as an archæologist was made. The best testimony to their enduring quality is that they were translated into French eighteen years after they were originally issued. They have definitely taken their place as the standard work on the subject. The mass of material passed in review is so extensive that any serious modification of the conclusions reached is not likely to be called for.

About 1890 Dr and Mrs Munro had settled in Edinburgh, where their house in Manor Place speedily became a centre of hospitality for antiquaries on the one hand, and men of science on the other. Munro had hosts of friends in both camps, and he liked to stimulate young men of promise by introducing them to the notice of those who had already achieved distinction. He had been elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1879. In 1888 he was appointed Honorary Secretary, a post which he continued to hold for eleven years. In 1891 he joined the Fellowship of the Royal Society, where he was speedily at home in most congenial company.

Honorary and Corresponding Memberships flowed in on him from various learned bodies in other countries. He delighted to attend archæological and scientific congresses, largely because it gave him a colourable excuse for the travel which he so thoroughly enjoyed. His experiences in Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Dalmatia are recorded in a volume which has gone through more than one edition. But his most comprehensive tour was undertaken in 1897, when he and his wife went to Toronto to attend the British Association meeting, and made the return journey by Japan, China, India, and the Mediterranean.

In 1892 he played a prominent part in rousing public interest in the newly discovered lake-village at Glastonbury. Next year he was President of the Anthropological Section of the British Association. By this time he had pushed his researches back from the lake-dwellers to the makers of paleolithic implements, and he chose for the subject of his Presidential address "The relation between the Erect Posture and the Physical and Intellectual Development of Man," maintaining the view that "man's mental superiority over all other animals was primarily due to his attainment of the erect attitude which, by entirely eliminating the fore-limbs from participating in the function of locomotion, enabled him to utilise these limbs exclusively for prehensile and mechanical purposes." The theory attracted widespread attention, and the address, which was afterwards published, was always regarded by its author as one of his most important contributions to anthropology. Such criticism as it received, he welcomed. Nothing pleased him better than intelligent discussion. Even controversy had a certain attraction for him: witness the zest with which he used to recall the main incidents of the dispute about the great "Clyde Mystery" long after time had justified the attitude he himself had so consistently adopted. So, too, he thoroughly enjoyed being summoned to give evidence before Lord-Justice Farwell in a lawsuit over certain Irish gold ornaments, when the point regarding which he had to testify was the date of the last upheaval of the land that formed the raised beaches along the shores of the North of Ireland and Scotland. This was in 1903.

The same year was marked by an incident that indicated an impending change in his way of life. He purchased a house at Largs. He was now sixty-eight, and he was beginning to feel that the bustle of foreign travel was something of a strain. He hoped to find in the quieter pursuits of a country environment a more restful form of the variety that he loved. At first his new home was a summer residence only. But he gradually became more and more attached to his garden at Elmbank. The death of his wife in 1907 was a very heavy blow. Thereafter Edinburgh saw him only at

rare intervals. As the list of his contributions to learned periodicals shows, he continued to work strenuously at his subject, seeking in this way to gain relief, first from the grievous personal loss that had befallen him, and afterwards from a painful neuritic affection which laid hold of him in 1909, and slowly but inexorably tightened its grasp until the end.

The evening of his life was brightened by an interest that sprang directly from his own liberality. In 1910 he handed over to the University Court of the University of Edinburgh a substantial capital sum for the endowment of a permanent lectureship in anthropology and prehistoric archæology. By a happy inspiration the Court invited the donor himself to be the first lecturer under the new foundation, and the vigour and freshness of the inaugural course which he delivered in 1912 are still vividly remembered by many. During the next year or two he watched with all a parent's solicitude the development of the experiment he had initiated. It was a matter of peculiar satisfaction to him that his friend Professor Geikie should have been appointed his immediate successor. Similarly, he journeyed to Edinburgh in the early months of 1914 to welcome and entertain Mr D. G. Hogarth, the third Munro Lecturer. Then came the war, an incidental result of which was to postpone for six years the series which the Abbé Breuil had promised to deliver. The postponement was a great disappointment to Munro, who had been looking forward keenly to the visit of the distinguished French scholar, of whose work he had a high appreciation.

And, when the Abbé did come to Scotland in 1921, the founder of the Lectureship was no longer alive to receive him. As early as 1916 his strength had been so seriously undermined that he took the gloomiest view of the future. But, despite much suffering, his splendid constitution and his determined will enabled him to hold out for four years more, and even to write, to lecture, and to publish in the interval. He died on 18th July 1920. when he was within three days of attaining the age of eighty-five. last piece of work to which he set his hand was a short sketch of his own life, which was composed for the information of his closest friends, and which has since been printed for private circulation. From it not a little of the material for the foregoing notice has been drawn. It is a plain record of a strenuous and useful career, of real distinction achieved through native ability and steadfast concentration of purpose. knew Munro can readily fill in the outline for themselves and colour it by their recollection of his frank sincerity, his genuine kindliness, his love of all good fellowship.

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