

## OBITUARY

JAMES LORRAIN SMITH, M.A., M.D., LL.D.,  
D.Sc., F.R.S., F.R.C.P. EDIN.

ON an afternoon of March 1886, in a crowded university class-room, two men, to whom the University of Edinburgh in general and the Medical School in particular owe much, came into direct personal relation with each other. One was the Professor, who had just returned to Edinburgh after having received the honour of knighthood at the hands of Queen Victoria, and the other was a young man with noble forehead and dignified mien who had been chosen by his fellow-students to write and to present on their behalf an address of congratulation to their distinguished teacher. We first-year medical students of 1885-86 had made no mistake in our judgment of these men. Sir William Turner will be remembered so long as the New University Buildings stand, and so long as Anatomy does not forget her Masters; and James Lorrain Smith has given to three universities and to generations of students in Belfast, in Manchester and in Edinburgh, the inspiration of those qualities of character and of intellect which his fellows divined in him forty-five years ago.

Lorrain Smith was a "son of the manse." Born at Half Morton, Dumfriesshire, on 21st August 1862, he was the fourth son of the Reverend Walter Smith, Free Church minister of that parish.

In that region, part moorland and part agricultural, steeped in its poetry and its legends, a sensitive, thoughtful lad played and observed and reasoned. To that countryside his memory was faithful, and in the last months of his life he was engaged, by way of recreation, in recording his recollections and impressions of the place, its folk lore, and the acquaintances and companions of his boyhood. In this connection it is significant, and it is also indicative of the endurance of early loyalties, that his funeral service at the Crematorium was conducted by Principal David Cairns and the Reverend William T. Cairns, playmates with whom in those far-off days he had rambled over the moors and had fished the streamlet tributaries of the Sark.

His early education was obtained in the village school and at George Watson's College. Like his elder brother, Walter, and later followed by his younger brother, William George, he entered on the Arts course of the University of Edinburgh. It is something remarkable that all three brothers should have developed a passion for philosophy, and that each should have distinguished himself in that study. Walter became Professor of Philosophy at Lake Forest, Illinois, U.S.A., and William held for some years the Lectureship in Experimental Psychology in our own University.

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Lorrain Smith passed with ease through the Arts curriculum, and after having gained the Vans Dunlop Scholarship in Philosophy, he graduated M.A. with First Class Honours in Philosophy, in 1884. He gained the Ferguson Scholarship in Philosophy a year or so later.

His course seemed to be set in the direction of philosophy, but, to the surprise of many of his friends, he saw nothing incongruous in the wedding of science and philosophy, and decided to devote his life to medicine. No one who knew the man and his work can doubt that he succeeded in his aim. From his philosophical instinct and training he derived that openness of mind and breadth of view which characterised everything to which he turned his attention. Even after he had embarked on his career as a medical student he kept alive the keenness of his interest in academic philosophy. The summer of 1888 he devoted very largely to reading in his old subject, and to such purpose that he was awarded, after competitive examination, the Sir William Hamilton Fellowship in Mental Philosophy. This abstraction of time from his medical studies naturally made him doubtful of presenting himself for the final examination in the following summer. But this philosopher was capable of quick decisions, and the present writer has a vivid recollection of sitting beside him in Mr F. M. Caird's classroom in March 1889, when a discussion of a few sentences decided them to face the odds and put their fortunes to the venture at the ensuing final. Thus it was that Lorrain Smith graduated M.B., C.M. on 1st August 1889.

In his medical course he had been particularly attracted by physiology and pathology, and to a man of his synthetic mind the course of physiology conducted by Dr Noël Paton, based throughout on the conception of anabolism and catabolism as a unifying principle, made strong appeal. When in the winter of 1889-90 he went to Oxford to work with Professor Burdon Sanderson, under whose inspiring ægis he remained, with the exceptions of the summers of 1890 and 1891, until the beginning of 1893, it seemed certain that his course was laid for physiology. In April 1890, he entered the residency of the Royal Infirmary as house physician to Dr Affleck. To his surviving colleagues of that residency group the mention of the ward assistants' party, and other similar jokes, will remind them of that spirit of fun which was always in the background of his gravity. He passed the summer of 1891 in the Institute of Pathological Anatomy at Strassburg under Professor von Recklinghausen. Having been appointed to the John Lucas Walker Studentship in Pathology in 1893, he proceeded to Cambridge and, under Professor Roy, definitely entered on his life-long course as a pathologist. For some time he had been greatly interested in the problems of respiration, and in 1893 he graduated M.D., being awarded a gold medal for his thesis on "Thyroidectomy and Respiratory Exchange." Part of the following



*Photo by]*

JAMES LORRAIN SMITH

*[Swan Watson .*

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winter he spent in respiratory research in the laboratory of Professor Bohr at Copenhagen.

He remained in Cambridge until, in 1895, he was appointed to the Lectureship on Pathology in Queen's College, Belfast—a lectureship later raised to a professorship. Whilst in Belfast he conducted an experimental inquiry on typhoid fever in relation to sewage and water supply, and, alone, or in conjunction with Dr J. S. Haldane, made important researches on the oxygen-capacity and on the volume of the blood under varying conditions.

In 1901, as a member of the Irish University Commission he came into close touch with the leaders of the intellectual life of Ireland, and found kindred spirits in Wilfred Ward, the philosopher, and in Father Healy, then Bishop of Clonfert, whose kindly wit and inexhaustible fund of stories rejoiced his heart.

After a successful career in Belfast, where his memory is green and where many friends deplore his death, he was elected, in 1904, to the Chair of Pathology in the University of Manchester. Here he elaborated his "case method" system of teaching pathology, to which he had given much thought whilst teaching in Belfast. As pointed out by Professor Alexander in his beautiful obituary address, "he never consented to treat pathology as an isolated subject." With the conception of pathology as a branch of biology, he held that no study of pathological conditions could be satisfactory unless disease be considered as a vital *process* and not as a *state*. It necessarily followed that the pathologist, like the clinician, must study the body as a whole in relation to abnormal function and abnormal reaction and not as a collocation of separate organs, and that no investigation of a diseased condition could be complete which was divorced from the clinical history of the case. The pathologist and the clinician must come into direct and necessary relation with each other. Hence the "Catalogue of the Pathological Museum of the University of Manchester," for which he was responsible, is no mere descriptive register, but is a *book*, part of the soul of the man, and embodies his idea of the "case-method" system of teaching pathology. Along this line, whilst Professor of Pathology in our own university, he published a "Series of Studies from the Pathological Department" (*Edinburgh Medical Journal*, 1915), illustrating his method of correlating the teaching of pathology with clinical medicine.

During his stay in Manchester he was *magna pars*, if not indeed *fons et origo*, in founding the Pathological Society of Great Britain and Ireland, which held its first meeting in the University of Manchester on 14th July 1906. He was appointed a member of the Home Office Departmental Committee to report on "Humidity and Ventilation in Cotton Weaving Sheds" (1907), and of a similar committee to report

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on "Humidity and Ventilation in Flax Mills and Linen Factories" (1912), inquiries of great importance to these staple industries. In 1909, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, and later became a Member of Council.

Professor Alexander has told us what Lorrain Smith was to Manchester University, and it is not surprising that, on the close of Professor Greenfield's tenure of office, the University of Edinburgh, in 1912, should recall as the new Professor of Pathology her old and distinguished alumnus. Of the many sided character of his work in Edinburgh there are many who can speak with knowledge and authority. He set himself with enthusiasm to the reorganisation of his department, and, by his devotion to teaching and research, he evoked a similar enthusiasm in everyone attached to it, whether as assistant or student. He soon began to take an active interest in the general affairs of the university, and, in 1914, was immersed in a scheme for a Lister Memorial Institute. The difficulties of the Great War found him as ready and able to cope with novel practical problems as with pathological investigation and university administration. The great German gas attack of the end of April 1915 produced in him quick and fertile reaction. Possibly from a dormant recollection from his chemistry days, under Professor Crum Brown, he recalled the extraordinary power of charcoal in absorbing gases, and, after short experimentation, proved its efficacy for poison gases. The idea was immediately submitted to the War Office, but the official mind, with all its virtues, does not react to new things with preternatural rapidity, and some eighteen months elapsed before charcoal became the basis of the box-respirator, which saved so many lives. Undeterred by official inertia he organised his department to the determination of the most efficient antiseptic for the treatment of septic wounds, and especially of gas gangrene infections. Having decided that hypochlorous acid was the agent he sought, the cheapest and readiest method of preparing it was devised, and in the *British Medical Journal* (1915) the discovery of eusol (Edinburgh University SOLution) was announced in a joint paper by himself and his assistants. Some striking cases have also demonstrated its value, by intra-venous injection, in certain coccal septicæmias.

From his departments, in Belfast, in Manchester, and in Edinburgh, there issued monographs dealing with many aspects of pathological research, the enumeration of which is not to our present purpose.

As always throughout his professional life he was in an especial degree interested in matters relating to the medical curriculum and medical education in general. In 1919, he was appointed Dean of the Medical Faculty and became the father of the medical students. His sympathy, his kindly humour and his candour found full scope for their

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exercise. "The approachable Professor," as the students named him, did much to assist the doubtful, the timid, the anxious and the wayward. In the retiring room of his department and in the Dean's office many a problem having little relation to medicine was resolved by his sagacious advice.

In 1912-13, and again from 1927 to the time of his death, he was a member of the General Medical Council and served on the Education Committee of the Council.

He received the honorary degree of LL.D. of Belfast University in 1922, and that of D.Sc. of the University of Manchester last year.

No record of James Lorrain Smith should be undertaken which does not make reference to his intense love and appreciation of literature, and especially of poetry. He enjoyed the new poets as he revelled in the old. He was widely read and touched life on many sides. The open air was a fascination to him, and he usually spent his vacations amongst the mountains and the glens of the Highlands or of the Lake District, walking long stretches, with members of his family in equal comradeship. He enjoyed a game of golf and was proud to be, for a while, the custodian of the trophy played for between the pathological and anatomical departments. An international rugby match had no more interested spectator than he.

In the last year of his life he had in mind and had already written many notes towards the preparation of an essay on "Growth," which, proceeding from the study of the single cell to far-reaching syntheses, would embody the observations and reflections of his life's work. On the night before the attack which presaged the end he returned from a dinner where he had met several university colleagues. After repeating with gusts of homeric laughter some of the stories of the dinner, he launched, with all his accustomed clarity and zest, on an outline of the argument of his book—his legacy, his testament. He is dead. His spirit has passed. The ashes of his body are laid in the grave of his father and his mother at Half Morton, in the region that he loved, with the great silences about him. He was kind, he was tolerant and firm, he was honest, he was strong, he was loyal. As has been said of another, he was one of the backbones of the world. He was a great friend. He was a great teacher. He was a great example. We bid him farewell. His inspiration, his influence, and his memory remain.

J. W. CRERAR.