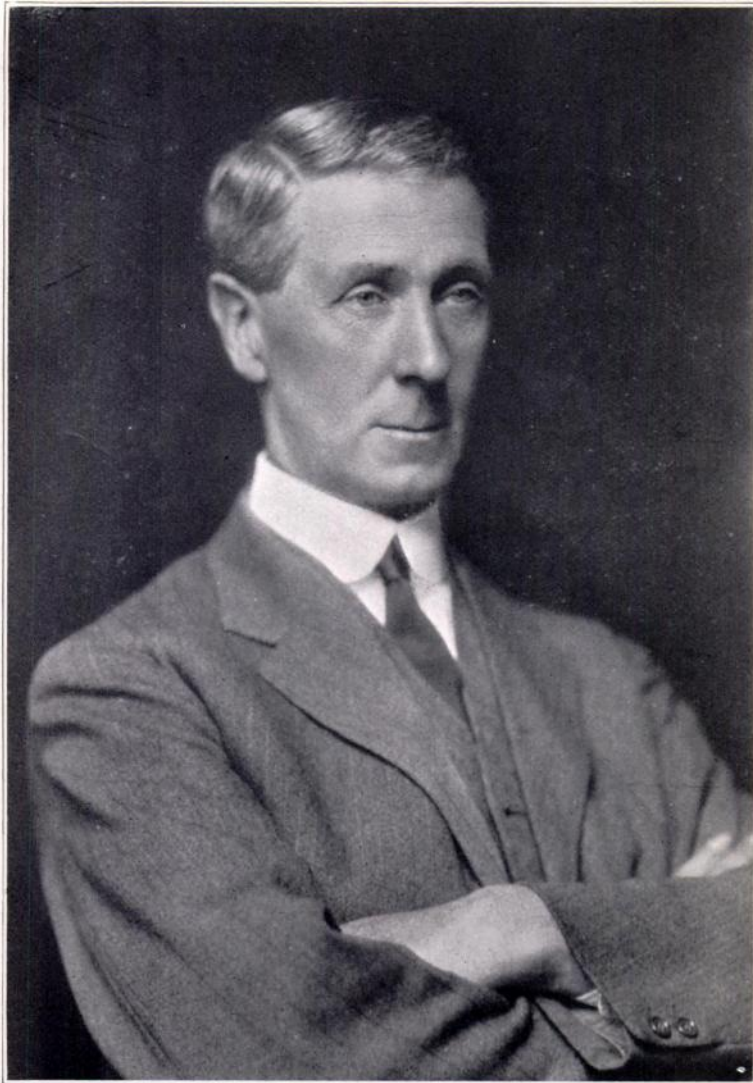


OBITUARY.

DOUGLAS McRAE, M.D., F.R.C.P.E.

GEORGE DOUGLAS McRAE was born on August 3, 1874, at Penicuik, Midlothian, the fourth son of Alexander Edwards McRae, M.D. Aberd., Fetteresk, Penicuik, and his wife Johanna Skinner Ranken, third daughter of the Very Revd. Arthur Ranken, Dean of Aberdeen and Orkney. Dr. Alexander McRae was descended from the "Clan" MacRae of Clunes, near Beaully, in Easter Ross and Cromarty, some of whom were also settled for a time on the west coast at Duich in Kintail at the head of Loch Duich. He died in 1882 at the age of 40, leaving his widow with a family of seven young children, four sons (another having died in 1876) and three daughters, to be brought up and educated. Owing to her husband's untimely death Mrs. McRae was not left in good circumstances; but she was a lady of strong character and striking personality, and exceptionally capable, practical and energetic, and she faced this duty and labour of love with great devotion, and for many years at Fetteresk successfully ran a comfortable and happy home for mental invalids. Her family always had the highest admiration and warmest affection for their mother, who died in 1904 at the age of 63. It is of interest to note, as an indication of his unbringing and character, that Douglas McRae in his youth was called "Sir Galahad" by his brothers and sisters in the chaff round the family table. He was educated at George Watson's College and the University of Edinburgh. He was a distinguished student, and gained medals in pathology and surgery and first-class honours certificates in medicine, midwifery, and mental diseases. He graduated M.B., C.M., in 1895. After graduation he acted for a short period as clinical assistant at Dundee Royal Infirmary, and for eight months as *locum tenens* in private practice in Devonshire and Northamptonshire. But his early home influences had particularly interested him in mental diseases, and in 1896 he decided to devote his life to that specialty. In 1896 he acted as clinical assistant at West Riding Asylum, Wakefield, and then at Royal Edinburgh Asylum, Morningside, where the writer (then an assistant physician) was one of his colleagues, and a life-long friendship began. In December, 1896, he was appointed an assistant medical officer at Wakefield, where he served under the late Dr. Bevan Lewis till May, 1899, acting also latterly as deputy pathologist and known there as "the industrious apprentice." In June, 1899, he was appointed an assistant physician at Morningside under the late Sir Thomas Clouston, and in 1902 became senior assistant physician in the West House department. During his nine years of office at Royal Edinburgh Asylum, from 1899 to 1908, he also acted as pathologist and was specially interested in pathological research. He worked assiduously in collaboration with the late Dr. William Ford Robertson, then Pathologist to the Scottish Asylums. During the five years 1903-1907 they published five joint papers on their bacteriological and experimental investigations into the pathology of general paralysis and tabes dorsalis, and on the treatment of these diseases by vaccines and antisera, having come to the conclusion that diphtheroid bacilli from the genito-urinary tract and other body passages were the specific and immediate exciting agents in the etiology of these affections, and that syphilis played only a predisposing role by lowering the resistance of the nervous system. This conclusion was disproved on the later discovery by Noguchi and others of the syphilitic spirochaete in the brain of general paretics. In 1906, while still senior assistant at West House, Douglas McRae was selected, on the special recommendation of the Commissioners in Lunacy, to act as Interim Medical Superintendent of Aberdeen City District Asylum at Kingseat, on the unexpected death of its first Superintendent, the late Dr. Charles Angus. This position he occupied for ten weeks. In 1907 he became M.D. of Edinburgh University, obtaining honours for his Thesis; and in November, 1907, after gaining the Diploma of M.R.C.P.E. in 1904, he was



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elected F.R.C.P.E. In January, 1908, he succeeded the writer as Medical Superintendent of Ayr District Asylum at Glengall, an office which he held with much acceptance to his Board and the community of Ayrshire during the ensuing 31 years, until his retirement in the summer of 1939.

Throughout the long tenure of his regime as medical and administrative "Chief" at Glengall Hospital he devoted himself unsparingly to his work and was a master of detail, in intimate touch with every aspect of its life and doings; and throughout he retained the highest esteem and regard of both patients and staff, and the best interests of both were constantly in the forefront of his thoughts. Conscientiousness and integrity, a high sense of duty and honour, thoughtfulness and consideration for others, kindness and sympathy, unselfishness and generosity, willingness to help and serve others, and invariable cheerfulness, were shining facets and outstanding features of his nature and humanity. Apart from his fine record at Glengall Hospital, Douglas McRae took an active interest and prominent part in the life and affairs of the Burgh and County of Ayr. He was a Justice of the Peace for Ayrshire, and was frequently engaged as adviser and expert witness in criminal and other judicial proceedings. During the Great War, 1914-18, he acted as Chairman of Ayrshire Local War Emergency Committee; and amongst other offices at various times he was Chairman of Ayrshire Joint Welfare, Hospitals, and Maternity and Child Diseases Committees; President of the Ayrshire Division of the Glasgow and West of Scotland Branch of the British Medical Association; and President of Ayrshire Musical Festival and of Ayr Amateur Orchestra, and a Vice-President of Ayr Burgh Choir. He was a lover of music (singing, piano and violin), the hobby which probably appealed to him most intimately, and he derived special pleasure as also solace from his violin, which he played with fine taste and expression. He also enjoyed and actively participated in private theatricals, playing his parts well. His favourite outdoor recreations were shooting, fishing, golf, cricket, motoring and gardening.

Douglas McRae became a member of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association in 1901, and its affairs were one of his chief interests during the rest of his life, and to it he gave very faithful and meritorious service. He acted as Assistant Editor of the *Journal of Mental Science* from 1915 to 1920, and thereafter till 1943 as one of the Joint Editors. The Association owe him a great debt of gratitude for his careful and valuable work in this responsible office, which occupied much of his time and energy. He also served at various periods as a Scottish Representative on the Council of the Association, and was Chairman of the Scottish Division, 1931-32, and Vice-Chairman of the Educational Committee, 1933-37. His long and much appreciated services received their just and well-deserved reward when the Association conferred upon him the highest honour at its disposal and elected him President for 1937-38.

Apart from his earlier joint papers he contributed the article on "Alcoholic Insanity" in Green's *Encyclopaedia Medica*, and occasional abstracts and reviews of psychiatric literature to various medical journals. Amongst other activities in the specialty he was also a past Chairman of the Scottish Asylums' Pathological Scheme, External Examiner in Psychological Medicine at Leeds University, and Examiner in Mental Diseases for the General Nursing Council of Scotland.

Douglas McRae was a faithful adherent and very regular attendant of the Episcopal Church of Scotland; and in politics he was a staunch Conservative. Throughout his busy life he was "the good companion," genuine and warm-hearted friend, and apart from his more serious side always cheery and fond of a joke. He had a keen sense of humour, and in discussions at medical and social meetings he often, out of mischief, expressed views (of which he himself did not approve) simply in order to arouse argument and ginger up opposition. He had another and allied streak in his nature, perhaps deriving from his Highland ancestry, a strong spirit of independence and readiness to resist what he regarded as any encroachment on one's rights and freedom. To be "hadden doon" in this way was anathema to him, and especially when such "encroachments" arrived in the form of circulars of instructions from the General Board of Control; and his antagonistic attitude to such perhaps did not always operate in the direction of his own best interests. But "Fighting Mac," as some of us dubbed him, was at bottom a peaceable and law-abiding member of society, and much endeared to all who knew him intimately.

After his retirement from Glengall Hospital in 1939 shortly before the outbreak of the present World War he settled at Duich, West Linton, Peeblesshire, about nine miles to the south-west of his native Penicuik. Here he made his last home and spent much of his leisure at the call of his garden; and he soon became a well-known figure in the village and, owing to his friendly and cheery nature, much liked by all and simply adored by the children. Gradually, however, his health broke down and cardiac weakness set in, and finally he passed away peacefully on May 7, 1943, in his 69th year. His mortal remains rest in the family grave in the old churchyard at Penicuik, overlooking the murmuring Esk and the little town with its distant sounds of a busy industry.

Douglas McRae married in 1908 Violet Moore Clouston, youngest daughter of the late James Stewart Clouston, Chief Factor of the Hudson Bay Company, and Margaret Miles. (He came of an old Orcadian family and left Orkney for Canada at the age of 17, and his eldest son was the late Sir Edward Seabourne Clouston, Baronet, President of the Bank of Montreal.) Douglas McRae is survived by his widow and their two children, Elizabeth, who resides with her mother, and Douglas Arthur, who is a Major in the R.A.M.C., and at present serving with the Central Mediterranean Force in Italy. To them we tender our deep sympathy in their great loss and sorrow.

C. C. EASTERBROOK.