

Dawson Fyers Duckworth Turner, B.A., M.D., F.R.C.P.E.

It is with deep regret that we have to record the death of one of our Fellows, known amongst us, and known to the whole scientific world, as Dr Dawson Turner.

The loss is difficult to appraise. Long and intimate contact with him makes it even the more difficult to say whether the loss sustained by the scientific world or by the medical profession is the greater.

He came of a learned family, and was born in Liverpool in 1857. He was educated at Shrewsbury and Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, where he took an Arts degree in 1884. Returning to this country, he went to Oxford, and later to Edinburgh, where he graduated in Medicine in 1888 with Honours. He was chosen by Sir James Affleck as his resident physician, and amongst his fellow-residents in the Edinburgh Infirmary were such brilliant men as Dr R. A. Fleming (now President of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh), Mr Miles (now President of the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh), Professor Robert Muir, and the late Professor James Ritchie. He graduated M.D. in 1890, and in the same year obtained the diploma M.R.C.P. Ed., being admitted to the Fellowship in 1891, when he also became M.R.C.P. Lond.

About this time it appeared as if his natural bent were still undecided. He became resident physician to the Royal Maternity and Simpson Memorial Hospital, and this branch of Medicine would certainly have been the richer if he had pursued it.

Later he published a book on skin diseases; but after a tour of the continental medical schools, the scientific side of Medicine claimed him.

He returned to Edinburgh and commenced lecturing on Medical Physics. His lectures were very popular with the students, not only on account of the great pains which he took in the preparation of his experiments and demonstrations, but also on account of the human appeal of his personality. Six feet in height, and of spare build, with the slight stoop of the student, he had a pleasing dignity and courtesy of manner. The progress of his students in after-life was always a matter of great interest and concern to him. Their achievements gratified him, and he kept in personal contact with a great number of them.

In 1895, shortly after he commenced lecturing on Physics, X-rays were discovered by Röntgen, and Dawson Turner was one of the first

to recognise their possibilities in Medicine. He set up an X-ray apparatus in his own home in George Square, the first in Edinburgh, and attracted much attention when he demonstrated to his friends and colleagues its properties in showing up bones and foreign bodies in the tissues.

In 1896 the Edinburgh Infirmary installed its first X-ray apparatus, and along with the late Dr Milne Murray he was given charge of this department.

A few years later, when the Curies in Paris had discovered radium, Dr Dawson Turner obtained a specimen which he used in the treatment of his own patients. It was one of the first specimens in this country, and he generously gave the Infirmary patients the benefit of it. Eventually the Infirmary secured a supply of its own, and Dr Dawson Turner supervised its administration to patients thereafter.

By 1914 he paid for his pioneer work in this form of radiant energy, and continued to pay for it in long drawn-out suffering for the remainder of his life. Protection against the rays was little known, and was only beginning to be understood. He had lost two fingers by this time, and he asked the Board of Managers of the Infirmary to relieve him of his X-ray work and devote his time to the treatment of patients by radium.

In 1925 he retired from active work, his general health having been undermined as a result of undue exposure to the action of X-rays. By this time he had lost an eye from this cause.

During all his active life he was always publishing the results of his researches. There was scarcely a year without three or four contributions from his pen.

In 1891 (*Royal Society Proceedings*), "A Preliminary Communication on the Electrical Resistance of Various Urines." In 1906 he gave to the medical world his discovery of the Hæmo-renal Index.

In 1893 he demonstrated to the Physical Society of London the results of Branly in the detection of electric surgings, which rendered much easier than they had been optical experiments on Hertzian waves.

His numerous contributions to the *Proceedings* of the Royal Society of Edinburgh bear testimony to his scientific attainments.

He was a great all-round man. A racing cyclist in his youth; one of the first motor-car owners in this country; a good billiard player, until the pain and disability caused by X-ray dermatitis made him give it up. He was no mean golfer, in spite of his disabled hands and eyes. He possessed one of the first mechanical piano-players in this country.

In all his many achievements he was encouraged and assisted by his wife, who survives him.

He died on Christmas day 1928 at Godalming, a great loss to all who knew him, and to the world of science in general.

He was elected a Fellow of the Society in 1906.

A. M.K.