

Harvey Littlejohn, M.A., M.B., B.Sc., F.R.C.S.E., F.R.S.E.

Born October 1862; died August 1927.

PROFESSOR HARVEY LITTLEJOHN was a native of Edinburgh, and in work for the medical school and the city he spent the greater part of his life. He was a graduate of the University in Arts and Medicine, and since 1906 he held the Chair of Forensic Medicine.

The University has, since the Chair was founded in 1807, been fortunate in the succession of teachers of Forensic Medicine. Among these were Sir Robert Christison and Sir Douglas Maclagan—men who added much to the fame of the University as a centre of medical teaching. Sir Henry Littlejohn, who had already been an extra-mural lecturer in the subject since 1856, was appointed to the Chair in 1896. In 1906 he was succeeded by his son, Harvey Littlejohn. Father and son were one in their effort to develop the teaching resources of their department, and to their zeal and success the medical school owes a great debt of gratitude. The Littlejohn museum and library, now committed to the care of the University, remain as permanent memorials of their work.

The students attend lectures in Forensic Medicine when they have reached the final stages of their course. Only after they have had instruction in various branches of Medicine are they fitted to study the duty of the medical practitioner in relation to the administration of justice. Since medico-legal problems may involve reference to any branch of Medicine, the responsibility of the practitioner takes many forms, and it is no easy task to prepare the student for this part of his future work.

To provide a thorough course of training in Forensic Medicine has now, for many years, been a well-established tradition in the Edinburgh school. Professor Littlejohn devoted himself earnestly and enthusiastically to this duty, and it has been justly said that he taught Forensic Medicine better than anyone else in Britain.

Soon after graduation, Professor Littlejohn was appointed Medical Officer of Health in Sheffield, and in this post, which he held for some years, he had a wide experience of State Medicine.

In 1896 he returned to Edinburgh to fill the post of Lecturer in Forensic Medicine in the School of the Royal Colleges. In 1906 he was appointed to the Chair of Forensic Medicine.

Exacting official and professional duties were never permitted to interrupt original investigation. While he was in Sheffield he published a series of reports and original papers on Public Health questions. A paper on the Notification of Infectious Diseases in Sheffield was followed by another on the same problem in the Edinburgh area. Other subjects were: An Outbreak of Typhoid Fever; of Typhus Fever; the Causes and Prevention of Smoke in the Atmosphere.

After his return to Edinburgh in 1896, he took up investigations in Forensic Medicine, and in the years that followed he contributed a series of papers on medico-legal inquiries by post-mortem examinations in cases of criminal violence; in suicide; and murder; on the interpretation of observations in cases of drowning; on the evidence of respiration in relation to the question of still-birth and infanticide; on cases of poisoning by arsenic; by strychnine; on the significance of blood-stains; on the use of the microscope in the detection of blood; on latent pneumonia. His last publication, an Atlas of Forensic Medicine, appeared in 1926.

He was a leading authority in the practice of Forensic Medicine, and from his office and experience he was called on to undertake many medico-legal inquiries. His reports and evidence given in the law courts were model medico-legal statements.

He had the fullest confidence of his professional colleagues, and many of them had been his students. To attend his class and listen to his teaching was an experience never to be forgotten. He was an eloquent speaker, racy and dramatic in expression, and he left on the mind of the student the most vivid impression of the difficulties he would have to meet in his practice and of the methods to be used to solve them. He strove unceasingly to demonstrate the necessity for high standards of work. He inculcated in this way a keen sense of professional honour and form, and a clear appreciation of the responsibility of the doctor in the general life of the community. His work as a teacher was of inestimable value, and will long be remembered.

Outside his own department he showed unfailing devotion to the general interests of the students. He did much by personal effort unknown to anyone except those immediately concerned. He was also a public supporter of many causes relating to undergraduate life. To the physical training of students, athletics, various forms of sport, and to the Officers Training Corps, he gave the benefit of his active interest.

In University administration, as Dean of the Faculty of Medicine,

member of the Senatus and of the Court, he did memorable service to the University. For many years he was representative of the University in the General Medical Council.

His personality was attractive, and among young and old his eager spirit soon secured a footing both genial and sociable. Among those who enjoyed the privilege of his friendship—and they were many—he was warmly esteemed for his unfailing attitude of generosity and sympathy.

He was elected a Fellow of the Society in 1903.

J. L. S.