

OSIER LIBRARY
REPRINT COLL.

Obituary, James Stewart

JAMES STEWART, M.D.

REPRINTED FROM THE MONTREAL MEDICAL JOURNAL, NOVEMBER, 1906.



JAMES STEWART, M.D.

Obituary.

JAMES STEWART.

James Stewart—a simple man with a simple name—died in Montreal on the sixth day of October, 1906, in the sixtieth year of his age. At the time of his death he was Professor of Medicine in McGill University, and Physician to the Royal Victoria Hospital.

Dr. Stewart was the son of the late Alexander Stewart, by his wife, Catherine McDiarmid, and was born at Osgoode, County Russell, Ontario, on November 19th, 1846. He was educated in the Public School, and at the Ottawa Grammar School. In 1865 he entered the Faculty of Medicine of McGill University, and graduated in 1869, being then in the twenty-third year of his age. His name does not appear in the prize list of his class. He began the practice of medicine at L'Orignal. Afterwards he removed to Varna, then to Brucefield, then to Winchester. In 1883, he proceeded to Scotland, where he obtained the qualification of Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Edinburgh. In the same year he returned to Montreal and was appointed Professor of Materia Medica and Therapeutics in the Medical Faculty of McGill University. In 1884 he became Registrar of the Faculty, a post which he held till 1891. In 1891 he was appointed to the Chair of Clinical Medicine, and in 1893 to the combined Chair of Medicine and Clinical Medicine.

In addition to these University appointments he was physician to the Royal Victoria Hospital since its foundation; and an honorary president of the section of medicine at the second Pan-American Medical Congress, held in Mexico in 1896. In 1897 he was vice-president of the section of medicine at the British Medical Association meeting in Montreal, and in 1903 he was president of the Association of American Physicians. Nor may we omit to mention his services upon the Editorial Board of this JOURNAL.

The death of Dr. Stewart leaves an obvious break in the ranks of the medical profession, a keen sense of want in the affections of his friends, and amongst the public at large a feeling of loss.

When he fell ill the younger members of the profession went about in perplexity. Men of his own age wondered to whom they would turn for a fresh perception of an intricate case. Persons who were sick were unwilling to die without the formality of a consultation with a physician upon whom the profession appeared to depend. It is worth enquiring for our own instruction why these things are so.

Dr. Stewart was devoid of exterior grace in manner or in speech. His manner was simple almost to rudeness. His disinclination to talk went nearly to the point of silence. Nor did he find an outlet in writing for the expression of those inward graces which all who came in contact with him felt that he possessed.

The truth in this enigma is that Dr. Stewart achieved his high position in the hearts and minds of his fellow men not so much by what he did as by what he was. In virtue of his inherent quality, simplicity of manner was redeemed from awkwardness, and became gracious; his reticence had nothing of taciturnity, nor had his silence anything of reserve. It was as if a subtle sympathy went out from him, which did not require speech for its expression.

There is something more. Dr. Stewart was learned in medicine. But he had transmuted learning into knowledge, knowledge into wisdom. Learning was his raw material, and when, through experience, he had converted learning into sagacity, it faded into the texture of his mind, and had no longer an independent existence. Facts and theories were to him the mere tools with which he worked in the secrecy of his own mind.

This acquaintance with the best which had been said and thought and done in medicine came to him as only it comes to the man who scorns delights and lives laborious days. He was the first in Canada, we believe, who systematically went to headquarters, and persistently enquired what men knew.

He was as well known in Vienna as in Montreal, in the one place a learner, in the other a teacher, teaching by his work with his patients, not by handing out theories to his students.

A simple character is always the most perplexing. That is why we find it hard to make clear that Dr. Stewart was sober, yet not sombre: shy and retiring, yet no recluse: himself without wittiness, yet the cause of merriment in others. The grasp of his hand, and the gaze of his steady eyes were more eloquent than any speech. His touch upon one's shoulder was more affectionate than an embrace. Still more curious, it is when members of the profession meet together to make merry that he is most missed. His spring of humour was small, yet it came from a great depth; and wherever he was there was a feeling of trust, of good nature, and all things which are friendly to good feeling.

We are not pretending that Dr. Stewart was a universal genius, or even a genius of any kind. He would have smiled a contradiction, had anyone made so silly a statement in his hearing. His capacity for organization was not high, nor was his judgment of either men or affairs very good. His initiative was small, and his counsels were always in favour of retaining the thing which had been. Nor did he interest himself much in matters which lay outside of medicine, in books, in men, or in women. For one who so ardently desired peace and quiet he had a strange liking for histories of war and accounts of battles. Few men were better informed upon the wars of the past century. The only public capacity in which he figured was as President of St. Andrew's Society, and even that rôle was not much to his liking.

A Resolution passed at a meeting of the Medical Faculty of McGill University, Monday, October 8th, 1906, is an earnest of the high esteem in which he was held by his colleagues who knew him best.

"RESOLVED, That the Members of the Medical Faculty of McGill University desire to record their sense of the deep loss which they have sustained in the death of their esteemed colleague and friend, Dr. James Stewart, Professor of Medicine and Clinical Medicine.

"Dr. Stewart's connexion with the Faculty of Medicine has been a long and brilliant one. From the moment of his arrival in Montreal in 1883 he was intimately connected with the work of the Faculty, as Registrar, and as Professor of *Materia Medica* and Therapeutics. Subsequently he was appointed to the Professorship of Clinical Medicine, and later to the combined Chair of Clinical Medicine and Theory and Practice.

"In addition to his University appointments he was intimately associated with the hospitals of Montreal, as Attending Physician—first in the Montreal General Hospital, and subsequently in the Royal Victoria Hospital.

"As a teacher Dr. Stewart earned an enviable reputation for simplicity, and lucidness, an intimate knowledge of the literature, and the power of presenting tersely the salient features of his subject.

"As a physician his practice was characterized by sound judgment, wisdom, and never failing common-sense, which never lost itself in useless verbiage,—qualities which assured him ample recognition by the medical profession and the public, not only in Montreal, but in the Dominion at large.

"His reputation was further enhanced by numerous and valuable contributions to the literature, particularly in the domain of neurology, to which he devoted special attention.

"To these qualities of the mind were added those of the heart, which most appealed to his patients—a quiet but none the less deep sympathy,—a readiness at all times when called upon to render assistance, and a steadfastness that know no wavering.

"In private life his conduct was marked by a high sense of honour and truth, and a desire to fulfil in all respects the highest ideals of his profession. Of a retiring disposition, he was ever averse to the publicity which his many talents and high position might have gained him, though he was the recipient of many honours which were not of his seeking, but were a tribute to the esteem in which he was held by the profession in Canada and the United States.

"In this brief and inadequate testimony to their late colleague the Members of the Faculty of Medicine desire not only

to express their personal loss but to convey to his sorrowing relatives sympathy in their bereavement."

To conclude, we cannot do better than to reproduce the words of Rev. James Barclay, spoken at the funeral ceremonies in St. Paul's church. They are better than those which we have employed:

"We are met to pay our tribute of respect and affection to one whose professional fame and whose personal worth were widely and gratefully recognized, not only in this city, but throughout the Dominion. Had he himself been asked what should be said on this occasion, he would have answered: 'Let little or nothing be said.' If ever there was a man who was content to live unnoticed, and who would have been content to die unnoticed, it was Dr. James Stewart. All the honours that came to him in life were unsought. They were thrust upon him as the inevitable reward of sterling work and genuine worth. He was a man of retiring and reticent nature, and of a singularly quiet and unobtrusive bearing, and it was only those who knew him well who knew the riches of both mind and heart that lay hidden behind the simple and unassuming manner. He bore his weight of knowledge and skill, and the burden of his honours 'lightly like a flower.'

"He was a member of a noble profession, and he further ennobled it by the integrity of his character and of the unselfishness of his services, and he enriched it by his valuable contributions. He was devoted to his life's work — an earnest and faithful student in his earlier days, he continued still to be a student when he had been promoted to a high place in the rank of teachers. Simplicity, sincerity, reverence, unselfish kindness, these were the features of Dr. Stewart's character that most impressed those who had the privilege of knowing him. Honoured as perhaps few men have been with the confidence and esteem of his professional brethren, revered with the respect and affection of his students, he was trusted and beloved by his patients, and warmly appreciated by his personal friends. Montreal loses in him one of its worthiest citizens, and the medical profession loses one of its most gifted and most esteemed members. The knowledge he acquired and the skill

to which he attained were ever regarded by him, not as means to self-promotion, but as gifts to be used in the service of his fellow-men, and that service was rendered with an unselfish readiness and generosity which secures for his memory a warm place in many a heart to-day. Not what he might make for himself, but what he might do for others was the prevailing purpose of his life. Could he have known all the grateful and loving recollections that have been awakened by his death, all the kindly things that have been said of him, by his brethren, by his patients, by his friends, he would have felt that his life had not been in vain. 'He being dead, yet speaketh.' Through his teaching and his example he will still live, and the fruits of his life will be seen in the lives of many of the students who were privileged to know him as teacher and as pattern."

THE MONTREAL MEDICAL JOURNAL

A MONTHLY RECORD OF
THE PROGRESS OF . . .

Medical and Surgical Science

EDITED BY

J. GEORGE ADAMI,	WILLIAM GARDNER,
GEO. E. ARMSTRONG,	H. A. LAFLEUR,
A. D. BLACKADER,	JOHN McCRAE,
G. GORDON CAMPBELL,	F. J. SHEPHERD,
F. G. FINLEY,	J. W. STIRLING,
ANDREW MACPHAIL, MANAGING EDITOR.	

Subscription price, \$3.00 per annum.

ADDRESS

The Montreal Medical Journal Co.

PUBLISHERS

P. O. Box 273

MONTREAL, Can.