

In private life Dr M'Bain was much esteemed by a large circle of friends. A man of extensive reading, amiable and unobtrusive in manner, he quietly prosecuted his practical work as a naturalist uninfluenced by any of the various theories which are not fully supported by facts. One scientific fact, indeed, to use his own words, was to him worth all the poetry in the world. He took a great interest in the scientific studies of young naturalists, and was at all times ready to give them the benefit of his counsel and wide experience. Many such students now mourn his loss in distant lands.

Dr M'Bain died, after a painful illness of some months' duration, at Trinity, near Edinburgh, on 21st March 1879.

Professor JAMES NICOL. By Professor Archibald Geikie.

In the death of Professor JAMES NICOL the Society has to regret the loss of one who served to link the present generation of geologists with the early leaders of the science in this country. Trained in this university under Jameson, he imbibed that love for the mineralogical side of geology which distinguished his career. His earliest scientific publication—an essay on the geology of his native county of Peebles—was awarded a prize by the Highland Society, and was issued in their “Transactions.” At the time of its appearance very little had been added to the original observations of Sir James Hall, communicated to Hutton, and published in the “Theory of the Earth,” regarding the structure and constitution of the so-called *schistus* or *killas*, forming the uplands of the south of Scotland. Mr Nicol, however, continued to devote himself to the investigation of this subject. He was the first to suggest that these rocks should be paralleled with some of the “Silurian” formations made known by the researches of Murchison; and in subsequent communications to the Geological Society of London he brought forward contributions to the unravelling of the complicated geology of these Silurian uplands of Scotland. At an early period of his life he published a small volume under the title of “Guide to the Geology of Scotland.” Though chiefly compiled from the published memoirs of previous observers, it was a meritorious and useful work, giving within a small compass a trustworthy digest of

all that was known at the time upon the subject. A more important work was his well-known “Manual of Mineralogy” which has long been a standard book of reference.

His papers giving promise of much ability, he was appointed to the important office of Assistant Secretary of the Geological Society of London, where he came into intimate relations with the leading geologists of the day. Afterwards he became Professor of Geology at Queen’s College, Cork—an office he soon vacated for the chair of natural history in the Aberdeen University, in the discharge of the duties of which he has spent the larger part of his scientific career.

For the last fifteen years he published scarcely any scientific papers, devoting his time principally to the business of the College, in which he took an active interest. During summer, however, he was in the habit of making excursions into the Highland mountains, where he renewed his acquaintance with minerals and rocks, which retained their interest for him to the last. Retiring in disposition, and latterly in somewhat enfeebled health, he allowed himself almost to drop out of the acquaintance of his fellow geologists, who rarely had an opportunity of seeing him save by visiting him at Aberdeen, or joining him in one of his Highland rambles. His unfailing kindness and readiness to help others greatly endeared him to his students.

Dr JOHN SMITH. By Dr Batty Tuke.

Dr JOHN SMITH was born in the year 1798. His father combined the business of brassfounder and farmer, renting the Calton Hill and a few adjacent fields. It may be interesting to place on record that Dr Smith’s father’s mother was born in 1685, the last year of the reign of Charles the Second. He was educated at Heriot’s Hospital, by the Governor of which institution he was recommended to Dr George Wood, son of the well-known Dr Alexander Wood, as an apprentice. He took the degree of Doctor of Medicine in the Edinburgh University in the year 1822, and became a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in 1833. After graduation he acted as Dr Wood’s assistant, and eventually succeeded to his practice, which included the management of the Saughton Hall Asylum for the