

OBITUARY.

GEORGE VIVIAN POORE, M.D.LOND., F.R.C.P.

By the death of Dr. George Vivian Poore, sanitarians, in common with the medical profession and the public, have sustained a very heavy loss. Dr. Poore's contributions to sanitary science and practice were in their way unique. He was able to survey the ground from the point of view of a general physician and a man of science, unhampered by the controlling and sometimes deadening influences which environ the man who is engaged in public health administration. To some extent Dr. Poore was a free lance in the sanitary world, but his excursions into the territory of hygiene were always welcome to those actually engaged in sanitary practice, not alone for the sparkle and brightness which were characteristic no less of his writings than of his speeches, but for the truths and happy definitions which his writings contain, such truths, especially when they are of an elemental nature, being too often apt to be buried and lost sight of in the progress and development of a young and aspiring science.

The inner meaning of much of Dr. Poore's work in the department of hygiene may be expressed in the words "Is not our daily life becoming too complex? Would it not be better to return to nature? If so, how is it to be done?" The "Essays on Rural Hygiene," "The Earth in Relation to the Preservation or Destruction of Contagion" (Milroy Lectures), "The Shortcomings of some Modern Sanitary Methods," and many other contributions develop this, the central idea of much of Dr. Poore's work. But he was not merely content to advocate his views on theoretical grounds, he also practised himself the principles he enunciated; and his house at Isleworth, and later on his garden at Priory Lodge, Andover, demonstrated to all who chose to observe how the individual citizen, who has a house and curtilage, may, by thought and care and the observance of nature's laws, be independent of complicated sanitary fittings, such as waterclosets, drains, and sewers, and may even dispense with the periodical visits of the dust-man.

Dr. Poore was a faithful disciple of the Rev. Henry Moule. He had a strong belief, which in him amounted to a conviction, that the surface soil of the earth was nature's chief purifying agent. He made a very careful

study of the purifying powers of different kinds of soil, and he arrived at the conclusion that under suitable conditions, and with intelligent manipulation, surface soil was the best of all purifiers for the waste and refuse matters of the human body and of human habitations.

In his advocacy of the more general practice by the community of conservancy or dry methods of excretal removal and disposal, and the purification of waste waters on garden ground, Dr. Poore, like other gifted men, was apt to lose sight of the fact that the science which interested him was of little account to the ordinary individual, and that the expert knowledge and intelligence which he could bring to bear upon the subject of refuse disposal were totally absent from the mental equipment of the ordinary householder. The man who is actively engaged in public health duties very soon realises how apathetic the public is in all sanitary matters, and that any system which depends for its success on even the smallest modicum of care and intelligent application on the part of the great mass of the population, is bound to be a failure, because neglect and unintelligent use are certain to follow. A return to the simple life, in which every man is his own scavenger, is possible enough to men of Dr. Poore's stamp, but the great bulk of the population, if they are to remain clean and have sanitary homes, must have everything made so easy for them, that no thought or care is required on their part, and even their mistakes and misdoings must be capable of easy rectification.

Dr. Poore was a man, however, who did not confine himself to one particular subject. He studied, he travelled, and he observed; and whatever the matter which he had at any time in hand, his observations upon it were always shrewd and far-seeing, and well worthy of attention. Of his success as a hospital physician and teacher it is not incumbent upon me to dilate in this notice; but of his really remarkable powers of forceful exposition as a lecturer or debater or speaker at meetings, it may truly be said that they were gifts of a quite unusual kind. When Dr. Poore rose to speak, there was always a pleasurable anticipation amongst his audience that they were about to listen to a really good speech, well reasoned, clearly and forcibly expressed in resonant tones, and lightened by those occasional touches of fancy and humour which were hardly ever absent from his utterances. Nor were his audiences ever disappointed; and Dr. Poore also did much towards the entertainment of the company at public dinners, where the after-dinner oratory is not always of the kind suitable to the occasion.

Dr. Poore was one of the founders of the Parkes Museum, and he took the very greatest interest in it from its earliest days. He was

honorary secretary of the Parkes Museum from 1876-1882, and it is very largely due to his efforts and his appreciation of what the future of the Museum would be, that the undertaking did not perish of neglect and want of support in its infancy. From 1883-1888 Dr. Poore was vice-chairman of the Parkes Museum, when Sir Douglas Galton was chairman, and he was later on a member of council of The Sanitary Institute, and registrar in 1902-3.

He frequently attended the congresses of the Institute, and he read numerous papers at congresses and sessional meetings. He was, up to the last, much interested in the work of the Institute, and his death now removes nearly the last of the pioneers of the "seventies," who underwent the struggle and strife of rearing the Parkes Museum and Royal Sanitary Institute on their present foundations, and of awakening the interest of a very apathetic public in schemes designed for the public's own well-being and sanitary improvement.

In private life Dr. Poore was always delightful, a most entertaining and genial companion, and a true and trusty friend; there must be a great many who will deplore his departure from amongst us.

L. C. P.

A Portrait of DR. POORE forms the frontispiece to this Part, facing p. 385.
