

## PROFESSOR WESLEY MILLS

BORN, FEBRUARY 22ND, 1847

DIED, FEBRUARY 13TH, 1915

**D**URING the winter of 1867-68, before beginning the study of medicine, I very often went with Dr. Bovell to his lecture on physiology at the old Medical School building in the Parks, Toronto. In those days of protoplasm and of Beale's "germinal matter," when the carmine stain had brought the nucleus into importance, he propounded for weeks the mysteries of the cell to a bewildered but delighted class, as no one could resist the personal charm and lucid tongue of a man with such a perfervid enthusiasm. Among those who caught the infection was a tall, thin student, taking Arts and Medicine, Thomas Wesley Mills. A helpful custom brought many of us into the professor's room after lecture to discuss points of difficulty: Mills was always full of them. J. E. Graham, Dick Zimmerman, Burt, of Paris, Ontario, and myself were usually of the company, and to all queries Dr. Bovell was ready with replies. Mills was deep in the philosophy course, and in many lively discussions I got my first introduction to Kant, Hegel, Cousin, and Mill. We nicknamed him "John Stuart" after the last-named philosopher. The next winter, when I became a regular medical student, the after-lecture symposia were repeated, and I got to know Mills very well, and to have a great respect for his ability in an argument. Then we parted, I to Montreal, he to teach and to save money. One lecture during the session of 1876-77, labouring at the *Proximate Principles* (taken chiefly from Dalton's "Physiology!") my eye caught on the back benches a critical expression on a familiar face—my old fellow student "John Stuart" who had come to McGill to finish his medical course. After graduation, in 1878, he took a hospital position and then went abroad to study laryngology. In the session of 1878-79 the faculty converted one of the lecture rooms into a physiological laboratory, and Dr. Arthur Ritchie acted as my demonstrator. Dr. Mills, who had worked at University College (London) laboratory, joined me in 1881 as demonstrator. We had a very active session and devoted the Saturdays to practical work, and had many class demonstrations. We used Sanderson's "Handbook," and I think we were the first in

Canada to give medical students an opportunity to work practically with apparatus. In those happy days the professor collected the fees and paid all expenses. My fees had been raised, and I took in for the session 1881-82, \$2,400 and spent \$1,019 on the department. The next session Dr. Mills went abroad again to study with Sir John Burdon-Sanderson, returning in October, 1883, and the faculty helped this year in the payment of his salary. When I was called to Philadelphia in 1884 he was appointed lecturer in physiology, and in 1886 made professor. In 1910 on account of ill health he resigned, since when he had been living quietly in London.

Mills had an excellent training as a physiologist. On two occasions he worked at University College with Sir John Burdon-Sanderson and Dr. Schäfer, and with Kronecker in Berlin, and twice for periods of three or four months with Professor Newall Martin at Johns Hopkins. He contributed papers on heart problems which were among the first to follow the fruitful lead of Gaskell—"On the heart of the turtle," "On the heart of the terrapin," "On the heart of the fish and menobranchus" (*Journal of Physiology*, Vols. v, vi, vii). He also became very interested in physiological chemistry and wrote a very good paper on "Oxalic acid" (*Journal of Physiology*, Vol. v). He also contributed several important articles on the physiology of the brain cortex. Subsequently two lines of study absorbed his energies. Like myself, he became a warm personal friend of Dr. Duncan McEachran, principal of the Montreal Veterinary College, in the work of which we were both keenly interested. This association led to a long series of researches on comparative physiology, and more particularly on animal intelligence. He started private kennels and studied the dog in all phases of health and disease, and he published two works, "How to keep a dog in town," and "The diseases of the dog." In 1886 appeared "Outlines of lectures on physiology," in 1889, "A text-book of animal physiology," and in 1890, "A text-book of comparative physiology." In 1898 he summarized his psychological studies in a work, "On the nature and development of animal intelligence," which, I am told, is still one of the best manuals on the subject.

One of Mills' earliest contributions to the *Journal of Physiology* was on the voice. He was passionately devoted to music, and was himself in younger days no mean performer on the violin. In 1906 he published an important work on "Voice production in singing and speaking," which brought him much reputation outside of medical circles. Since his retirement and serious illness he lived

in London, and devoted himself with great energy and enthusiasm to the study of music. He had pet theories, but it is surprising how thoroughly familiar he became with all the aspects of the subject. Only a few weeks ago he wrote me a long account of his hopes and ambitions for more and better music in this country and in Canada. He was a constant contributor and critic to various musical journals. He has left to the library of the McGill Conservatory of Music his works on the subject, also his violin for the use of a poor student, and a collection of books of clippings of musical criticisms, which, as he says in his will, "cost me much labour and will probably increase in value as time passes."

Mills had all the essentials for success—ambition, brains, and a capacity for hard work; but in his make-up there was a curious lack of capacity for happiness—not in his home, but in collegiate and professional circles. Temperament, or possibly the hard struggle of his early years, had made his outlook on life a bit sombre, and he often understood his colleagues as little as some of them did him. Howard he loved, and could appreciate his stern sense of duty; but the opportunism of Craik, the philosophic calm of Ross, the contagious hilarity of Roddick, the cynical wisdom of Shepherd, and my own frivolities he never understood.

Upon men obviously striving to be taken at their own valuation the world has no mercy; now and again one wins out, but the majority form a battered band whose work and worth never receive a due mead of appreciation. It is the careless sinner who goes a-whistling and working through life, caring not for what the world thinks, who gets more than his due, and can say with Wordsworth as the shadows lengthen "the gratitude of man has oftener left me mourning." It is tragic that one who had done so much and worked so hard should be able to write, as Mills did to me, "I have not fared too well at the hands of men during my life." Like many men devoid of the quality, he prided himself on a keen sense of humour. This led to a mental astigmatization which sometimes gave a blurred vision, even in the sunshine of life. Guileless as a child, he was at the mercy of the coarser spirits of a class who took advantage of an innocency made piquant by the assurance of wisdom. But to the earnest student Mills was a devoted teacher and a constant friend. His labours in connexion with the student societies should always be carefully remembered at McGill. He worked hard for the school and for the university, and built up an excellent department in physiology.

Mills was singularly happy in his death. Following a serious

operation, prostatectomy, in 1910, he was ill for months, and one of the best articles on the psychology of the sick-bed and of nurses from the standpoint of the patient is to be found in his article entitled, "Some considerations bearing on the patient, the student, and the nurse," in the *British Medical Journal*, March 19th, 1910, in which he gave his history as a patient for a year. The story illustrates Plato's shrewd remark that to appreciate fully all the aspects of a disease a doctor should have had it. An interesting feature is the personal description of the concentrated wretchedness in the condition of shock. During the past few years he had been very well. About ten days before his death he wrote complaining of attacks of pain in the pit of the stomach, which he feared were anginal, and he had had one or two attacks of dyspnoea. But a reassuring letter from me put the thing out of his mind, and he wrote saying he was quite well again. On Saturday afternoon, February 13th, after luncheon he was writing, when his wife heard his head drop on the table. He fell over, and in a few minutes was dead. A post-mortem showed advanced coronary artery disease, a fresh thrombus in one branch, beginning aneurism at the apex of the left ventricle, sclerosis of the arteries, and large arteriosclerotic kidneys.

W. O.

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### Obituary

THE following tribute to the late Dr. Kingston has been received from the secretary of the Elgin County Medical Association:

Dr. J. J. Kingston, one of Aylmer's most useful and respected citizens, died at Aylmer on Friday evening, March 12th, 1915. Dr. Kingston received his medical education at the Toronto School of Medicine and was a graduate of Victoria University. For a number of years he carried on a successful practice at Vienna, Ontario. About twenty-eight years ago he moved to Aylmer, where, in the seventieth year of his age, he died.

Another scene in life's drama has been enacted and the faithful actor has passed beyond the bounds of time. Those who knew him best loved him most. His modest reserve placed him in an atmosphere entirely his own and his quiet dignity secured for him