

In Memoriam.

FRANCOIS S. B. DE CHAUMONT,
M.D., F.R.S.,

*Professor of Military Hygiene in the Army Medical School, Netley.
First President of the Hampshire Field Club.*

BY DR. W. C. MACLEAN, C.B.

We have to record the lamented death of this distinguished man, cut off at the comparatively early age of 55. Dr. de Chaumont was, as his name indicates, of French extraction on his father's side; his mother was a Scottish lady. He was born in Edinburgh, and educated in the Edinburgh Academy and University of that city. After passing through the arts and medical classes with distinction, he obtained his degree with honours, and entered the medical service of the Army, serving in the Rifle Brigade in the Crimea. On the removal of the Army Medical School from Chatham to Netley, Dr. de Chaumont was appointed Assistant Professor of Military Hygiene, under the late Dr. Parkes. In this position he not only assisted his principal in the laborious duty of teaching in the laboratory of the School, but did an immense amount of extra work for Government in the way of analysis, reporting on hospitals and barracks, contributing to the departmental Blue Book, and papers to scientific journals on health questions. He was also appointed to give instruction to young officers of the Royal Engineers at the School of Military Engineering at Chatham on military hygiene, so far as concerned the health arrangements and construction of military buildings, and such like matters—instruction which was highly valued, not only by the young officers, but by their seniors also.

On the lamented death of Professor Parkes, Dr. de Chaumont was, with the hearty concurrence of the other professors and the whole service, appointed his successor.

From this time until his health completely broke down, the subject of this notice led a laborious life. In addition to the heavy and responsible duties of his chair, conscientiously discharged, he did an immense amount of work, taking an active part in congresses at home and abroad; inspecting and reporting on hospitals, barracks, and public buildings; giving addresses on health questions to various societies; and, above all, editing the great work of Parkes on *Practical Hygiene*, two editions of which he published, bringing the work up to the latest developments of the science with conspicuous ability, and in such a reverent spirit to the work of his great master as to be highly appreciated by Dr. Parkes's old pupils and friends and the profession generally. He was also the author of the article on *Hygiene* in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Dr. de Chaumont was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society; it is not possible for us to give in this brief notice a list of his numerous contributions to science; that will be done fully in the *Transactions* of that Society in the usual course. Meanwhile it must suffice to say that the late Professor was *facile princeps* in his own department, and was acknowledged to be so throughout Europe, and in the United States of America more particularly. His scientific knowledge, far from being confined to his own branch, was large and accurate; he delighted in mathematical science, in which he excelled, and in which, if his other pressing duties and pursuits had permitted, he was capable of greatly distinguishing himself. He was an accomplished linguist, familiar with all the modern languages, and a master of philology, a study very congenial to him. He delighted in music, and he had a knowledge of its principles that would have been creditable to a professed musician, and far beyond that of amateurs; if time had allowed, he would have excelled as an executant; as it was, some years ago he could "attack" the compositions of the great masters of the piano in a manner not often attempted by amateurs. Like most men of intellectual power, he had a Macaulay-like tenacity of memory; whatever he read he remembered, and stored in his mind with such order and method, that it was available with unfailing readiness at a moment's notice. With all his acquirements he was the most modest of men; all his

knowledge was at the service of his friends; he possessed a generous and equal temper, had not a trace of literary jealousy in his nature, and was a loyal colleague.

Into the details of the ailments that cut short this useful life we do not propose to enter. He suffered from profound mental depression, and it was evident to his friends that his life's work was done, and they feel that under the sad circumstances he was fortunate in his death, which occurred at his residence Woolston Lawn, on Wednesday, April 18th, 1888.

The funeral took place in the cemetery of St. Mary's Extra. Although rain fell in torrents throughout the day, with a bitter north-east wind, it was attended by the whole of the staff at Netley Hospital, the professors and the surgeons on probation in the Army Medical School, many members of the Southampton Literary and Philosophical Society; Hants Field Club, of which he was President; the Council of the Hartley Institution, of which he had, until a few days before his death, been a member; and representatives from other public institutions in Southampton, and by a large number of the gentry and medical practitioners in the neighbourhood.

The *Hampshire Independent*, in an obituary notice, alluding to the local services of Professor de Chaumont, says:—"As a Fellow of the Royal Society, Dr. de Chaumont was, of course, well known. At the British Association meetings in Southampton in 1882 he spoke on several occasions. In the Physical Section he took part in a discussion on a paper by Professor Lord Raleigh on 'Ventilators and ventilating.' As a man of prominently active scientific and literary pursuits he was invited many years ago to take a seat on the Council of the Hartley Institution, and readily assented, finding there plenty of work that was congenial to his tastes, and it is hardly necessary to say that the various departments of the Institution owe very much to his fostering care and guiding hand, and in no branch of distinctly local work will his loss be more greatly felt than at the Hartley. On the day he died a letter was read from him by the Mayor, at the Southampton Town Council, resigning his seat as a non-corporation member of the Hartley Council. No reason was given

for such a step, but the Council knew only too well that illness dictated it, and accepted the resignation with a cordial expression of sympathy, little thinking that the Professor had already joined the great majority, though the melancholy fact became known ere the meeting broke up. The Southampton Literary and Philosophical Society was fittingly honoured by his acceptance of the office of president, which he held for many years, his diligence in the performance of the duties of the chair being only equalled by the transcendent abilities he possessed for occupying such a position. He was a frequent contributor of papers, and in his best days of health was rarely absent from his post, and he invariably had something, and that always of a practical nature, to contribute to discussions. He was also president of the Hampshire Field Club, taking part, with members of his family, in the summer excursions, his great scientific knowledge and general intelligence always rendering him in these outings a most delightful companion. It was only on Wednesday, at the annual meeting of the Club, that a wish was expressed on his behalf to resign, but the Committee, properly gauging the value attaching to such a head, proposed his re-election, if but for his name only, promising to relieve him of all work in connection with the office. The *conversazione* arranged for the evening would undoubtedly have been postponed had the news of his death arrived earlier, but, under the circumstances, as a large number of members of the Club and their friends were coming from various parts of the county, it was impossible to communicate with them. As the news spread a gloomy sorrow pervaded all, and as there were many present who knew Dr. de Chaumont, the *conversazione* appropriately afforded an early medium, and an opportunity that otherwise might not have been afforded, for a united expression from the members of the Literary and Philosophical Society and the Hampshire Field Club of deep regret at the death of the President and of heartfelt sympathy with the widow and large but young family who mourn his loss."