Hubert Maitland Turnbull, 1875-1955

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HUBERT MAITLAND TURNBULL
1875-1955

HUBERT MAITLAND TURNBULL, who died on 29 September 1955 some eight years after retirement from the Chair of Morbid Anatomy at the London Hospital Medical College, occupied a position of eminence in British pathology. Not only was he greatly esteemed by his colleagues at the London but his influence extended widely throughout the medical schools of this and other countries of the Commonwealth. This was due not so much to his ability as an initiator and director of research, even though he was responsible for a considerable amount of valuable original work during his forty years at the London Hospital, but to a particular genius for accuracy of observation and meticulous attention to detail which he possessed in high degree and applied with almost religious fervour to everything that he did. Entering pathology at a time when many in this country held that morbid anatomy was a dead subject, Virchow, in their opinion, having left little new territory to be explored, Turnbull set himself to revolutionize morbid anatomical practice and to raise the subject to the level of a science. And so well did he succeed that he proved a source of inspiration not only to his fellow pathologists and those young graduates who chose to emulate him, but also to the much wider circle of clinicians who sought the privilege of working for a time in his department as a prelude to specialization in some other branch of medicine.

The son of Scottish middle class parents Turnbull was born on 3 March 1875 in Glasgow, but since the family moved to Edinburgh when he was still an infant it was this latter city that he came to look on as his native one. His father, Andrew Hugh Turnbull, was an actuary who at the time of his son Hubert’s birth was Manager of the City of Glasgow Life Assurance Company, but later joined the Scottish Widows Fund, serving first of all as Secretary and Joint Actuary and subsequently as Manager. He was an enthusiastic member of the Volunteer Force and had the distinction of being elected in 1878 to the Queen’s Body Guard for Scotland, the Royal Company of Archers. Turnbull’s mother, Margaret Lothian Black, was the youngest daughter of Adam Black, the founder of the publishing firm of A. & C. Black which later moved from Edinburgh to London. Adam Black was twice Lord Provost of Edinburgh and represented that city in parliament from 1856 to 1865. In commemoration of his long and valued services a statue to him was unveiled in 1877; it stands today in Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh. It is worthy of note that two of Turnbull’s paternal uncles had distinguished careers. His father’s eldest brother, John William Turnbull, who was at Caius College,
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Cambridge, and passed Senior Optime in the Mathematical Tripos coming fifth in the list, was later called to the Bar at Lincoln’s Inn and subsequently went to Natal where he was eventually made a Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of that country. Another uncle, Alexander Turnbull, studied medicine at Edinburgh University, taking his doctorate of medicine at the early age of 21. Entering the Navy he had a brilliant career culminating in his appointment as Inspector General of Medical Services. Thus on both sides of the family there is ample evidence of an ability which was above the average from which Turnbull could have inherited his particular qualities, if these things can be derived in this way.

He commenced his education at St Ninian’s, a preparatory school in Moffat, where from 1884 he spent four years which seem to have been without any particular formative influences. If one were to search for such an influence in this period of his life it would probably be to mention William Evans the Scottish naturalist, a colleague of his father in the Scottish Widows Fund. This man befriended Turnbull and his young brother; he took them on bird-nesting expeditions and taught them how to observe the habits of birds and to recognize their song and alarm notes. This friendship had a very profound effect on Turnbull, in fact he attributes his interest in science to this association and he kept in touch with Evans right up to the time of his death. For the remainder of his schooling Turnbull came South of the Tweed to Charterhouse, where for six years he received the type of classical education which was provided by the English Public Schools in those days. The only concession to science teaching at Charterhouse at that time was to allot one hour a week to chemistry, and after reaching the Lower VIth even that meagre ration was dispensed with. Not only was there this great disparity in the amount of time devoted to the teaching of science and the classics, but the quality of the two showed an equal divergence; the teaching of the humanities was of a high order with T. E. Paige outstanding amongst the classical masters.

So when Turnbull left Charterhouse in 1894 to go to Magdalen College, Oxford, he had yet to receive some training in science, a fact which he deplored at the time, though in all probability it was not a serious handicap. And it was not until two years later, after taking Classical Moderations, that he turned to science with the object of qualifying in medicine. This change was largely the result of his father’s suggestion, who no doubt had in mind his son’s early interest in ornithology, and the wisdom of this advice was soon to become evident by the enthusiasm with which Turnbull threw himself into these new studies. Attracted in turn by botany, animal pathology and physiology it was this last subject in which he found the greatest interest. His teachers included Professor Gotch, Dr J. S. Haldane and Dr Gustav Mann and the excellence of their teaching combined with the small size of the classes provided unique opportunities for learning, of which Turnbull took full advantage. It was confidently expected that he would get a first in Greats but to the disappointment both of his teachers and himself he only
obtained a good second class. It was about this time (1896) that an introductory course in pathology for medical students at Oxford was first instituted. This was done at the instigation of Professor Burdon-Sanderson, recently appointed to the Regius Chair of Medicine at Oxford, and the course, organized and given by Dr James Ritchie, was taken by those studying for medicine concurrently with anatomy after graduating B.A. In the summer of 1898 when Turnbull attended Ritchie’s course there were six others in the class, amongst them A. E. Boycott and H. R. Dean, and it must be accounted in large part to Ritchie’s teaching that three of the seven—Turnbull, Boycott and Dean—elected to specialize in pathology. All three came to occupy positions of eminence in this speciality. Anatomy in those days at Oxford was taught by Professor Arthur Thomson and Dr Gabriel Farmer. At first Turnbull found this a very difficult subject, but helped by a good visual memory he came to enjoy it, finding particular interest in its comparative aspect. And having taken the 2nd M.B. and been awarded the James Welch Prize in anatomy, he prepared for the primary F.R.C.S. examination by acting as demonstrator in anatomy at Oxford for a period of two terms, joining the extramural school of anatomy at Edinburgh in order to continue these studies during the vacations. The decision to specialize in pathology had not yet been taken, in fact this was not to be decided until after Turnbull had qualified and had studied with Professor Schmorl. At the time when he was about to embark on his clinical studies his aim, apparently, was surgery, at any rate this seems to have been the wish of his Oxford teachers, and he accomplished the first step in this direction in the autumn of 1900 by passing the primary F.R.C.S. examination.

It was at this time that he went to the London Hospital for his clinical studies, having obtained the Price University Entrance Scholarship which is open to competition at that medical school by graduates of Oxford and Cambridge. Amongst Turnbull’s teachers at the London Hospital probably none made a greater impression on him than Henry Head and William Bulloch. Turnbull has described how when he first went to the London he used to meet Henry Head in the Underground on his daily journey to the hospital and how Head profited from these chance meetings to instruct him in the matter of physical signs. Though Turnbull counted this to his good fortune it was not without its embarrassment for his instructor’s loud and penetrating voice caused considerable annoyance to their fellow passengers. This passed unnoticed by Head, however, who continued daily unperturbed to give these unsolicited lessons on the Underground. Later Turnbull came to be officially connected with Head when he served as one of his clinical clerks and this stimulating experience so raised his interest in neurological medicine that for a time neurology competed with surgery in Turnbull’s plans for postgraduate specialization. It was doubtless also responsible for the fact that the thesis which Turnbull presented for the degree of D.M. was on a neuropathological subject: the apparently congenital loss of post-central cortex in an adult. Sherrington was invited to adjudge the thesis and he expressed the
opinion that the candidate was a neurologist of great promise and since Professor Burdon-Sanderson, the Regius Professor of Medicine, was of a like mind, the thesis was accepted and Turnbull proceeded to the degree in 1906. William Bulloch, later to be made Professor of Bacteriology, was also a most inspiring teacher; that seems to have been the almost unanimous opinion of those who studied under him and it was undoubtedly shared by Turnbull. Not only was he widely read, but he knew personally many of the leading pathologists and microbiologists of Western Europe and he drew largely on this intimate knowledge to give his lectures a vivid interest which claimed the attention of even the least studious. Turnbull found a delight in these lectures which provided him with something that even the widest reading could not furnish, and it seems clear that the teaching of Bulloch, like that of Ritchie at Oxford before him, must have had something to do with Turnbull’s election to make a career in pathology.

After qualifying at the end of 1902 by obtaining the Conjoint Diplomas of the English Colleges as well as the B.M. and B.Ch. of Oxford, Turnbull, following the usual practice, began what was intended to be a series of house appointments which had, however, to be curtailed on account of illness. Having served three months on Surgical Out Patients and acted for a short period as Emergency Officer, he was made House Physician to Drs Francis Warner and Bertrand Dawson (later to become Lord Dawson of Penn). Unfortunately this last post was held for only ten days when he fell ill and was eventually sent home, and it was not until some five months later that he returned to the London Hospital this time to work in the Institute of Pathology where Dr Redcliffe Salaman had recently been appointed to be the first director.

The idea, fostered by Turnbull’s teacher at Oxford, that he should become a surgeon still dominated his plans for the future. And largely at the suggestion of Professor Ritchie, who seems to have played a prominent part in organizing Turnbull’s postgraduate studies, it was suggested that he should go to Professor Schmorl at Dresden to learn something about bone pathology in preparation for specialization in orthopaedic surgery. With this in view Turnbull entered for the Radcliffe Travelling Fellowship of University College, Oxford, having been coached for the examination by Bulloch. The result of this examination has to be ratified by the Primate, the Lord Chancellor and the Premier, and Turnbull’s departure for his studies abroad might have been considerably delayed had he been obliged to await the official announcement of his having been awarded the Fellowship. However, Professor Ritchie told him in strict secrecy of his success and in July 1904 he went to Jena for a few weeks to perfect his German, and returning to this country in August, he left again shortly afterwards, this time for Copenhagen, Here it was planned that he should attend Professor Salmonsén’s course of experimental pathology and work with Dr Georges Dreyer (later to become Professor of Pathology at Oxford) at the Danish State Serum Institute, before going to Dresden where he was to spend the major part of his time. But again
illness interfered with his plans. Hardly had he commenced his studies at Copenhagen than he fell ill and was admitted to the Kommune Hospital; he returned home after a stay of little more than two months in the Danish capital. And when by the spring of the next year his health had been restored Turnbull decided to proceed to Dresden without further delay to take up his duties as voluntary assistant to Professor Georg Schmorl at the Friedrichstadt Krankenhaus. This association with Schmorl was probably one of the most important episodes in Turnbull's life. Schmorl was of striking personality, a man of energy and great vitality. He had a profound knowledge of his subject and he was in addition an excellent teacher, Turnbull has described him as the most inspiring that he had ever met, and it did not take very long to persuade Turnbull that what he had been told in England about morbid anatomy being a dead subject was far from being true. As practised and taught by Schmorl it was very much alive, and before Turnbull's stay in Dresden was many months old he had decided to abandon all idea of a clinical career and to devote himself to morbid anatomy. When he had nearly completed a year with Schmorl news came from London that the directorship of the Institute of Pathology (then the Andrew Clark Institute) at the London Hospital was shortly to be advertised. Dr R. Salaman, its first director, had been obliged to retire on the score of ill health and Dr R. G. Slade who had succeeded him had died; it was temporarily under the directorship of Dr Charles Miller, who ultimately became the first director of the Medical Unit at the London Hospital. Since the directorship of the Andrew Clark Institute was the type of post which Turnbull now had in mind as his ultimate goal he returned to London to make further enquiries, and although on hearing of the duties of the post Turnbull thought that he was still somewhat inexperienced for it, he decided to apply and paid the necessary round of visits on the members of the consultant staff of the hospital. He was, however, frank with them about his lack of experience and most wisely Turnbull was told to return to Dresden and to re-apply when he felt that he was qualified to undertake these new duties, it being understood that Dr Charles Miller would continue temporarily to act as director until Turnbull was ready. After a further seven months with Schmorl he re-applied and was appointed to the post of Director of the Andrew Clark Institute of Pathology at the London Hospital in November 1906, a post that he was to hold until he retired forty years later.

The first few years of his directorship proved heavy going. Not that his duties as laid down by the hospital were onerous. He had to organize the Institute, see that the autopsies were satisfactorily made and recorded, conduct research and do some teaching of morbid anatomy and it is probable that Turnbull could, without undue effort, have fulfilled these requirements to the satisfaction of everyone but himself. He had other, more ambitious ideas, however. Morbid anatomy in England at that time was at a rather low ebb; its methods were perfunctory and it lacked the vital spark of a healthy growing subject. And Turnbull coming directly from the very invigorating experience of working in Schmorl's department at Dresden, had early
decided to make radical changes in morbid anatomical practice at the London Hospital. He debated with himself whether to introduce these reforms one by one or to make a clean sweep; he decided on the latter alternative. This decision not only entailed a great deal of hard work but it inevitably brought Turnbull into conflict with those of his colleagues who were identified with the old regime and resented the change for one reason or another. And Turnbull was not perhaps the best person for this task in some respects. Not only was he imbued with all the zeal of the reformer but he could be particularly unyielding when he was convinced that right was on his side, and had it not been for the loyal help of his Assistant Director, Dr Robert Worthington, the difficulties might have proved insuperable. In addition to his professional qualities Worthington was a man of considerable tact and since he was also persona grata with his clinical colleagues he was able to further his chief’s interests invaluably. Between the two the reforms were put through and in a relatively short time the Institute was running if not to the satisfaction of Turnbull, at least on what he considered to be the right lines. Much new equipment was purchased including a circular saw for the bones, the need for which had been impressed on Turnbull by Schmorl as a parting injunction when he left Dresden. A standard method of conducting a complete necropsy was laid down and books for recording the clinical and post-mortem findings and the examination of pieces of tissue taken for microscopy, were designed. The usual practice of recording size by comparison with natural objects—bean, pea, fruits, eggs, etc.—was replaced by accurate measurement and the need for a variety of staining methods in the microscopical examination of sections was emphasized. In this last respect Turnbull was embarking on the road which has led to the elaborate discipline of histochemistry of today. One of the major reforms instituted by Turnbull concerned the arrangements for the making of autopsies. Originally these had been done by the physicians of the hospital and when Turnbull took over the Institute four physicians attended one day each a week as ‘visiting pathologists’ to make and demonstrate necropsies. These gentlemen were far from punctual in their attendance and under the new regime this so disorganized the work of the department that complaints soon came from the post-mortem attendants owing to the amount of overtime they had to work. An attempt to fix the hours of attendance of the visiting pathologists was hotly resented by them and Turnbull was reported for censure first to the Medical Council of the hospital, who disclaimed any jurisdiction over him, and subsequently to the College Board, who found in Turnbull’s favour. With the effective support of the Chairman of the Hospital, Sydney Holland (later to become Lord Knutsford), and the tactful intervention of the Assistant Director, Robert Worthington, peace was restored. But this really marked a turning point in the affairs of the ‘visiting pathologists’. Gradually the number of autopsies made by them diminished; by 1911 few were so done and in another nine years this practice had ceased, all the necropsies being made by the Institute staff.
Another important change instituted by Turnbull concerned the examination of biopsy material. When he was appointed none of this work came to his department. Surgeons wishing to examine specimens removed at operation or at Out Patients had sections prepared for them by a technician working in the hospital. And when Dr Panton (later Sir Philip Panton) was appointed first director of the Clinical Laboratory in 1909 it was arranged that he should take over the work. This was much resented by Turnbull who argued with every reason that he could not possibly learn or teach his subject if he were to be confined to the study of material obtained at necropsy; under such an arrangement some types of tissue change would hardly ever come his way. So strongly did he feel on this matter that he intimated he would have to retire if it was not rectified. Fortunately a compromise was reached whereby the Institute was allowed to take over the examination of surgical biopsies, the surgeons being given the right to choose to which department—the Institute of Pathology or the Clinical Laboratory—they sent their specimens. And although when I went to the London Hospital in 1926 a few biopsy specimens were still being sent to the Clinical Laboratory, it was not long before the vast majority went to the Institute. The compromise was reached in March 1909 and by the end of that year nearly a thousand surgical specimens had been received; in 1946 the year of Turnbull’s retirement, the number had risen to 3080. On these broad lines the work of the Institute developed over the succeeding years. The building in which it was housed was enlarged and the new building, renamed the Bernhard Baron Institute, was opened in 1927 by Sir Humphrey Rolleston. Under Turnbull’s enlightened and devoted direction it became one of the leading centres of morbid anatomy in the country and a Mecca for those from all over the world interested in this subject.

Turnbull’s value as a teacher is not easy to assess. He was probably not quite in the same class as some of our most eminent teachers of pathology, such as Hamilton of Aberdeen for instance, at any rate as a teacher of undergraduates he was not in this class. Yet his influence on pathology for which he will long be remembered, was very great. This was not due to any particular oratorical skill or gift for the inspiring presentation of his subject, for he was not a fluent lecturer. That at any rate is what I have gathered from others, because I never actually heard Turnbull lecture or even read a paper before a scientific society for that matter. He taught in the lecture room, of course, and from 1909, two years after his appointment, the Director’s course of lectures constituted an important part of the teaching offered by his department. But though these lectures were in the first instance intended for the undergraduates and attended by them, as time went on this course was expanded into an advanced one, comprising lectures on both general and special pathology, more suitable for postgraduate than undergraduate consumption. And since from 1911 the undergraduates were specifically catered for in a course of lectures given by the Assistant Director, attendance by them at Turnbull’s lectures ceased to be obligatory and his audience was
drawn largely from the house officers, the pathology assistants and junior members of his staff. A few of the undergraduates from amongst the more serious and discerning continued to go to the Director's lectures, as I learned to my discomfiture when I became responsible for the teaching of bacteriology. Owing to an error on the part of the Dean's office I found myself billed to give one of my lectures at the same time as Turnbull and some half dozen of my class were torn between seeing how the new professor shaped and going to Turnbull's lecture. Despite representations to the Dean I obtained no relief from the somewhat unequal struggle for the rest of the academic year, in fact the Dean thought that it was rather a good arrangement that I should have to compete with a colleague for the attention of the students, it put me on my mettle right from the start! And as a matter of fact I did not come out of it too badly, though inevitably I lost one or two of the students to Turnbull. One thing it impressed on me, however, and it is for this reason really that I recount the episode, though Turnbull might not have been the most eloquent of lecturers the substance of his lectures was magnificent. They were complete in every detail, including all the most recent work; nothing went into those lectures unless it had been most carefully weighed and checked and authority was invariably given for views or statements about which there was question. They were, in fact, a veritable tour de force and vastly appreciated, but they were strong meat. And although a few of the undergraduates found their way into his audience the majority of the students at the London Hospital did not come under Turnbull's influence at the most formative stage of their medical education. The same was true of the remainder of Turnbull's teaching activities. It was his practice for instance in the early years of his directorship to demonstrate daily in the post-mortem room any material of particular interest and these demonstrations were much appreciated and well attended; but from 1925 he ceased to do this, leaving these demonstrations to his assistants. And when that same year it was decided, after consultation with Panton, to give the students about to enter on their clinical studies a short introductory course in pathology so that they should have some basic knowledge of the subject and at least understand its language, Turnbull delegated this teaching to the Junior Assistant Director, at that time Dr Bratton. There were, no doubt, excellent reasons for these decisions, with this I am not really concerned. The point I wish to make is that from 1926, that is for more than twenty years before he retired, Turnbull had little or nothing directly to do with the training of the undergraduates at the London Hospital. And it follows from this that the influence which he had as a teacher, and we have seen how important and beneficial this proved for pathology, made itself felt at a higher level, on his junior staff and on the numerous postgraduates who came to work as assistants in his department. This he achieved more by the individual guidance that he gave to those working with him and by the example that he set them than by anything else. His unswerving honesty, his meticulous attention to detail and his unrelenting pursuit of truth made of him a legendary figure dominating the activities of his institute.
and acting as an inspiration to even the most junior of his colleagues, technical and qualified alike. Nothing but the best, nothing but the truth was acceptable to Turnbull and all who were privileged to work with him were expected to aim at the same high standard and made the attempt if not always the grade. The list of those who held the post of Pathology Assistant at the London Hospital in Turnbull’s time is a long one. Some of these individuals never had the intention of making a career in pathology, they wished to work with Turnbull so as better to prepare themselves for a career in some clinical specialty; the names of many distinguished men are to be found amongst them. The majority, however, came to Turnbull’s department with specialization in pathology in view and during the years that he held the post of director forty made this choice, several reaching eminence in this specialty. Four of the chairs of pathology in this country have been held by pupils of Turnbull; he was himself succeeded by one of his own training, Professor Dorothy Russell. And when one recalls that in addition to the regular pathology assistants recruited from amongst those who graduated at the London Hospital, many came from all over the world to work voluntarily as assistants to Turnbull it will be realized how widespread his influence has been.

When one comes to consider Turnbull’s researches it is difficult at times to avoid a feeling of disappointment. This is not occasioned by any lack of quality in his published work, because Turnbull was incapable of that; it is the thought of the time which he must have devoted, at the expense of his planned personal research, to the compilation of notes on the pathological findings in cases which were being written up by his clinical colleagues. Often enough these notes appeared under Turnbull’s initials as addenda to the papers which they illuminated, his name not appearing with those of the other authors, but Turnbull was probably indifferent to this, for he was the most generous and unselfish of workers, caring little who received credit for the work so long as its excellence and accuracy were assured. And it is not suggested that these activities were either unimportant or necessarily irksome to Turnbull, in fact at times they provided him with the greatest of pleasure. This was true for instance of his collaboration with Dr Donald Hunter in the latter’s study of calcium and phosphorus metabolism and the part played in this by the parathyroids. But the fact remains that out of the 82 scientific publications listed in Turnbull’s bibliography 24, nearly a third, were initialed reports prepared by him for clinical colleagues. And we also know that he had to lay aside his studies on bone pathology for completion when he retired, an intention which, unfortunately, remained unrealized owing to ill health. It is probable, therefore, that this was a factor which contributed to the restriction of Turnbull’s scientific output. Another was his extreme reluctance to commit himself on paper. By nature ultra-cautious he had a fear of falling into error which proved most inhibiting when it came to writing a paper. Each statement had to be weighed most carefully and every phrase searched for ambiguity of meaning, added to which he was a stylist who tolerated nothing but the most polished prose. All things considered it is
hardly surprising that his output of scientific publications should have been somewhat limited. None the less amongst those papers that he did publish, either alone or with one or other of his colleagues, is to be found original work of outstanding merit. Here the pride of place belongs to his identification of post-vaccinal encephalomyelitis. Between seeing his first case in 1912 and obtaining further material there was an interval of ten years. But in 1922, having satisfied himself of the connexion between vaccination and the perivascular demyelinating lesions which he had observed in the central nervous system, he reported the matter to the Ministry of Health. Further cases having come to light the Ministry, early in 1924, appointed a Commission to investigate the matter, at the same time putting a ban on publication. In the meantime cases were observed by Bastiaanse in Holland, who published an account of his findings in 1925. Since Turnbull's paper on the subject, published jointly with McIntosh, did not appear until the next year priority of publication went to the Dutch author. Two years later Turnbull (1928) drew attention to the essential similarity of this condition and the encephalomyelitic complication of the exanthemata and the correctness of this is recognized today by grouping these conditions together with the common designation of post-infection encephalomyelitis. Turnbull evidently found inspiration in his association with his colleague McIntosh because two further important pieces of work came from this joint authorship. In 1913, four years after Landsteiner and Popper (1909) demonstrated the viral aetiology of acute anterior poliomyelitis, Turnbull and McIntosh transmitted the disease to monkeys with material from a fatal case and made a histological study of the lesions in the experimental disease. And in 1920 they reported the results of their investigation of encephalitis lethargica which made its appearance as a 'new' disease in this country and parts of Europe in the later years of the first World War. Their claim to have transmitted the condition to monkeys remains unconfirmed; in fact the aetiology of encephalitis lethargica has yet to be settled and the opportunity of doing so now is remote since the disease seems to have disappeared. Turnbull's association with Schmorl early in his career gave him a special interest in bone pathology which was to continue to the end, though here again his published papers are few. In 1922 he published his researches on the inflammatory changes in the long bones found in congenital syphilis. This was followed a few years later by two papers on foetal rickets, and it was about this same period that Turnbull was associated with Donald Hunter in the classical researches on the metabolism of calcium and phosphorus in generalized disease of bones to which reference has already been made. And his last publication of all was also in the field of bone pathology: the description with one of his old pupils, S. L. Baker, of a new collagen disease of bone matrix. That was in the nature of a preliminary communication which owing to ill health Turnbull was unable to pursue; it was left to Baker to do so. Amongst the more important of his other scientific writings are papers on the cardiovascular system, 'Alterations in arterial structure and their relation to syphilis', which appeared
just before the commencement of the first World War, a paper on intracranial aneurisms some four years later and finally the report of a discussion on obliterative vascular disease in which he took part in the mid-thirties. According to those who are better qualified to judge than I am, the first of these papers is a classic the value of which is undimmed by the passage of time. The accuracy of the Wassermann reaction as checked by post-mortem findings, the pathology of human psittacosis and T.N.T. poisoning are other subjects on which Turnbull worked and wrote and it is clear that although he may not have been a prolific writer he made valuable contributions to many aspects of pathology.

If Turnbull was a reluctant writer he was certainly no better where the spoken word was concerned. He rarely read papers before scientific societies or took part, officially or unofficially, in the discussions they organized. It is true that he was a foundation member of the Pathological Society of Great Britain and Ireland and was to be seen at its meetings from time to time and he was also a member of the Medical Research Club of London and found pleasure in its activities. But generally speaking he held himself aloof from meetings. This has been attributed to the fact that he suffered acutely from migraine and that attendance at meetings was apt to precipitate an attack of this incapacitating condition. And although this was undoubtedly the case it seems highly probable that the almost morbid fear of committing himself to some statement which might subsequently prove untrue, which was such a brake on his scientific writing, was also responsible for preventing Turnbull from playing the full part in scientific discussions which his considerable knowledge entitled him to do. It is also more than probable that this attitude of Turnbull to activities outside his institute and the medical school of which it formed a part, was responsible for the relatively few honours that came his way. In 1919 the University of London conferred on him the title of Professor of Morbid Anatomy and he was elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in 1929 under bye-law 39B. Election to the Fellowship of the Royal Society came ten years later and in 1945, two years before he retired, Oxford University conferred on him the honorary degree of D.Sc. That same year the Journal of Pathology and Bacteriology, to commemorate his 70th birthday, produced a special number contributed by his pupils and dedicated to him. When he retired he was made Emeritus Professor of Morbid Anatomy by the University of London. Turnbull was no seeker after honours, in fact he was largely indifferent to such things. But his election to the Royal Society and the receipt of an honorary D.Sc. from his old university gave him very real pleasure, and rightly so, since it was a recognition of the successful fulfilment of the task which he had set himself when he elected to make a career in pathology.

So far we have been concerned with Turnbull as a man of science; what of the other characteristics which contributed to his make-up? His tall gaunt frame with his somewhat unbending attitude and severe mien suggested an austerity which was at variance with the generosity and kindness of heart
which lay beneath. He was a shy man who found it difficult, except perhaps in writing, to express the full depth of his feelings and he was at times misjudged on first meeting. But those who were privileged to know him well realized that he was a man of generous intent who enjoyed companionship and good conversation and who was blessed with a real sense of humour. Perhaps the greatest tribute to Turnbull as a man was the affection and devotion which he inspired in all who worked with him. For them he was ‘The Chief’ whose constant care was for their welfare and happiness and they were secure in the knowledge that he was always available to give them the benefit of his advice. This was as true of his technical staff as of his professional colleagues; requests for his help never went unheeded.

It might easily be assumed from what has been said that Turnbull had no interests outside the subject he professed, but that would be quite incorrect, for he had many hobbies which he pursued with almost the same zeal that he devoted to morbid anatomy. His interest in birds, inculcated in his boyhood by the Scottish naturalist, William Evans, blossomed into bird watching when he went up to Oxford and he continued to take an active interest in this pursuit for the rest of his life; as might have been expected Turnbull kept exact notes of all that he observed. He was also an expert angler and many of his holidays were spent fishing for salmon or trout; incidentally he wrote a series of papers on the scales of the salmon which appeared in *The Field* in 1909-10. Geology was another of his holiday interests and at one period of his life his kit for a country holiday always included a geological hammer. He played golf with more than average skill; in fact I have always understood that his handicap, which was never above single figures, had at one time been down to scratch. His garden at Woking provided him with relaxation at week-ends and since the soil there is an acid one he was able to indulge to the full his particular fancy in flowering shrubs the azalea and rhododendron; at the Chelsea Flower Show exhibits in this class were always carefully inspected by him. And when one adds to this list of recreations that of watercolour painting which Turnbull took up in his advancing years, it will be realized how wide his interests were.

Illness had proved a handicap throughout his life. His postgraduate training was twice interrupted by illness and migraine, which in his undergraduate days was so severe as to raise the question of cerebral tumour in differential diagnosis, had a considerable influence on the pace and pattern of the earlier part of his scientific career and was largely responsible for his becoming something of a recluse; fortunately the attacks became less severe with advancing years as is usually the case with this disease. A scratch of his right forefinger when bird nesting in 1923 opened the way for infection which generalized with the production of a severe bacteraemia; recovery left him with ankylosis of the interphalangeal joints of that finger. And in his later years he suffered from pulmonary tuberculosis contracted, it is supposed, in the post-mortem room. Added to these misfortunes the death in 1933 of his wife, to whom he was devoted, affected him deeply.
Hubert Maitland Turnbull

Owing to the outbreak of war in 1939 Turnbull’s retirement was postponed for six years and during the war he took up residence in the London Hospital regardless of the danger of living in that part of London, in order better to cope with the task of running his department with a much depleted staff. Although Dr W. W. Woods, who had been his devoted assistant director since 1920, gave him every possible support this task proved a great drain on Turnbull’s physical resources and he aged manifestly. And when he came to retire in 1947 he found that he no longer possessed the energy for all the things which he had looked forward to doing in retirement. Unhappily also his retirement was marred by a series of illnesses some of which necessitated treatment in hospital and he returned to the London Hospital on several occasions, but these times as a patient. His eightieth birthday found him there for the purpose of a further radiological examination of his chest and some five months later he died peacefully in the hospital which he had served so well and faithfully. Turnbull had four children, three sons and a daughter, all of whom survive him.

Samuel Bedson

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