

## OBITUARY.

## DR. MICHAEL JAMES NOLAN.

By the death of Dr. Nolan on December 27, 1944, Irish Psychiatry loses almost the last of those great figures who dominated the field of psychological medicine in Ireland for the first thirty years of this century. Leeper, Nolan, Gavin, Mills, Henry Eustace, all have now left us and their places will be very difficult to fill. Of this band Nolan must have been the senior, as he entered the field of psychiatry as far back as 1888, on being appointed Assistant Medical Officer to the Richmond Asylum (now Grangegorman Mental Hospital). In 1893 he was appointed Resident Medical Superintendent of Down County Mental Hospital, Downpatrick, and here he was to labour and to establish his reputation over the next 40 years, only retiring on account of failing eyesight, the result of an accident, in 1935.

Dr. Nolan's work at Down Mental Hospital became known far and wide. He laboured incessantly to bring his hospital to the very first rank of similar institutions, and his work was rewarded by almost all the honours it was possible for him to obtain. In 1924 he was elected President of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association, and in 1926 President of the Ulster Medical Society. In 1931 the R.M.P.A. elected him as Honorary Member.

A walk around Down Mental Hospital with Dr. Nolan revealed his intense interest and pride in his institution, as well as his amazing grasp of the clinical problems of his patients. His standard of perfection was, I believe, extremely difficult to live up to, but even those who felt the task heavy recognized his singleness of purpose, and when promotion in another hospital became possible no one could give greater help; he took, in fact, a great pride in the achievements of former members of his staff.

Even in his retirement he was not inactive, and the writer recalls an important medico-legal case in which he was associated with Dr. Nolan, fortunately on the same side, only some six years ago. For a man in his 79th year to stand up to a gruelling cross-examination by one of the most merciless advocates at the Bar was no mean feat. Only some two or three years ago he revealed in correspondence his continued interest in psychiatry and all modern advances, including shock therapy.

In the Royal Medico-Psychological Association Dr. Nolan took a lifelong interest, and few important meetings anywhere in the British Isles were without the benefit of his clear and precise thinking. He never overcame a slight impediment in speech, but this only seemed to enhance rather than detract from the force of his arguments, which gained additional momentum from his dominating presence and striking physique.

The writer has cause to remember him for many acts of kindness and encouragement. The older members of our Association will easily recall his genial presence, and his obvious pleasure in assisting in all the affairs of the R.M.P.A. But I believe his most lasting memorial, and the one which he himself would treasure most, will be in the memory of many hundreds of patients whom he assisted back to the road of sanity and peace.

The sympathy of all who knew him will be extended to his widow and to his son, Dr. Greene Nolan.

R. THOMPSON.