

Ernest Muir, C.M.G., C.I.E., M.D. (Edin.), F.R.C.S., LL.D.  
1880-1974



With the passing of Dr. Ernest Muir on 1 November 1974 at the age of 94, Britain has lost its doyen leprologist.

Dr. Muir was born on 17 June 1880 in Banffshire, Scotland. He received his later education in Edinburgh at Watson's College and then at the University Medical School. Qualifying in 1903, he went that same year as a medical missionary to Tiberias, Syria under the auspices of the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Association. After a period of leave, during which time he passed the clinical part of the Edinburgh M.D., he spent the next eight years in mission work in Bengal. It was here that he became deeply interested in tropical medicine, completing a thesis on kala-azar for submission as part of his doctorate which he received in 1910. In 1914 during his next leave from India, he passed the examinations for the F.R.C.S. (Edinburgh).

Leprosy as a medical and social problem had fascinated him in Bengal. In 1920 Sir

Leonard Rogers invited him to develop leprosy research in the recently opened Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine. Dr. Muir had found his niche and his life's work. He threw himself into the task and, in his quiet unassuming way, laid the foundations of a career that brought hope to many leprosy sufferers that he personally helped and new insights into the pathology and treatment of the disease.

It was in India that his long connection with the British Leprosy Relief Association began. Dr. Muir was asked to advise the Indian Council of BELRA on the utilization of funds being raised, and with Rev. Frank Oldrieve, gained the personal interest of Lord Reading, the Viceroy. Much of the present government program in India based on survey, training of doctors and research, is derived from Muir's perspicacity and recommendations.

From 1925 onwards, Dr. Muir's influence on the world of leprosy increased. He traveled far giving lectures and advising in such countries as Hong Kong, China, Japan, Canada, U.S.A., and elsewhere. Back in Calcutta he stimulated research in treatment, animal experimentation and histopathology. His wide knowledge was recognized in his appointment as examiner in

tropical medicine in Calcutta, and for his last two years there (1933-1935) as professor of tropical medicine.

Back in England, still fit and eager to help, Dr. Muir became successively the secretary, medical secretary and then medical adviser to BELRA. He visited West Africa and the Caribbean, becoming for a time medical superintendent of the Chacachacare Leprosarium in Trinidad. It was here that he introduced diasone into the treatment of leprosy patients, and he later did some excellent work using dapsone in Bengal under the auspices of The Leprosy Mission.

Dr. Muir's association with the International Leprosy Association dates back to the days of its inauguration in Manila in 1931. He was secretary-treasurer of the Association for many years, and secretary-general of its international congresses at Cairo (1938) and Havana (1948), and he prepared the way for the congress in Rio de Janeiro

in 1963. He was an honorary vice-president at the time of his death.

He will be remembered for his careful and meticulously presented research work in leprosy and for his writings, in particular his *Manual of Leprosy*. He will also be remembered by many in India and throughout the world as a gracious and kindly Christian doctor, whose whole life exemplified his deep religious convictions. An occasion that afforded him a peculiar pleasure was a party organized by The Leprosy Mission to mark his 90th birthday.

He was a member of the Council of The Mission and vice-president. Honors awarded to him were the K.I.H. Gold Medal and bar, the C.I.E. and C.M.G., and an honorary LL.D. from Hong Kong. More than these honors, he valued the gratitude of the Indian people and many others to whom he gave renewed hope through his sympathy and skill.

—S. G. BROWNE