OBITUARY.

FREDERICK WILLIAM BARRY, M.D., D.Sc.

Dr. Barry's sudden and untimely death, the result of accident, occurred on October 12th, 1897. At that date he had been fifteen years Inspector, and latterly had been senior inspector, of the medical department of the Local Government Board. Previously he had held the post of Sanitary Commissioner with the Government of Cyprus, and had been Medical Officer of Health for the combined Craven district in his native county of Yorkshire. His career at Edinburgh University (where he graduated M.D. in 1876) had been one of particular distinction. Quite early, Barry decided to make for himself a future in public health work; and thereafter, throughout the whole of his short working life—he was only forty-six—he persistently kept in view the obligations and duties which his choice had imposed on him: always he was quietly preparing himself to deal with any problem or to perform any duty which in the future might need to be undertaken. It was in this spirit that, in 1884, he obtained his D.Sc. degree in public health at Edinburgh, and some years later was called to the Bar as a member of the Inner Temple; and with the same object he collected together his exclusive and valuable library of public-health literature.

Thus armed with knowledge in all branches of his work, possessed of much ability, and above all of high character, Barry always came to a fresh undertaking with a large, often little suspected, fund of strength in reserve. Hence it was that the bigger and the more intricate the inquiry on which he was engaged, the more ready Barry to reduce matters to order, and the greater the ease with which he seemed to overcome difficulties. Indication of this faculty can be seen in every one of his official reports, in which the reader cannot fail to be struck by his masterly arrangement of subject, by his method of setting out facts, and by the logic of his conclusions. It is characteristic of these reports that, while chary of hypothesis and explanation, Barry was never content until he had obtained every fact relating to the matter in hand, nor until, when he had collected his facts, he had set them out in just proportion from every conceivable viewpoint.

The report by which Barry has perhaps been best known was that upon epidemic small-pox in Sheffield in 1887-8.
This report, comprising some 300 folio pages of facts and statistics, was an exhaustive account, such as had never before appeared, of the behaviour of small-pox in present times among a large community dependant for their protection upon the infantile vaccination enforced by the English law. Barry let the facts of the relation between small-pox and vaccination in Sheffield tell their own tale: district by district, street by street, ages by ages: the whole furnishing demonstration of the nature and extent of the protection which had been afforded, and a lesson to any who cared to understand it of the paramount importance to the State of an efficient vaccination system. This report, prefaced by a powerful introduction by the late Sir George Buchanan, was published in 1889. But its teaching was lost upon the Government. The same year, Mr. Ritchie, then President of the Local Government Board, put political convenience before public welfare, and by appointing the Vaccination Commission virtually abandoned the system of compulsory vaccination in the country. From time to time, during the seven years' session of that Commission, Barry was engaged in putting the Sheffield evidence before them, and in confuting the many attacks which had been made on his report. And in the end the Commissioners recorded their conclusion that the material correctness of Barry's facts was unshaken, and they drew upon them largely in their final pronouncement.

Noteworthy among other official reports was Barry's inquiry, made in conjunction with Mr. Gordon Smith, into back-to-back houses, and his investigations into epidemic enteric fever among the several large populations in the Tees valley in the years 1890 and 1891. The report upon the latter inquiry furnished a classical case of a considerable river carrying enteric fever infection for long distances, and distributing fever far and wide among populations dependant upon it for their water-supply.

Barry's force of character, his earnestness and his unselfishness, could not fail to impress themselves on those who worked with him. Largely for this reason, partly also owing to his Yorkshire directness of speech and habit of going straight to the point, his success was nowhere greater than in organisation and administration. Two in particular of his administrative acts may be referred to. During his two years' tenure of office as Sanitary Commissioner of Cyprus he organised and carried through the first census taken in that island a census comprehending dwellings, population, conjugal
state, age, religion, and infirmities of a widely-scattered population of many nationalities. For his report on this census, published as a Parliamentary paper in 1884, Dr. Barry received special acknowledgement from the Colonial Office. The other instance is the Port and Riparian Sanitary Survey made by inspectors of the Local Government Board in 1893-94. This survey was made primarily to secure proper provision at all English and Welsh ports against imported cholera: in practice it did much more, and has had lasting results in improved efficiency of administration among sanitary districts along the coastline. The direction of the undertaking, and also of a similar survey of certain inland districts, was almost entirely in Barry's hands. No more important piece of work had ever before been undertaken by the medical department of the Local Government Board. Only those who worked with Barry at that time can tell how much he was responsible for its success; and none can estimate better than they the extent of the loss which the death of their senior colleague and future chief has inflicted alike upon the civil service and the public health service of the country.