

**James Fairlie Gemmill, M.A., M.D., D.Sc., F.R.S.**  
(1867–1926).

JAMES FAIRLIE GEMMILL was born at Hillhead, Mauchline, on the 26th November 1867, the youngest of a family of eight. On both sides of the house he had a fine pedigree—among Ayrshire farmer-folk. His father's farm was next to Mossgiel, where Burns lived for a time, and among the formative influences of boyhood must be included the everyday life of the farm, the Saturday rambles, and the reading of poems and stories round the kitchen-fire in the winter evenings. It is interesting to notice that the zoologist was afterwards keenly interested in the animals injurious to crops and stock, and that his last piece of leisure-time activity was the preparation of a lecture on "Natural History in Burns."

From the village school he went to Kilmarnock Academy, and thence to Glasgow University. When he was twenty-one and nearly through with his Arts classes, he had a bad attack of pleurisy, after which he went to Australia and New Zealand to recuperate. In about a year he returned with restored health and finished his Arts course, taking First Class Honours in Classics. He had many University distinctions.

Following what seems to have been an early bent, he passed from Arts to Medicine, and one of the inspirations of his life was the influence of Professor John Cleland, the philosophical anatomist. After completing his medical course, Gemmill took a voyage to India and another to Rangoon, both of which he greatly enjoyed. In 1895 he went to Leipzig, where he studied in part under Professor Wilhelm His, who probably strengthened his attraction to embryological research. He spent some time at the Naples Biological Station, and travelled a little in Italy and Switzerland, as afterwards in Germany and Norway.

On his return to Glasgow Gemmill became Lecturer (1906) and afterwards a Research Fellow (1917) in Embryology and a Lecturer on Zoology (1904) to Training College students. It was during this period that he took a keen interest in the establishment of the Millport Biological Station, for the success of which in its struggling years he exerted himself unsparingly. He made the Station the headquarters of much of his zoological work, and he also attracted others to follow his example. In its now vigorous maturity the Millport Station should not forget what it owes to Gemmill's disinterested loyalty in early days. He was first President of the Marine Biological Association of the West

of Scotland (1901–1907). He was a Major in the Royal Army Medical Corps (V.), and in 1917 was the Commanding Officer in Glasgow, R.A.M.C.(V.).

In 1919 he was elected to the Professorship of Zoology in University College, Dundee, where he greatly enjoyed his concentration of research and his enlarged opportunities. He threw himself heartily into various educational endeavours to diffuse interest in Natural History, and took, at the same time, his full share of academic duties. In 1924 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of London.

Gemmill was interested in many sides of zoology — anatomical, faunistic, and embryological; but the last was strongest. His lasting monument will be his studies on the development of Echinoderms, and on the starfishes (*Solaster* and *Asterias*) in particular. What marks this work is its combination of technical precision with shrewdness of judgment. His embryological studies extended also to Coelentera, such as sea-anemones and medusæ, and to Fishes, which he tackled from the teratological side (*Teratology of Fishes*, 1912). In recent years, as we have mentioned, Professor Gemmill became much interested in farm-pests of various kinds, from the Bibio bulb-fly that attacks wheat to the elusive tapeworm that infects young lambs. He had a turn for mechanical contrivances bearing on zoological technique, and was conspicuously successful with small aquaria. It is well known that he added to the faunistic census of the Firth of Clyde by records which he made in his study-aquarium in the heart of Glasgow. But how readily would he turn from exhibiting some little aerating device to discuss the largest questions in Biology; and one did not know which most to admire, his ingenuity or his judgment. As regards the problems of Organic Evolution, his general position was vitalistic and Lamarekian, both in the deeper sense.

Professor Gemmill was an interesting lecturer, quietly persuasive, subtly suggestive, always prompting the listener, whether student or layman, to join in the interesting quest. Even for a scientific investigator he was extraordinarily cautious; and apart from an inborn shrinking from the dogmatic, this was largely due to his philosophical discipline. A sincere, reverent, upright man, a cheerful companion, a loyal friend, he liked simple pleasures—the country walk, the flowers of the field, the adventures of the garden, the great expectations of the dredge, the companionship of pets. He loved children and he had a rare gift of affectionate interest—half a naturalist's, half an artist's—in the individualities of men of goodwill.

Though never of the strongest, Gemmill was very wiry, a good golfer, fond of long walks among the hills, with great power of physical endurance. Perhaps this led him to overexert himself on his last holiday in Norway in the summer of 1925. With a great sorrow as his shadow, he walked very hard and climbed high mountains. On his way home, probably overtired, he spent an intense week at the Biological Station at Bergen, where his keen interest in the creatures of the sea asserted itself all too strongly. In any case, whatever the precise cause may have been, Gemmill came home oppressed by a severe nervous exhaustion which, in spite of a gallant fight and every possible carefulness, proved eventually overwhelming. But as long as his strength lasted, he was a man of valour, unswerving in his loyalty to the science to which he devoted his life.

He was elected a Fellow of the Society in 1923.

J. A. T.