

Obituary

SIR COMYNS BERKELEY, M.D., M.Ch.

F.R.C.P., F.R.C.S., F.R.C.O.G., M.M.S.A.

The death on Jan. 27 of Sir Comyns Berkeley, which we announced last week with great regret, removes one who had been for the best part of half a century in the front rank of obstetric and gynaecological surgeons in this country. He was a leading figure of the Middlesex Hospital, which he entered as a student in 1888, just ten years after his friend and mentor, Sir John Bland-Sutton, had entered it. Comyns Berkeley had the bearing of a physician of a more sumptuous age—one could imagine him attending at St. James's Palace for the delivery of Queen Anne, though with him in charge her maternal record would have been much less disappointing—but no man was more alive to practical issues or did more to raise the standard of midwifery in this country.

George Harold Arthur Comyns Berkeley was born in Chelsea on Oct. 16, 1865.



[C. Vandyk, Ltd.]

At the age of 13 he went to Marlborough, and at 18 to Cambridge (Caius), where he remained for five years, taking the B.A. (Natural Sciences Tripos) in 1887. Then came his years at Middlesex, and he qualified M.B., B.Ch. in 1892. Though he worked for a time as house-physician at the Brompton Hospital and at the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, the bent of his career quite early was towards obstetrics, and he served his own hospital, Middlesex, as obstetric house-surgeon, obstetric registrar, and tutor in obstetrics and diseases of women. In 1903 he was elected to the visiting staff of the Middlesex, and his association with that hospital, and

his deep affection for it, continued until the end of his life. He was also consulting surgeon to the City of London Maternity Hospital and to the Chelsea Hospital for Women, and consulting gynaecological surgeon to the Hornsey, Eltham, and Clacton Hospitals, and to the London County Council Radium Centre at Lambeth. During the war of 1914-18 he was surgeon-in-charge of the Clacton Military Hospital, Eastern Command.

No man exercised a larger influence on the standard of midwifery in this country. He was at one time or another examiner in midwifery and diseases of women to every university in England and Wales except two, to two of the Scottish universities, to the English Conjoint Board, and to the Society of Apothecaries. His long-continued work for the Central Midwives Board included the role of examiner, member of the Board, and eventually for ten years its chairman. Under him the Board tightened up its regulations, insisted on the observance of them in the letter as well as in the spirit, and greatly raised the status of midwives by the enforcement of an examination system and discipline which, hardly as it might bear upon women who had drifted into midwifery without adequate training or preparation, was no more than the importance of their work demanded. He also endeavoured to secure that medical students as well as pupil-midwives should have a sufficient number of cases. He did much to establish pre-maternity supervision—really a quite modern practice. He was interested also in general nursing, and the Royal College of Nursing for many years had the benefit of his presence as honorary treasurer and *frereside* friend.

In his surgical practice he was a most careful operator, insistent upon every antiseptic and aseptic precaution, and on the fastidious preparation of the patient. He was exceptionally fortunate in having during his years of operative work at the Middlesex the same anaesthetist, his friend Dr. Herbert Charles. Berkeley was not afraid of speaking his mind on any subject or of expressing dissent from new departures in obstetric practice

which seemed to him unwise or precipitate. At the Portsmouth Meeting of the British Medical Association in 1923 he delivered an address on the use and abuse of the obstetric forceps, and afterwards, he said, received considerable abuse, with the result that his banking account suffered for a time. He had his own views as to the reason for the stubborn figure of maternal mortality a few years ago. He thought it was due to lack of antenatal care, either the neglect of the local authorities to make provision or the unwillingness of women to avail themselves of it. Ignorance, carelessness, undue haste were to him the three malignant spirits which attended childbed. His services were secured by Sir George Newman, then Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health, to advise medical officers of the Ministry in an investigation into maternal mortality. The reports of that investigation pay high tribute to his services. Radium treatment in gynaecological conditions interested him, and he was a member of the National Radium Committee and vice-chairman of the National Radium Trust. He first used radium in carcinoma of the cervix in 1912, but took a conservative attitude.

Comyns Berkeley joined the British Medical Association in the early 'nineties. In 1925 he was elected president of the Metropolitan Counties Branch, when his presidential address bore the title "Save the Women and Children." In the following year he was president of the Section of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the Nottingham Meeting. Though he took no particular part in medico-political affairs, he was a most loyal member of the Association and a diligent reader of its *Journal*. Even when he was away on long visits abroad he insisted on copies of the *B.M.J.* being saved for him and carefully studied them on his return. He was himself an editor; under his direction for over twenty years the *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of the British Empire* became one of the leading special journals. He was a most prolific writer, being the author of many books and treatises which passed into a number of editions. These include a *Handbook for Obstetric Dressers and Midwives*, of which a twelfth edition appeared in 1943; *Gynaecology for Nurses*, which is still in great request; and an *Atlas of Midwifery*. The title of this last work was changed in later editions to *Pictorial Midwifery*; it contains some 250 pictures illustrating practically all the points in connexion with the teaching of midwifery which lend themselves to pictorial representation. He edited the two popular textbooks known as *Midwifery by Ten Teachers* and *Diseases of Women by Ten Teachers*, each of which has reached a seventh edition. With his junior colleague Victor Bonney he wrote the well-known and deservedly praised *Textbook of Gynaecological Surgery*, now in its fourth edition; also *Difficulties and Emergencies of Obstetric Practice* (third edition, 1920) and *Guide to Gynaecology in General Practice*.

Sir Comyns Berkeley, who was knighted in 1934, was a Fellow of all three Royal Colleges—Physicians, Surgeons, and Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and of the last-named he was for long a member of Council and its first treasurer. He was also Honorary Master of Midwifery of the Society of Apothecaries. Just before the war he was nominated an honorary member of the German Society for Gynaecology. Socially he was a man much sought after, a popular member of the Garrick and other clubs, a keen golfer and rider to hounds, and an admirable host. But his life was largely absorbed by his profession, which he pursued with undeviating energy and zest until well beyond the age of normal retirement. In recent years his health seemed precarious, and the death of Lady Berkeley during the war was a heavy blow.

Mr. VICTOR BONNEY writes:

As Comyns Berkeley's oldest surviving friend and colleague I want to add something personal to the obituary notice. My recollection of him goes back to 1891 when he was house-surgeon to Mr. Henry Morris and I a young student, but we did not come into near contact till 1898, when I went to Chelsea Hospital for Women as resident surgical officer, he then being the junior assistant surgeon. From that time forwards our association was very close, and for many years we worked as a team of two.

At the end of the last century most of the gynaecologists were not fully trained surgeons, but physicians on whom a degree of surgical proficiency had been grafted, but we had the advantage of a close association with Bland-Sutton, and both of us owe a great deal to him. We endeavoured to advance gynaecological surgery and took up Wertheim's operation (then newly invented) with enthusiasm.

In all our early cases of this operation we assisted one another, and at intervals thereafter published the results we had obtained.

The idea of writing a textbook on gynaecological surgery took shape in 1905, but the question of illustrations held it up as neither of us could afford the heavy expense of a professional artist. I therefore had to teach myself to draw, and the process was a long one. The text was written conjointly between 9 p.m. and 2 a.m., and to keep us awake we consumed a bottle of old port at each sitting. The book appeared in 1911. Thereafter we collaborated in four other books, the last (in conjunction with Douglas Macleod) not long before the last war.

From 1914 to 1918 we were the surgeons to the military branch of the Middlesex Hospital at Clacton-on-Sea. It was a first-line base hospital and over 10,000 wounded soldiers passed through our hands. It was necessary to carry on the teaching and surgical work at Middlesex and Chelsea Hospitals, so we arranged that each of us should spend half the week in London and half at Clacton. The half in London, when each of us did his own work and that of his colleague, was very strenuous.

The record of his life's work, even in epitome, is an amazing one, and it might be thought that the spending of so much energy on intensive labour would leave little room for the graces and pleasures of existence. But not at all; he possessed a native humour, a geniality, a toleration, and a kindness of heart which made him an ideal companion, and at any social gathering, private or public, where fun and good fellowship were called for he was a priceless asset. A *bon viveur* by nature and inheritance, joying in good company, especially when it was intimate and gossipy, and possessing an intense relish for the pleasant things of life, he held with the poet that "laughter and the love of friends" were of all things the most worth winning. I with many other of his host of friends will remember with affectionate regret the dinners, perfect in substance and service, that he used to give at his own house or at the Garrick, nor less those jovial suppers of perfect Stilton and audit ale which, at 2 a.m., succeeded several hours spent in hard literary work.

In the last few years of his life domestic misfortune beset him; his house in Wimpole Street was badly damaged by a bomb, as likewise was the house he removed to and the office wherein he worked; and presently his health began to fail, and the death of his dearly loved wife was the final blow. Nevertheless, with indomitable resolution he continued editing his journal and presiding over his Board, and undismayed carried on to the end.

In paying this tribute to the life's work of a very old and loved colleague and friend I cannot but think it teaches these two great lessons: first what enormous capability there is in unflinching persistence—in 50 years I never saw Berkeley lounge or be idle, he was always doing something; and secondly that time is much more spacious than most of us think; there being within it, if fully utilized, ample room for both great work and great play.

W. E. THOMAS, M.D., J.P.

Prof. GILBERT I. STRACHAN sends the following appreciation:

William Evans Thomas, who died at Porthcawl on Jan. 20th in his 83rd year, was a native of Bala in North Wales. Soon after graduation at Edinburgh he settled in practice in the Rhondda Valley, where, at Ystrad Rhondda, he practised for almost sixty years. He was a keen clinician and kept well abreast of modern advances in his profession, so that his practice became one of the largest in the Rhondda Valley. In spite of this he found opportunity to take a leading part in public affairs, and much of his time and energy in this respect was devoted to the interests of the British Medical Association. He was at different periods honorary secretary and chairman of the North Glamorgan and Brecknock Division, twice president of the South Wales and Monmouthshire Branch, chairman of the Welsh Committee, and vice-chairman of the Welsh Contract Practice Committee. He was also a member of the Representative Body and for a number of years a member of Council. He was one of the original members of the Rhondda Urban District Council, also a member of the governing bodies of the Welsh National Tuberculosis Association, of the National Museum of Wales, of the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire, and of the Welsh National School of Medicine, as well as of the Board of Management of Cardiff Royal Infirmary. Twenty-five years ago he was appointed a Justice of the Peace.

This sketch far from exhausts the many activities of this remarkable man, who in private life was one of the most cheerful of companions, with an impish sense of humour and a perfect "leg-puller," while he was an ideal host. "W. E.," as he was always known, had the keen-witted enthusiasm of his race; he was always angered at any example of injustice and was ready to fight at any time in the interests of the under-dog. A Welsh-speaking Welshman, he was intensely proud of his country, its achievements, its art, its culture, and its language; and as the best type of Welsh patriot he could always be relied on to maintain the interests of gallant little Wales. His busy life left him but little time for recrea-

tion or sport, and he had small inclination in this direction; work was his mainstay, and many a summer "holiday" was spent at a B.M.A. Annual Meeting.

The death of "W. E." represents the snapping of still another of the few links that connect us with that generation of medical men, the old school, who almost grew up with the Welsh coalfields. They were a hardy and conscientious body of men, and their earlier days on foot or on horseback in all weathers were in marked contrast with the comfort of the latter-day motor-car. Dr. Thomas had the knack of appealing to younger men, with whom he kept constantly in touch, so that his range of acquaintance was enormous; in this way his passing creates a wide gap which it will be difficult to fill, and his absence will be felt by a wide circle far beyond his own generation. At the funeral at Glyn Taff Cemetery, Pontypridd, representatives of many public bodies, including the Welsh National School of Medicine, were present to pay their last respects. It was well said of him that few men had touched life at so many points as he had.

ALFRED EDDOWES, M.D., M.R.C.P.

Dr. Alfred Eddowes, who died on Jan. 15 at Woodford Green at the age of 95, joined the British Medical Association as long ago as 1875, and held office in the Section of Dermatology at three Annual Meetings—as secretary in 1901 at Cheltenham, as vice-president in 1910 in London, and as president in 1914 in Aberdeen.

The son of a medical man, he was born at Pontesbury, Salop, and from Shrewsbury School went to the University of Edinburgh, where he won a medal in physiology and graduated M.B., C.M. in 1873, taking the M.D. three years later. After postgraduate study in London at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and in Vienna, Hamburg, and Paris, Eddowes was resident medical officer at the Royal Salop Hospital for over four years, and then worked in general practice in his native county for eleven years. Coming to London he specialized in dermatology, took the M.R.C.P. in 1897, and became physician for skin cases at the West End Hospital for Nervous Diseases, and also physician to the skin department of St. George's and St. James's Dispensary and to the St. John's Hospital for Diseases of the Skin in Leicester Square. Later he joined the staff of the Western Skin Hospital and was honorary dermatologist to the Artistes' Section of the Stage Guild. He was elected a corresponding member of the French Society of Dermatology and of the Italian Society of Dermatology and Syphilology.

Universities and Colleges

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

In a Congregation held on Jan. 24 the following medical degrees were conferred:

D.M.—D. Whitteridge.
B.M., B.Ch.—G. A. S. Lloyd, J. S. P. Rawlins, C. G. White, I. C. Todd, A. J. Ogg, R. P. C. Handfield-Jones (in absence).

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

The Trustees of the Nuffield Foundation have offered to the University financial support for an investigation (under Prof. F. C. Bartlett at the Psychological Laboratory) on causes and results of ageing, dealing with characteristics and changes of human function which are associated with different age groups, with particular reference to adult groups. The grants that the Trustees have in mind are a non-recurrent one of £2,000 for initial capital outlay, and a recurrent grant of £6,000 a year for three years in the first instance, with the possibility of renewal for a period not exceeding three years, making six years in all. Should the whole of the grant not be expended in any year, the unexpended balance should be carried forward for use later in the grant period.

The *Cambridge University Reporter* for Jan. 29 contains a report by the Council of the Senate on the establishment of a professorship of radiotherapeutics, and a report by the General Board on the constitution of a department of radiotherapeutics. The Faculty Board of Medicine has recommended unanimously that a professorship in this subject should be established for Dr. J. S. Mitchell, who was medical officer in charge of the radiotherapeutic centre at Addenbrooke's Hospital until he went to Canada on Government service in 1944. This recommendation is approved by the Council, which further recommends that the chair should be limited to one tenure and primarily assigned to the Faculty of Medicine, and that the professor shall not engage in private practice. The General Board