

Obituary

Sir Charles Ballance, K.C.M.G., C.B., M.V.O.

BY the death, in his eightieth year, of Sir Charles Ballance, British surgery has lost one of its most dignified and distinguished leaders.

Charles Alfred Ballance was born in 1856. His medical career began at St. Thomas's Hospital, with which institution he remained connected throughout his life. As an undergraduate he gained numerous prizes and medals, including gold medals at the University of London at the examinations for the degrees of B.S. in 1880 and M.S. in 1881. When a young graduate, he spent some time in Germany, working at histological research. As a result, he published a scholarly book on "Ligation of Great Arteries in Continuity". Returning to London, he was appointed to the staff of St. Thomas's Hospital, occupying successively the posts of aural surgeon, assistant surgeon, full surgeon and ultimately consulting surgeon. Amongst other hospital appointments he was surgeon to the Evelina Hospital for Children; to the National Hospital, Queen Square; and to the West End Hospital for Nervous Diseases.

Equipped with a sound knowledge of pathology, Ballance was one of the earliest workers in the histological investigation of the processes of repair, first of arteries and, later, of the peripheral nerves. Throughout his professional life, he remained a general surgeon, but with a special bent for aural diseases and for neurological surgery. As an aural surgeon he devised and taught a special radical operation for mastoid infection, a procedure which was a marked advance on preceding methods. His long experience at the National Hospital enabled him to attain a distinguished position as a pioneer of brain surgery, although he was overshadowed to some extent by his brilliant and dashing colleague Sir Victor Horsley.

From 1899 until 1901, conjointly with one of his former house-physicians, Purves-Stewart, he carried out a research upon the processes of degeneration and regeneration in peripheral nerves. This subject, the repair of peripheral nerves, continued to interest him throughout his life, so much so that after his retirement from active practice he spent a couple of years in the United States, where he undertook a new and successful research upon the methods of therapeutic anastomosis of divided nerves, with special reference to the treatment of facial palsy.

During the Great War, Sir Charles served as consulting surgeon to the Mediterranean Forces with the rank of colonel, being posted at Malta. There, in conjunction with Sir Charters Symonds, he organised, supervised and inspired with enthusiasm the large number of emergency military hospitals which during the Gallipoli campaign came to throng the island. In recognition of his services there, the University of Malta conferred on him the honorary degree of M.D. Meanwhile he was created C.B. in 1916 and K.C.M.G.

in 1918, having previously in 1906 been made a member of the Victorian Order.

On his return to civilian practice, Sir Charles continued to work with indomitable energy at some of the more difficult and recondite problems of modern surgery. He published books on the history of brain surgery, on the surgery of the heart and on the surgery of the temporal bone. In 1930 he gave the MacEwen Memorial Lecture in Glasgow, and was afterwards made LL.D. of that University. In 1933 he delivered the Lister Memorial Lecture at the Royal College of Surgeons, of which he had been vice-president in 1920. Most appropriately, in 1933 the College awarded him the Lister Medal in recognition of his distinguished contributions to surgical science.

Apart from his professional eminence, Ballance was a man of wide general culture. Every official oration delivered by him was enriched and embellished by classical quotations, Shakespearian and others, to such a degree that their literary charm sometimes tended to divert the reader's attention from the solid scientific facts which they so admirably clothed. In his book upon the "Healing of Nerves", in addition to apt quotations from Bacchylides, Manilius, Shakespeare and R. L. Stevenson, he paid a compliment to the erudition of his colleagues at the National Hospital by a charming dedication couched in elegant Latin.

Ballance's personality and character were dignified, impressive and attractive. To his professional colleagues and friends, his kindness, hospitality, loyalty and generosity were proverbial. His family life was singularly happy, although he suffered tragic blows by the death of his wife and later of his only son, Dr. Alaric Ballance, who served with gallantry and distinction in the War and was a source of justifiable pride to his father. The high quality of the stock to which Sir Charles belonged is further exemplified by the distinguished career of his brother, Sir Hamilton Ballance, of Norwich, happily with us still. Sir Charles Ballance's memory will long be treasured by his friends, pupils and admirers all over the world.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Mr. Richard Bentley, president of the Royal Meteorological Society in 1905-6, on February 23, aged eighty-one years.

Sir Theodore Morison, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., C.B.E., in 1919-29 principal of Armstrong College, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and previously (1899-1905) principal of the Mahomedan Anglo-Oriental College of Aligarh (now the Aligarh Muslim University), on February 14, aged seventy-two years.

Miss Grace Stebbing, sister of the late Rev. T. R. R. Stebbing, F.R.S., and one of the oldest members of the British Association, on February 25, aged ninety-five years.