

OBITUARY

NEIL MACLAY, M.B., C.M. (Glasgow), Senior Surgeon to the Throat, Nose, and Ear Hospital, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

THE ranks of British laryngologists and otologists have been further depleted by the tragically sudden death, from angina pectoris, on the 26th June, of Dr Neil Maclay, of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, while on holiday at Bamborough, Northumberland.

Well known and highly esteemed, he died at the early age of 53; his death has come as a great blow to his many friends and confrères.

After qualifying as M.B., C.M., at Glasgow University in 1895, he gained experience in several assistantships, and as surgeon on the s.s. *Pegu*; he then settled down, in 1899, at Wallsend-on-Tyne. Though carrying on an extensive general practice he found time to interest himself in diseases of the throat and ear, and became attached to the Throat, Nose, and Ear Hospital, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. In 1911, he decided to devote all his time to the specialty, and for this purpose he removed to Newcastle. He spared no pains to bring his knowledge up to date, and paid many visits to the London clinics, and thus acquired a sound and very wide knowledge of the subject. He was most methodical and thorough in his work, and was a skilful operator.

Amongst the appointments he held at the time of his death were those of Senior Surgeon to the Throat, Nose, and Ear Hospital, and Aural Surgeon to the Infectious Diseases Hospital, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

He took a keen interest in the administrative part of the first-named hospital, and in the recent extension of that institution.

Dr Neil Maclay became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine in 1914, having previously, in 1910, been elected a Member of the Section of Laryngology; in 1925 he joined the Section of Otology.

He was also a Member of the Scottish Society of Otology and Laryngology, and frequently attended meetings of both these Societies in London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. On the day of his death he had intended travelling to Edinburgh to attend the meeting of the Scottish Society.

He was Past-President of the Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Northern Counties Medical Society, having previously occupied the post of Secretary to that Society.

He was also much interested in the Annual Meetings of the British Medical Association. His contribution to the Section of Laryngology

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and Otology, at the Bradford Meeting, in 1924, on "Nasal Neuroses" will always be regarded as of a high and academic order. It comprised important observations and experiments carried out over a number of years, and his conclusions, based on this research work, that nasal neuroses were connected with calcium inefficiency in the system, represents a distinct advance in our knowledge of the subject.

He was one of the Vice-Presidents of the Section of Laryngology and Otology at the British Medical Association Meeting at Bath, in 1925, and will be remembered as taking part in the discussion on Chronic Middle-Ear Disease.

Since 1911 he has made frequent contributions to the *Journal of Laryngology and Otology*, in the form of clinical cases bearing on Cranial Osteomyelitis, Endothelioma of the Frontal Sinus, Primary Intranasal Syphilis, and the Influence of Toxic Agents upon the Nasal Mucous Membrane.

During the early years of the Great War Dr Maclay threw his whole heart and soul into the formation of the Tyneside Scottish Battalion, and acted as Medical Officer for a considerable time. During the later years of the War, as a result of strenuous work, he was incapacitated by many months of illness, which probably undermined his robust constitution. He had not been feeling very well in the early part of the present year, but a holiday at Tunbridge Wells had apparently fully restored him to health. The day before his death he had played two "rounds" of golf, and expressed himself, at the end of the day, as feeling "very fit."

It was one of his dearest wishes that he would one day become a golfer who could hold his own against the average player. This wish was realised, for the day before his death he played two rounds of golf better than he had ever done before. The last hole, a bogey four, he did in three. He was delighted.

He was an enthusiastic lover of Nature, and an ardent follower of Izaak Walton, and he was never more happy than when he could slip away from his strenuous work to the wilder and more romantic part of Northumberland, where, within sight of The Cheviot, he would wander, rod in hand, alongside his favourite trout-stream, the Glen.

He married, in 1900, Mary, third daughter of the late William Morton, Esquire, of Woodlands, Beesby, by whom he is survived. Maclay leaves one son, who commenced his medical training at Cambridge, where he took the B.A. degree; he is now completing his studies at St George's Hospital.

Neil Maclay was a man of strong and sterling character, actuated by high ideals. He tolerated nothing that was mean or small. Though quiet and reserved in his nature, those who came in close contact with him, if only for a short time, became his firm friends, and

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they one and all realise that his "passing" has brought to them a very real sense of bereavement.

The following appreciation has been received from an old friend of twenty-six years' standing, formerly an undergraduate of the University of Durham: "I always considered him one of the finest characters I have ever met. He of all men managed to combine a large understanding of human weakness with kindness and tolerance, and to mingle in fair proportion a hatred of evil with a broad justice in all his judgments. He was a source of inspiration and of strength, and always showed the soundest of common sense."

Sir Thomas Oliver writes: "By the unexpected death of Dr Neil Maclay, Newcastle-upon-Tyne has lost an able and much respected member of the medical profession. After he settled down in Wallsend he soon gathered together a large and lucrative practice, but it was apparent to all who knew him that his aspirations lay in another direction than that of being a successful general medical practitioner. The opportunity came when, through the death of Mr Ouston, he obtained the surgical appointment on the Staff of the Newcastle Throat and Ear Hospital. With this appointment he removed to Newcastle and commenced his career as a specialist. By degrees he surrounded himself with a well-to-do clientele, and his professional services were much sought after and appreciated. In the north of England he was regarded as a *capable and reliable throat and ear surgeon*. *Calm and deliberate* in his manner, and a man of few words, Neil Maclay, by his sincerity, readily gained the confidence of his patients as well as the esteem of his medical brethren. He was a man of high principle, and had a strong sense of duty."

"His life was not spent in the limelight, but such lives have made England what it is." This simple tribute was paid to his memory by Canon Wilkinson, Rector of Gosforth, at a Memorial Service held in Jesmond Parish Church on the 29th June, which was attended by a vast gathering of representatives of the medical profession, public bodies, and private mourners.

"They met," said Canon Wilkinson, "to pay a last earthly tribute to one who had led a life which, though far short of 'man's allotted span,' was one crowded with activity. His end was such as he would himself have desired, for he died in harness. His work was his passion and he loved his home. Many an hour he dedicated to the aid of the sick and suffering, and rendered devoted service to the hospital of which he might well be termed the second founder. He helped it to rise to increasing usefulness in face of crippling lack of finances, and bore much of the administration on his own shoulders."

At the interment, which took place at Jesmond Old Cemetery, the British Medical Association was represented by Sir Robert Bolam, and



[Photo by James Bacon & Sons, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

NEIL MACLAY.

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the Section of Laryngology, Royal Society of Medicine, by his hospital colleague, Dr W. J. Harrison, who, on behalf of the President, Council, and Members, placed a laurel wreath, to his memory, on his grave.
Requiescat in pace. IRWIN MOORE.

We are indebted to Dr Dan M'Kenzie for the following appreciation of his friend:—

“It is with sorrow that I take this opportunity of paying a last tribute to the memory of Neil Maclay, whose sudden, untimely death has deprived our specialty of one of its most highly respected members, and the writer of these lines of one of the oldest and dearest of his friends.

“Long before I met him for the first time I had heard of him from a mutual friend, a doctor practising in Eaglesham, the village in Renfrewshire from which Maclay came, as a young ‘lad of parts’ then studying medicine in Glasgow, and so, when at last we did meet each other, I, in a sense, already knew my man. But that the borderline between the acquaintance and the friend should have been so speedily crossed as it was when we met, I had not expected. Maclay, however, was an understanding person, and although the brooding face, the tall, heavy, and even massive form seemed, at first sight, only to betoken a stolid Lowland Scot, it was not long before the hidden fire of the Celt flashed through the crust to reveal the sensitiveness and the sympathy of a nature of more than ordinary warmth.

“When Maclay made up his mind to become an oto-laryngologist it was to ‘the Central’ that he repaired, and there we foregathered, teaching, learning, talking, planning, hoping, aye, and fearing as well, in the cold shiver that precedes the burning of boats. But the man was of high courage, daunted not at all by risks, though clearly, more clearly than most perhaps, apprehending them all. And how well-founded that quiet self-confidence was, his subsequent career amply proved. For many years, and at the time of his death, there was no special practitioner in the north of England better known or more cordially trusted.

“Maclay’s was a familiar, though for the most part a silent figure at our Societies’ meetings, but, like many another infrequent speaker, he never got up without adding to the common stock something of his own, and of value. As a surgeon he was sound, resourceful, and honest.

“But it was in his private talk that he shone. Quite unknown to himself, he possessed the gift of narrative, and to hear him describe the happenings of some case or another, the medical story interspersed with comments, shrewd but kindly, on the human side of the business, often, with his quick, dark eye glinting humour, clenched by a pungent

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phrase in Scots Doric, made the hours in his company slip away like so many minutes, and invariably left me with the conviction that, were he to write just as he spoke, the whole world would be the gainer, instead of only one solitary listener.

“It seems unbelievable that all this life and deep understanding should in the twinkling of an eye be gone from us.

“One evening he and I with a few others seated round a table were chatting lightly and discursively about nothing in particular, when—I cannot now recall in what connection; it may have been but a joke—someone casually let fall the remark, the commonplace remark, that while for things in general, our plain everyday philosophy might suffice, still there was, you might say, something—and I shall not forget Maclay’s quick turn to me, and his deep, low tones: ‘Aye! there is something more!’

“So, after all,—perhaps——

“In the meantime, to his friends still here, the world has become poorer and colder. Something—has been lost to us.”

GENERAL NOTES

ROYAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE,

1 Wimpole Street, London, W. 1.

Sections of Laryngology and Otology.—The Session 1926-27 will open on Friday, 5th November. The Section of Laryngology will meet on Friday, 5th November, at 5 P.M., and the Section of Otology on Saturday, 6th November, at 10.30 A.M.

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THE SEMON LECTURE, 1926.

Dr A. Brown Kelly, M.D., D.Sc. (Glasg.), has been invited by the Semon Lecture Board to deliver the Semon Lecture of the University of London. The address, the title of which will be announced later, will be given on the afternoon of Thursday, 2nd December.

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DIPLOMA IN LARYNGOLOGY AND OTOLOGY OF THE CONJOINT BOARD, LONDON.

The Royal College of Physicians, London, and the Royal College of Surgeons of England have recently granted the Diploma of D.L.O. to eleven candidates.

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SCOTTISH SOCIETY OF OTOLOGY AND LARYNGOLOGY.

The Society offers a prize of £20 for the best piece of Clinical or Laboratory Research Work in Oto-Laryngology. The prize is open to