

## OBITUARY

### DR. GUNNAR HOLMGREN

THE death has been reported from Stockholm of Dr. GUNNAR HOLMGREN, Emeritus Professor of Oto-laryngology at the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, a few weeks before his 79th birthday, which would have been celebrated on September 27th.

During an active professional life of great distinction he became the acknowledged leader of Scandinavian Oto-laryngology and one of the leading figures in the world in this field.

His energy and administrative ability also led to him playing a prominent part not only in Swedish but also in Scandinavian Medicine.

Born in Uppsala in 1875 to Fritz Hof Holmgren, Professor of Physiology at the University of Uppsala, and to Ann Margaret Holmgren the Swedish Feminist, he became the first Professor of Oto-laryngology at the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, in 1912, which post he filled with great distinction until 1940.

He founded the International journal *Acta-Otolaryngologica* in 1918 and continued as Editor-in-chief until the time of his death. He also founded in 1929 *Nordisk Medicinsk Tidskrift* (Scandinavian Medical Journal) which under his guidance soon became the leading general medical journal of Scandinavia.

By his efforts, the Hungarian otologist and Nobel Prize winner, Robert Bárány, was released in 1917 from a prisoner of war camp in Russian Turkestan and allowed to be domiciled in Sweden where he eventually became Professor of Oto-laryngology in Uppsala. Bárány stimulated Holmgren's interest in the relief by surgery of deafness due to otosclerosis, so that for the subsequent 20 years Holmgren persevered in this field with occasional success until the further development of this work by Sourdille of France and finally Lempert of America made this into an established and successful procedure which justified the foresight and fortitude of Holmgren in reviving and persevering with this work despite poor results at first.

Gunnar Holmgren was Rector of the Karolinska Institute from 1933 until 1939 and during this time the new Institute and Hospital were designed and built. He was also for a period President of the Royal Academy of Science, Sweden, and in 1947 he founded and became President of the International Conference of Audiology.

Such achievements as these were only made possible by Holmgren's great energy, fixity of purpose, administrative ability and above all his great personal charm. All who met him realized that they were in the presence of a great man ; though he always made the humblest visitor feel most welcome. To English visitors he was particularly gracious and the writer well remembers

## Obituary

how in 1938 Gunnar Holmgren was loud in his praises of Winston Churchill, whom he described then as England's greatest statesman.

He received many honours from Sweden and the other Scandinavian countries and he was an Honorary member of many medical societies throughout the world.

He is survived by Frau Emmy Holmgren, his third wife, and two sons, the elder an otologist and the younger a lawyer.

T.E.C.