

Obituary

repair of the nose as such is outside the scope of the volume. We can only regret that Dr Sheehan has not so far covered a wider field, but it is to be hoped that following this valuable volume upon the specialised reparative surgery of the orbital region, other such volumes may be produced, dealing with plastic repair of the nose and of the mouth.

J. J. M. SHAW.

OBITUARY

WILLIAM SMITH SYME, M.D. Edin., F.R.F.P. & S. (Glas.),
F.R.S.E.

It is with the deepest regret that we have to record the death of William Smith Syme, M.D., aurist and laryngologist to the Western Infirmary, Glasgow, lecturer on diseases of the ear, nose, and throat, the University of Glasgow, and surgeon to the Glasgow Ear, Nose, and Throat Hospital. It was realised among his friends that recently his health was not so good as it had been three years ago, but he showed no signs of diminished activity either at work or play. It was, therefore, with feelings of shocked surprise that they learned of his untimely death. At the age of 58, he passed away during sleep on the night of Monday, 14th August, while on holiday in North Wales.

Dr Syme was born in Newfoundland, and was always proud of his association with "our oldest colony." He was educated, however, in this country, at Blair Lodge School in Stirlingshire, afterwards proceeding to the University of Edinburgh, where he graduated M.B., C.M., in 1891, and in 1898 took his Doctor's degree. After qualifying, he engaged in general practice, first at Crewe, and later in Cambridgeshire. He retained many delightful memories of his practice in that county, and it was characteristic of the man that he was able to uproot himself from the pleasures of life in the country when he felt that he was losing touch with progress in medicine. Being desirous of keeping himself abreast of progress he selected a town with a teaching-school, eventually settling in Glasgow. Like many another Edinburgh graduate who has made his mark in that city, Syme became a whole-hearted stepson and citizen.

While visiting the hospitals in his new home, he came under the influence of two pioneers in otology and laryngology, Thomas Barr and Walker Downie; he then decided to take up the specialty in which they were engaged. He came a good deal in contact also with the late Sir Kennedy Dalziel, with whom he formed a life-long friendship, and to whom he owed much of his knowledge of surgical technique.



[Photo by T. and R. Annan & Sons

WILLIAM SMITH SYME

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In due course Syme was appointed to the visiting staff of the Ear, Nose, and Throat Hospital, and, one imagines, quickly began to make his mark. He was not one to take things for granted and to work along the ordinary routine lines. He must inquire into the why and wherefore. Hence we find him at an early date working at the anatomy and pathology of the nasal accessory sinuses, at that time not so well understood, perhaps, as now. The results of this work were embodied in a publication which gained for him the Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Later, he contributed largely, and always in an interesting way, to the literature of the specialty, and several years ago he published a Text-book of Diseases of the Ear, Nose, and Throat. This was so well received that in the present year a second edition was called for.

As an operator he used very few instruments; he evolved his own technique for each type of operation, and, in some cases too, his own instruments, his tonsil enucleator and septum elevator being widely known. He was impatient of treatment not promising lasting benefit, and was inclined towards the adoption of radical methods. He was exceedingly quick and dexterous with his hands, getting through an amazing amount of work during the forenoon at hospital. So much ability and energy marked him out for early promotion, and, on the death of Dr Barr in 1917, Syme was appointed one of the two surgeons to the Ear, Nose, and Throat Hospital.

In 1918 he became a Fellow of the Royal Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, and when Walker Downie retired from the Throat Department of the Western Infirmary in 1920, Syme received the appointment in that institution, and along with it the lectureship in the University. To large classes of students he proved a most inspiring teacher, emphasising the points of importance by the use of telling phrases which arrested the hearers' attention, and impressed themselves on the memory. In Syme's class, there was little of the formality usual between teacher and taught, and the consequent feeling of ease probably inspired confidence on the students' part in their examination of patients.

Syme was one of the founders of the Scottish Society of Otology and Laryngology, and acted as Honorary Secretary for a number of years until he relinquished that duty on his election to the Chair. In the laryngological world many honours were bestowed on him, some of local, others of national or even international character. Two of these may be mentioned here; an invitation several years ago to address the Canadian Medical Association on the subject of malignant disease in the throat, and, recently, his election as President of the Section of Laryngology of the Royal Society of Medicine, London, a position which an inscrutable fate has decreed that he cannot fill.

Letter to the Editors

Greatly, however, as we shall miss Syme the laryngologist, even more shall we, who knew and loved him, miss the man and his personality. He was always at his best in his home circle. He had a very cheery family of six, of whom he was the cheeriest. He was a most kind and thoughtful host, had a great sense of humour, and a hearty, jovial laugh. A strong, energetic man himself, he was considerate of his fellow-workers; he had a great sense of compassion for the "under-dog," in whom he always found a redeeming feature. His work, like his golf and tennis, was characterised by boundless energy; he swam in the baths every morning before breakfast, summer and winter. His life was very full and he enjoyed it to the end. On the day before his death, he played two rounds of golf, and swam in a stormy sea. The great consolation left to a wide circle of sorrowing friends is that he died quietly and without pain; he was thus spared the suffering which his own good work had so often succeeded in preventing in others.

Dr Syme leaves a widow and six children, two sons and four daughters, two of the latter being married. The elder son, Dr W. S. Syme, has been happily associated for some years with his father's work, both in hospital and in private practice. To Mrs Syme, and to her family, the deepest sympathy will go out from the many friends and colleagues of her husband.

GAVIN YOUNG.

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

THE TREATMENT OF LUPUS BY RADIUM.

TO THE EDITORS

The Journal of Laryngology and Otology.

DEAR SIRS,—In the August number of the *Journal* there appears an article by Sir St Clair Thomson on the subject of lupus of the upper air passages. No doubt in an opening address on the subject of tuberculosis, Sir St Clair's object was to stimulate discussion rather than give a comprehensive view of the question of lupus itself. And perhaps that is why he made no mention of the varying forms which lupus may take in these regions, and of the complications which may ensue. But when he says that the whole local treatment of this complaint can be summed up in the words "galvano-cautery," no laryngologist who has made a special study of the subject could possibly agree with him.