



JAMES WALKER DOWNIE, M.B., C.M., F.R.F.P.S.G.

OBITUARY

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By the death of Walker Downie on 21st July 1921, in his 66th year, the profession has lost one who for more than thirty years held a prominent place in our specialty. Born in Glasgow, educated at the High School and the University, he graduated in 1881, and after a course of study in London, he returned to his native city. For a time, as was not unusual in those days in Glasgow, he engaged in general practice, though devoting himself specially to the treatment of affections of the throat, nose, and ear. For several years he worked in the surgical wards of the Western Infirmary as assistant to the late Dr Patterson, an association to which Walker Downie often referred, and which, indeed, had a decided effect upon his surgical methods.

In 1888, Walker Downie was appointed to the charge of the Throat and Nose Department of the Western Infirmary. At that time there were no beds definitely set apart for the special branch, but, in 1916, two wards were allocated for that purpose and he became full Surgeon. In 1895, he received the newly-instituted Lectureship on Diseases of the Throat and Nose at the University. Previous to this he had conducted at the Western Medical School an extra-mural class, which was very popular both with students and graduates. During the whole period of the war he acted as specialist in connection with the 3rd Scottish General Hospital with the rank of Major R.A.M.C. (T.F.). He was also Surgeon for Diseases of the Ear, Nose, and Throat at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Glasgow.

His clinical manual on *Diseases of the Throat and Nose* reached a second edition, and found favour with his students, for whom it was primarily intended. Out of his large and rapidly increasing experience, hospital and private, he published many interesting reports of cases, and he made other contributions to the literature of the specialty. Probably those which had reference to the treatment of nasal deformities by the injection of paraffin-wax are most generally known. He was accepted as an authority on the subject, as he was one of the first, in this country at any rate, to use the method.

Walker Downie expressed himself tersely and forcibly both in speaking and writing, and he shone as a lecturer and teacher. Even before attendance on a course of instruction in Diseases of the Throat and Nose was compulsory for graduation purposes, as it is now in the Scottish Universities, his class was large. Indeed in this, as in the work of his department at the Western Infirmary, he put too great a tax on his time and on his health. He frequently expressed his regret

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that he was thereby prevented from attending, as often as he would have liked, the Laryngological Meetings in London. It was for this reason, and also because he was above everything a Scot, that he responded so readily to the suggestion for the formation of the Scottish Otological and Laryngological Society, in which he took a great interest. His love for and belief in Scotland, and especially Glasgow, was evident to anyone who associated with him. He knew the history of his city and of her sons. He was proud of her and even jealous for her. He was strongly attached to his University and to the Royal Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons in which he had held high office, and to which he presented a mace. Walker Downie had interests outside his profession. He was well versed in business affairs and would have made his mark in a commercial career. He was fond of sport—fishing and shooting—and of travel. He had, too, a love for and knowledge of Art.

About three years ago he had the misfortune to fracture his patella, and he was, in consequence, unable to carry on his work for a considerable time. The war brought him a double bereavement in the loss of his brother and of his only son. His former robust health became impaired and he began to suffer from attacks of angina pectoris. He spent the winter of 1919-20 in the south of France, and on his return appeared much improved in health. The anginous attacks, however, again manifested themselves, and he resigned his appointments at the Western Infirmary and at the University, though he still continued in private practice, against the advice of his doctor. It was quite in accord with his restless energy, mental and physical, that he could not contemplate complete retirement.

He is survived by his widow and daughter, to whom all his colleagues and friends desire to extend their sympathy.

W. S. SYME.