

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

TO THE EDITORS,

The Journal of Laryngology.

SIRS,—I have just received the Journal with Mr Tilley's reply to my last letter on "The Blood-Clot Method of Closing the Mastoid." Of course I accept Mr Tilley's statements, but they do not satisfy me. In doing a simple mastoid operation, I hold that evacuation of the muco-pus and complete exenteration of the mastoid process are not all we aim at. We aim at complete restoration of the middle ear, and I cannot see how this method secures it. I have done over four hundred mastoid operations, most of which have been the simple operation, and the resulting condition of the middle ear and hearing in most leave nothing to be desired. If I could be sure of the same results with the immediate closure method I would willingly adopt it, for the after-dressing would be so much lessened. T. A. MACGIBBON.

CHRISTCHURCH, N.Z.

OBITUARY

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL, HON. LL.D. (EDIN.)

It is fitting that the *Journal* should pay tribute to the life and work of Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone, who died on 1st August at Baddeck, Nova Scotia.

Born in 1847 in Edinburgh, where he received his early education at the High School and the University, in 1870 he emigrated to Canada on account of his health, and, along with his father, he took up residence in the town of Brantford, Ontario.

The lines of scientific research, which brought distinction and fame to the younger Bell, doubtless had been stimulated and fostered by the work of his father, Melville Bell, who had attained some celebrity by reason of his scientific analysis of the elements of speech, and through the introduction of methods directed towards the alleviation of deafness. Engaged in the study of audition and elocution, Graham Bell turned his attention towards improving the means of rendering the sound of the human voice intelligible to the deaf and dumb.

It was but a further step in the development of his thesis, to study

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the properties of artificial diaphragms capable of picking up sound waves generated by the voice, and, when transmitted along the electric wire, retranslating them into the terms of human speech at distances far beyond the range at which the voice was able to carry. Success attended his labours, and, in 1876, at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, the telephone was on view; it is interesting to record that the late Lord Kelvin was present and witnessed the first public demonstration of its use.

“Amongst the achievements of modern science none is more wonderful or beneficent than the removal of the barriers which disease and distance alike present to the transmission of human speech; it is a two-fold triumph.” In these words, which briefly summarise Graham Bell's most brilliant results, the Dean of the Faculty of Law presented him, in 1906, for the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws of the University of his native city. Science has progressed since 1876, and the electric wire is no longer a necessary link in the chain of telephonic communication, but this in no sense minimises the discovery of Bell.

Amongst his other inventions he produced the photophone, and he was in part responsible for the introduction of the gramophone. During the War he directed his attention and applied his genius in other directions, designing a submarine chaser capable of attaining great speed while under water.

Graham Bell was the recipient of many honours, but his greatest reward lay in the knowledge that he had been able to give humanity one of the most valuable and beneficent inventions of science. He is buried at Cape Breton upon a mountain top, his tomb blasted out of solid rock.

A. L. T.

GENERAL NOTES

ROYAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE,

1 Wimpole Street, London, W. 1.

Section of Otology—*President*, Mr Hunter F. Tod, F.R.C.S. *Hon. Secretaries*, Mr F. J. Cleminson, M.Ch., and Mr Archer Ryland, F.R.C.S.E.

The First Meeting of the Section will be held at 1 Wimpole Street, on Friday, 20th October, at 5 P.M.

Members who propose to show patients, specimens, etc., should communicate with the Senior Secretary, Mr F. J. Cleminson, 32 Harley Street, London, W.1, at least twelve days before the Meeting.

Section of Laryngology—*President*, Mr Charles A. Parker, F.R.C.S.Ed. *Hon. Secretaries*, Mr T. B. Layton, D.S.O., M.S., and Mr J. F. O'Malley, F.R.C.S.

The First Meeting of the Section will be held at 1 Wimpole Street, on Friday, 3rd November, at 4.45 P.M.