

OBITUARY

JAMES COUBRO POTTER, M.B., C.M., F.R.C.S. (EDIN.).

Surgeon, Metropolitan Ear, Nose, and Throat Hospital,
Fitzroy Square, W 1.

THE sudden and unexpected death, on 16th April, from cerebral hæmorrhage, of Mr Coubro Potter, at the early age of fifty-four, previously notified in our columns, came as a great shock to his many friends and colleagues.

By his death the ranks of British laryngologists and otologists—so recently suffering from the loss of Hunter Tod, James Donelan, Nixon Biggs, and Charles Bean—have been still further depleted.

Mr Coubro Potter was the son of John Potter, Esq., shipowner, of Fenchurch Street, E.C., and Linden Gardens, W., and was educated at the Edinburgh Academy. He entered Edinburgh University as a medical student, where he graduated M.B., C.M., in 1893, receiving the degree of M.D. with Honours in 1900.

Commencing his career as house-surgeon to the Belgrave Hospital for Children, he settled down in general practice and for some years carried it on successfully in the north-west of London. Later, he decided to study diseases of the throat and ear. In pursuance of this object, he joined the Metropolitan Throat Hospital as clinical assistant under Dr Pegler, and soon showed great ability, and a faculty for quickly mastering the details of operative work. As vacancies occurred he passed rapidly from the posts of clinical assistant, anæsthetist, and assistant surgeon, to a place on the senior staff. In 1915, he obtained the Diploma of Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons (Edin.), and, immediately after, was appointed Laryngologist to the Mount Vernon Hospital for Consumption.

At the outbreak of the Great War his patriotism displayed itself in immediately applying for active service, and he was greatly disappointed on being told that his services could be best employed at home. He was offered and accepted the appointment of Surgeon to the Ear, Nose, and Throat Department, Queen Alexandra Military Hospital, Millbank, and later received other military appointments.

With an immense store of energy and a great capacity for work, he threw his whole heart and time into military service at home. His interest and enthusiasm in this work became so great, that since the War he continued all his military appointments and devoted practically all his time to hospital work at the expense of his private practice, which latterly became of secondary consideration to him. There is no doubt that his strenuous work during the War, and afterwards carried



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(No recent photograph is available for reproduction. The above photograph was taken in 1905, when he was 36 years of age.)

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on without a break, undermined his constitution and was indirectly the cause of his premature death.

Dr Hemington Pegler, Consulting Surgeon to the Metropolitan Ear, Nose, and Throat Hospital, adds the following tribute to his memory:—“I have known Coubro Potter for twenty years, and cannot realise his death. He was very popular at the Fitzroy Square Hospital, and by his frequent attendance on its Committee contributed a great deal towards its prosperity. His cheerful and happy disposition made him a great favourite with the staff and patients. He was a familiar figure at the Meetings of the Section of Laryngology, Royal Society of Medicine, though his voice was seldom heard, and doubtless the prodigious amount of work which he undertook and performed so faithfully, prevented his communicating his valuable experience in surgery to current literature.”

Mr Buckland Jones, Surgeon to the Fitzroy Square Hospital, referring to Mr Coubro Potter's long association with that hospital, says:—“He devoted a large part of his time to the services of the hospital during the twenty years he was connected with it, and his cheerful and genial personality endeared him to all with whom he came in contact. He was very good at clinical work, and a most capable and successful surgeon. He always took the greatest interest in the administration of the hospital, and served for many years on the Committee of Management, the Medical Board, and the House Committee. His patients will miss a capable and considerate friend, and the staff an excellent and helpful colleague.”

Lieut.-General Sir T. H. John C. Goodwin, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., Director-General Army Medical Service, writes:—“Coubro Potter's death was very sad and unexpected. He is a great loss to the profession and we shall miss him very much at Millbank, where he held the appointment of Ear, Nose, and Throat Specialist at Queen Alexandra's Military Hospital from September 1914 to the day of his death. I saw a certain amount of his work personally, and saw him operate on several occasions. He was a charming man to work with as he was always so cheerful and anxious to help. He made many friends and will be very greatly missed.”

Lieut.-Colonel J. F. Martin, R.A.M.C., Commanding Officer Queen Alexandra's Military Hospital, writes:—“A first class man at his work, and blessed with a singularly cheerful disposition, he made many friends in the Army amongst his patients and his colleagues in the Royal Army Medical Corps, by whom he is sadly missed.”

Colonel E. L. Gowland, Medical Superintendent of the Ministry of Pensions Hospital, Orpington, Kent, writes:—“The loss of Coubro Potter's services is felt very keenly here, where his genial personality was much appreciated by his medical colleagues and the whole staff,

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as well as by the pensioner-patients, who benefited so much by his skilful treatment."

Mr E. C. Hughes, Assistant Surgeon to Guy's Hospital, and Surgeon Specialist to Queen Alexandra Military Hospital, writes:—"I first met Coubro Potter in 1916 at Millbank, where he was Specialist in charge of the Ear, Nose, and Throat Department. He made his department a conspicuous success, and to it the War Office referred a large number of doubtful and difficult cases. So satisfactory was his work, that the War Office retained him in active service right up to the time of his death. At the same time he was carrying on his appointments at civilian hospitals, for one of which—the Metropolitan Throat Hospital—he had a very great affection. After the War he added to his duties by becoming visiting aural surgeon to the Pensions Hospital at Orpington, and by sitting upon Pension Boards. These arduous duties were too much for him, for, in 1921, he was taken ill, and found to be suffering from high arterial tension. Though advised to be careful and reduce his work, he made light of it, and was soon back at full work. His optimism never left him. On the day of his death he was on his way to Millbank, and not feeling well, called at the house of a physician, where he had a cerebral hæmorrhage and passed away in a few hours. Potter loved his work, and the more work he did the happier he was; in fact, his appetite for work surprised me when I first met him. He loved his home life, and the atmosphere of his home was always associated with firm friendship and good fellowship. He will be much missed."

At the time of his death he held the appointments of Surgeon to the Metropolitan Ear, Nose, and Throat Hospital; Laryngologist to Mount Vernon Hospital for Consumption; Visiting Aural Surgeon to the County of London War Hospital; Laryngologist and Aural Surgeon to the Ear, Nose, and Throat Department, Queen Alexandra's Military Hospital, Millbank; Visiting Aural Surgeon to the Ministry of Pensions Hospital, Orpington; Consulting Aural Surgeon to the British Red Cross Society, County of London Branch, Paddington Division.

He was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, and Member of the Laryngological and Otological Sections, also a Member of the Harveian Society.

Though of late years he had not much opportunity for recreation or sport, in his earlier days he was well known as a keen and intrepid yachtsman on the Clyde.

He leaves a widow, the only daughter of John Young, Esq., of Glasgow, and of Allt-a-more, Argyllshire, and one son "Jack," a Flight Lieutenant in the Royal Air Service, of whom he was very proud.

IRWIN MOORE.