

Obituaries

His contributions to our literature were numerous and all marked by his keen observation and all standing the test of time. He was one of the first to call attention to subglottic cancer of the larynx. He was among the first in U.S.A. to practise and recommend laryngofissure and his open-mindedness was shown by his pointing out the possibility of the benefits of radium in certain manifestations of laryngeal cancer. He contributed largely to our knowledge of naso-pharyngeal fibromata,—a comparative rarity in this country.

Socially he was what Dr. Samuel Johnson liked—a very “clubable man”. Like all his nation he was much given to delightful hospitality, much appreciated by many visitors from this side. It was made still more acceptable by his cordial and charming manners. Though of slight figure he had a dignified and distinguished bearing which made him an attractive figure in the medical gatherings he attended so frequently. All the laryngologists in America looked up to him as their *pater patriae*.

StC.T.

HERBERT S. BIRKETT, C.B., M.D., LL.D.

(1864-1942)

Montreal, Canada

DEATH has taken a heavy toll of our leaders lately. Within a year the doyens of French and of American Laryngology have gone with Moure of Bordeaux and Delavan of New York, and now the loss is Canada's and Britain's in the death of Herbert Birkett.

Dr. H. S. Birkett, who died in July, at the age of 78, was the most frequent of all the Overseas visitors to this country and none was more welcome. Born in Ontario he came to school here in Chester, and this doubtless helps to explain his fondness for England where he felt so much at home. Graduating at McGill University in 1886 he wisely worked as demonstrator of anatomy for seven years. He served as lecturer before becoming Professor of Otolaryngology in his University in 1894, a post he held for no less than 37 years before becoming Emeritus in 1932. His record was so good that he was elected and served as Dean of the Medical Faculty for eight years. His work was recognized by an Honorary LL.D. His high standing in North America is shown by his having held office as President of the exclusive American Laryngological Association, of the American Otological Society and of the large Society conveniently known as “The Multilogical”, viz. the “American Laryngological, Rhinological and Otological Society”. On this side he was Vice-President of his Section at an Annual Meeting of the British Medical Association and delivered the Semon Lecture in 1922. To these shores, always accompanied by his wife and Miss Birkett, he frequently came to visit his many friends and seldom missed the annual gathering of the B.M.A.

He had long been an active officer in Canada's Territorial Army, like another esteemed member of our specialty, Ernest Waggett. Of both of them it used to be said in regard to the Great War that “they were the first to be in it and amongst the last out of it”. Birkett organized and for three and a half years commanded the 3rd Canadian General Hospital (McGill). He was consultant in Otolaryngology at Boulogne in 1919 and remained in France

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until the war was well over, serving as Assistant Director General of the Canadian Medical Section, and retiring with the rank of Brigadier-General and the Companionship of the Bath, both well earned.

He returned to his home after an absence of more than five years, with his health shaken and his private practice scattered. Happily he recovered both and he still had more than 20 years before him of health, happiness, active practice and friends. Of the latter he had many both here and in his own home town. Behind an undemonstrative exterior there was a depth of sentiment and, with his scientific training, and a character forged in the hard school of men and affairs, he was possessed of a calm temperament and a ripe judgment in all things. This was much relied on and valued for the help and guidance which many demanded of him, and received so generously. He will be missed at our gatherings.

StC.T.