

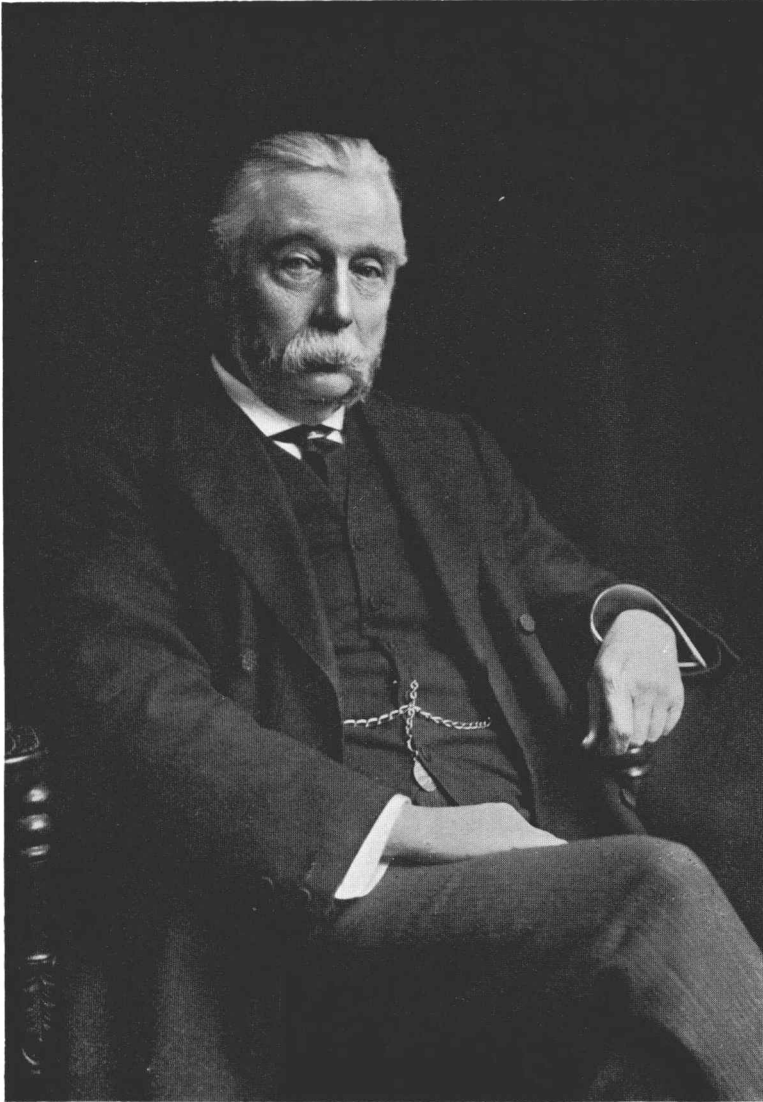
OBITUARY

URBAN PRITCHARD, M.D. Edin., F.R.C.S. Eng.,
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URBAN PRITCHARD, the *doyen* of British otologists, whose death was recently announced, was born on the 21st March 1845. After receiving the greater part of his medical training at King's College Hospital, London, at a time when Sir William Fergusson, Professor Partridge, and Professor Johnson were members of the teaching staff, he obtained, in 1868, the diploma of M.R.C.S. Eng. and L.R.C.P. Lond. He then proceeded to Edinburgh where he matriculated at the University, and spent a further year of study, attending amongst others the lectures of Sir Robert Christison and Sir James Young Simpson. After passing the professional examinations, Urban Pritchard graduated M.B., C.M. Edin., in 1869, and, two years later, he took his Doctor's degree, receiving a gold medal for his Thesis, entitled, "Researches on the Structure of the Lamina Spiralis Membranacea, with a supplementary chapter on the Staining of Tissues." Throughout his life he retained many pleasant memories of his association with the northern metropolis.

On his return to London he became attached to King's College Hospital, at which he held a number of junior appointments, amongst them the post of Demonstrator in Physiology, a subject in which he took a keen interest. He devoted much of his time to research connected with the anatomy of the internal ear, not only in man, but in many of the lower animals; and, as we have stated, the earlier investigations formed the subject-matter of his thesis for the Doctorate in Medicine.

Concerning this aspect of his work, his former pupil and intimate friend, Mr Arthur H. Cheatle, has given us an interesting account. Between 1876 and 1881, Urban Pritchard published four papers as the outcome of his original researches upon the organ of Corti, and, considering the methods then in use in the preparation of the tissues for microscopic examination, the sections were of great beauty and still remain a source of instruction. His first paper, "The Organ of Corti in Mammals," was read before the Royal Society and published, in 1876, in the *Proceedings*. In it many observations were made upon the structure, innervation, development, and function of that organ. As an illustration of his zeal and perseverance, his investigations covered a large field, which included the examination of the cochlea in man, the monkey, the sheep, dog, cat, rat, guinea-pig, rabbit, porpoise, and kangaroo.



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The three other papers were: "Termination of Nerves in the Vestibule and Semicircular Canals," "The Development of the Organ of Corti," and "The Cochlea of the *Ornithorhynchus platypus* compared with Mammals and Birds," the last appearing, in 1881, in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*. He described in *Ornithorhynchus platypus*, the enlarged anterior extremity of the cochlear tube with its modified lining membrane and patch of nerve epithelium, known as the lagena. The nerve epithelium, consisting of cells exactly similar to those found in the macula acustica of the vestibule of mammals and birds, formed in this animal, the lowest in the mammalian series, another anatomical link between the bird and the mammal. Urban Pritchard also pointed out that the cochlea in the bird was similar to that in reptiles and amphibians; therefore the lagena was really a link between the cochlea of the higher and lower vertebrates, and not merely one between the mammals and birds.

With his mind thus interested in the study of the anatomy and function of the ear, it was not unnatural that he should turn his attention to its diseases. At the period with which we are dealing, special departments in the large general hospitals, with one or two exceptions, had not yet received recognition. Special hospitals, however, existed, and, in 1874, Urban Pritchard was appointed Surgeon to the Royal Ear Hospital in Soho, a position which he held until 1900, when he was made Consulting Surgeon. In 1876, however, King's College Hospital opened an aural department, of which he was put in charge, and ten years later he was made Professor of Aural Surgery in King's College, the only professorship of the kind in this country. In 1910 he retired from the active work of the Chair. Those who were privileged to see him at work in his clinic will recall the invariable courtesy with which he received the visitor, and the kindness and sympathy shown to the patients.

Throughout a long and busy career Urban Pritchard maintained an active interest in, and exercised a valuable influence upon, the progress of Otology in various directions. From 1884 to 1922, a period covering nearly forty years, he was the chief British Representative on the Committee of Organisation of the International Congress of Otology, which met periodically in different countries. When the Congress met in London, in 1899, he was elected President, and much of the success of the meeting was due to his personality and to the scientific position which he had attained. When, after the war, the Congress again met, in 1922, in Paris, he was present and took part in the business of the meeting.

He was one of those who founded the Otological Society of the United Kingdom, now the Section of Otology of the Royal Society of Medicine, and became its second President. He was co-Editor of the

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International Archives of Otolology, and he wrote a Handbook of Diseases of the Ear which reached a third edition.

Even after retirement to his country home in Buckinghamshire in 1920, he maintained almost to the end of his life a connection with the Section of Otolology and was a familiar figure at the meetings. Fishing was a favourite recreation, and his garden was always a source of pleasure and interest to him.

He married, in 1872, Miss Blade Pallister, in whom he found a constant and ever-willing helpmate. To her, who survives him, we extend our sincerest sympathy.

To Sir James Dundas-Grant we are indebted for the following appreciation: "For many years the late Professor Urban Pritchard was one of the most prominent figures in our specialty. It may be truthfully asserted that he was also the most beloved and respected. The name of Toynbee may possibly hold the first place in having laid truly and well the foundation stone not only of British Otolology but of Otolology in general, if we may accept the dictum of Professor Politzer. Pritchard's name, however, will always be held in the highest respect on account of his pioneer investigations into the microscopical structure of the internal ear of man and the lower animals. We would express the hope that Mr Cheatle may find the anatomical sections still suitable for preservation in the Toynbee room of the Royal Society of Medicine.

"The main incidents of Urban Pritchard's life are characteristic of a sound, vigorous-minded, and home-loving citizen. Many persons so endowed live unnoticed and die forgotten by those among whom they have spent their lives. Pritchard had some qualities which those who knew him well will always remember. While ever ready to discuss, he was not contentious, and while *tenax propositi*, he was always conciliatory. His influence was accordingly exercised in the Otolological Society with the happiest results. His occupation of the Presidential Chair was a complete success.

"Although never robust in body (in fact he had jocularly stated that it was seriously questioned whether it was worth while to provide an expensive medical education for one whose prospects of survival seemed so doubtful), he was endowed with an apparently inexhaustible flow of good spirits and a capacity for merry banter which is so much appreciated in the Londoner by those who hail from other parts of the kingdom. To have him as a travelling companion was a great addition to the pleasure of the journey, and the twinkle in his eye with the smile under the moustache always precluded some little quip to enliven tedium or allay discomfort."

A. LOGAN TURNER.