



JOHN SMITH FRASER

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BRITISH otology, during the past few months, has lost more than one of its most distinguished exponents. With the death of Dr. John Smith Fraser, which took place at his home in Edinburgh on May 11th, another name has been added to the ever-growing list of those who have crossed over.

Born sixty-one years ago, on December 4th, 1874, at Springfield, Cupar, Fife, where his father, who afterwards became a Commissioner in Lunacy, was the medical superintendent of the Fife District Asylum, Fraser came to Edinburgh when six years of age. Educated first at George Watson's College and then at Fettes College, which he left in 1892, he began the study of medicine at the University of Edinburgh, where, after a distinguished career as a student, he graduated M.B., Ch.B., in 1897 with first-class honours. After graduating he acted both as resident house physician and resident house surgeon in the Royal Infirmary. Anxious to obtain the valuable experience in general medicine which only a period of general practice can give, he spent five years as an assistant in Lichfield. But in 1904, having decided to specialize in diseases of the ear and throat, he worked for the greater part of that year in London and Vienna, studying under the leading specialists in these cities.

Returning to Edinburgh in 1905, he became clinical assistant in the ear and throat department of the Royal Infirmary under Dr. Robert McKenzie Johnston and Dr. Logan Turner. In the same year he passed the examination for the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, and was admitted a Fellow of the College. In August, 1906, he was appointed assistant surgeon in the ear, nose and throat department of the Royal Infirmary, and in 1921, was promoted surgeon—a position from which he was due to retire in August of this year. For fifteen years, while in charge of wards, he was Lecturer in Diseases of the Ear, Nose and Throat, in the University of Edinburgh.

The mere enumeration of Dr. Fraser's appointments conveys very little idea of what he actually accomplished in his professional career, or of the high position to which he attained in the specialty during thirty years of service on the honorary staff of the Royal Infirmary. He was a happy example of the man who combined, in

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a somewhat unusual degree, the intellectual gifts which made him both a successful clinician and an earnest scientific investigator. From the first he threw himself heart and soul into the work of the laboratory, and during the years of waiting for practice—and, indeed, to the end of his life—he worked indefatigably at the many problems which interested him. The pathology of diseases of the ear still offered a fruitful field, calling for exploration, and, having mastered the difficult technique required in the preparation of that organ, a necessary preliminary for its microscopical investigation, he applied himself to conscientious and painstaking research. Of particular merit is his work on congenital deaf-mutism, on congenital syphilitic disease, on tuberculous affection of the ear, on otosclerosis, and in the demonstration of the pathways of infection from the ear to the brain and the meninges. His work, however, was not confined to the study of diseases of the ear. His investigations ranged over the whole field of the specialty, and he sometimes expressed the hope that he might find time to compile a monograph upon the pathology of the diseases of the nose, ear and throat; he possessed the material necessary for a book of this kind.

He thus laid a sure foundation upon which he built his clinical experience, his accuracy in diagnosis, and his well-deserved reputation as a successful operating surgeon. He was a prolific writer: his papers, both clinical and pathological, always showed evidence of very careful preparation and of his power of exact observation, and the pages of the *Journal*, of which he was co-editor from 1921-9, have been enriched by many of his contributions. A popular teacher, he expressed himself in lucid and simple language, so that there was never any doubt as to his meaning or to the essential points he desired to make. In debate he was often a forceful and candid critic, enlivening the discussions at scientific meetings when they were, perhaps, inclined to languish.

The value of Dr. Fraser's scientific work has been fittingly recognized and rewarded, not only in this country but abroad. From his colleagues in the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh he received, in 1922, the Liston Victoria Jubilee Prize, awarded quadrennially by the College for meritorious contributions to practical surgery; from the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, in 1929, the Freeland-Barbour Fellowship, and, in 1930, the Norman Gamble Research Prize in Otology of the Royal Society of Medicine of London. He was made President of the Section of Otology of the same Society and President of the Section of Laryngology and Otology of the British Medical Association at its meeting in Bournemouth in 1934. He was an honorary member of the Austrian and American Otological Societies and of the Otological Society of Madrid and a corresponding member of the American Laryngological Association.

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Although handicapped by indifferent health during the past three years, he faced the future with characteristic courage, and continued his work to the end. A loyal friend and a helpful colleague, with whom it was always a pleasure to work, Jack Fraser will be greatly missed by a large circle of friends and acquaintances. He had many interests outside his work. As an undergraduate, he obtained his "Blue" as a member of the University tennis team of 1896; he was a golfer of no mean ability, and at times he found angling a congenial form of recreation.

He is survived by his wife, a daughter of Major Ludwig Reichsritter von Bouvard, of Vienna; his two sons are graduates, with honours, of the University of Edinburgh—one in science and the other in medicine.

A. LOGAN TURNER.