

## OBITUARY.

DR. H. W. BARBER.

HAROLD WORDSWORTH BARBER was born in 1886 at Nottingham, the son of a solicitor of that city. He was educated at Repton School and at Cambridge University, entering Clare College as a Scholar in Natural Science and leaving with a First Class Natural Science Tripos. He went to Guy's Hospital in 1908 and qualified in 1911. In 1912 he was awarded the Arthur Durham Travelling Scholarship and for a year he studied dermatology in Paris and with Unna at Hamburg. He liked and admired the French, whose language he spoke fluently, and for his teacher Darier especially he formed a deep and permanent attachment. From 1913 to 1915 he was a medical registrar at Guy's Hospital, thereafter serving in various parts of the world in the R.A.M.C. for the remainder of the Great War. He returned to Guy's Hospital in 1919 as a medical registrar and towards the end of that year he was appointed Physician in Charge of the Department for Diseases of the Skin. Since 1850 the care of diseases of the skin had been given to a succession of general physicians which included such great figures as Addison, Gull, Hilton Fagge, Pye Smith, Samuel Wilks, and finally Cooper Perry, upon whose advice Barber had decided earlier to adopt dermatology as his career.

Barber matched his illustrious predecessors in possessing outstanding qualities of mind and personality. He had been a very impressive medical registrar at a time when his generation at Guy's Hospital was rich in talent and in those days the Arthur Durham Scholarship was usually awarded to those who were expected in due course to be appointed to the senior staff. He began to contribute to dermatological literature during the latter part of the Great War and his writings attracted immediate attention. Indeed, he soon began to dominate thought in British dermatology and this he did by thinking, teaching and writing in terms of broad concepts of aetiology and pathogenesis. Equally, he was endowed with an exceedingly accurate and retentive visual memory, and he probably knew as much about the morphological aspect of dermatology as anyone living. To the end of his days he commanded rapt attention whenever he spoke at meetings; his distinguished features and bearing and his ability to express his thoughts with remarkable clarity will be ever remembered, and will be sadly missed by his colleagues.

He was President of the Section of Dermatology of the Royal Society of Medicine in 1935-36, and 1936-37, and of the British Association of Dermatology and Syphilology in 1944 and 1945. In 1929 he delivered the Lettsomian Lectures on The Relationship of Dermatology to other branches of Medicine, and in 1952 the Prosser White Oration, in which he depicted in outline the ideas and principles which had guided him through his professional career. In this Oration, while expressing his great appreciation of the modern urge to seek exact knowledge by controlled experiment and statistical analysis, he advanced the plea that the art of the great clinicians should never be allowed to wane. No one has any doubt that he is numbered among those whose art he so greatly admired.

Barber earned and won the unbounded admiration and affection of his colleagues as well as of a great number of other people with whom his life brought him into contact. His appearance and bearing were aristocratic; his outlook, both romantic and firmly conservative, was reflected in the elegance of his home, his charm as a host, his taste in reading and in the theatre, the beauty of his garden at Hampstead, and his attachment to great institutions, especially his University and the Hospital

whose great clinical tradition he upheld so ably. He often criticized the views of others, or regretted a lack of them, but he never spoke unkindly of anyone, apparently crediting the rest of mankind with his own breadth of outlook and generosity.

His tastes were in some respects sophisticated, for example in wine and food about which he knew everything, in others very simple. He loved cricket and knew all the cricketers and their performances from the distant past as well as any school-boy. He followed the fortunes of his apparently talented but often disappointing County, and in the early days he also noted regretfully the defects in the Forest and County football sides. In those days also he liked Phillips Oppenheim and other good story writers of the time. Later he became a race-goer and a keen bird watcher. He enjoyed travelling in good trains, and when, some few years before his retirement from the staff of Guy's Hospital, he left Hampstead to live at Brighton he certainly found the journey to and from London no hardship.

With his great erudition, his enthusiasm and outstanding personal attractiveness it was natural that Barber should attract to himself a large body of students of all ages who thought that he was quite incomparable. The same qualities brought him an almost overwhelming practice with its attendant responsibilities and unremitting hard work. He worked far too hard all his life and he died far too young, but he will always live in the minds and hearts of those who knew him and in the memory of all as a great figure in British dermatology.

G. B. D.

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