

OBITUARY

Sir Henry Bashford died on August 15, 1961 at the age of 81. He was the grandson of a naval officer wounded at Trafalgar. His maternal grandfather was the rector of a fashionable London church and one of Queen Victoria's chaplains; and there were at least two bishops in his mother's family. In spite of all this, the ups and downs of the family fortune were such that, at one time, Sir Henry and his brother lived in a cheap lodging house in Shepherd's Bush, where his mother, a most courageous and intelligent woman, had taken them, before moving later to Bedford. His father had died penniless when the boys were very young; but their family life was full of warmth and affection. He was seven when one of his schoolmasters said that he lacked ambition.

At 15 he decided to leave Bedford Modern School, and he went to Western Canada as a farm labourer, to see the world. From there he wrote to his mother most entertainingly, and two of his short stories based on that phase of his life are very revealing.

On his return, some 18 months later, he completed his school examinations and a small, forgotten legacy enabled him to study medicine at the London Hospital.

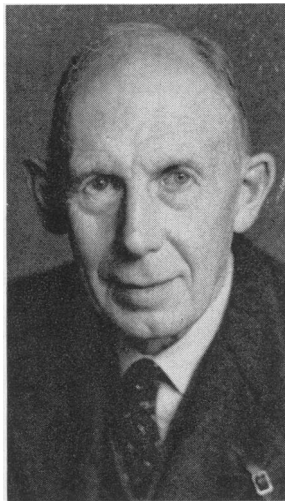
These little known factors of his background are important, for they make one understand how he became later one of the pioneers of industrial medicine. This incredibly kindly man was a gentleman by descent. Courage, adventure, curiosity, and a real interest in other people formed in him a mixture with a liberal Christianity, broad-mindedness, and a readiness to help, but at the same time he was free from the righteousness of missionary zeal.

His description is as vivid of life in Shepherd's Bush after Kensington as of his sixteenth birthday, when he found himself out of work in the snow-covered prairie of Canada, with one dollar in his pocket and nowhere to spend the night; they are both without any bitterness. Poverty and hardship did not leave him with a chip on his shoulder.

He qualified from the London Hospital in 1904. He had thoroughly enjoyed student life, and his sketches of fellow students and other people he encountered, are lively and delightful. Already at that time he was known for his facility of humorous and serious rhyming. He always took three months holiday, and he cycled all over England and Scotland, often camping and sometimes working as a farmhand again. After qualifying, he first did locums, and his observations on general practice in

the East End and in Cornwall are of great interest. After some house appointments at the London, he entered the Post Office Medical Service, where he was to remain until 1943.

He found there a highly developed organization, covering a cross-section of most of the light industries of the country. There were postmen, porters, sorters, clerks, engineers, telegraphists, telephonists, factory workers, scientists, sailors, drivers, and, especially, young people from 14 onwards. The medical work was mainly clinical, consisting of out-patient activities, treatment, prescribing, and of a certain amount of visiting. The other important aspects were pre-employment examinations and long-term follow-up; the latter was made possible by the excellent and almost unique system of sickness recording, covering a working life from 14 to 60 in many tens of thousands of men and women. The Post Office Medical Service, which began in 1855, is perhaps the oldest industrial medical service in Britain. No wonder there were unworked mines of information for a doctor concerning medicine and industry. His natural curiosity and his interest in people did not allow him to remain a mere on-looker. Remembering his own sudden growth when he was 16, he became deeply involved in the statistical study of the physique of young workers and the influence on it of better feeding, housing, and care, and his final papers on the subject are still classics. He also tackled the problem of adolescent albuminuria and succeeded in overcoming a popular superstition. He was also suspicious of the innocent heart murmur of the young, later dealt with



Walter Stoneman

by William Evans and others. As a practical man, who had deep insight into workers and working conditions, he studied the effect of loss of wages as an incentive to return to work, and put the question of quarantine in healthy contacts into its rightful place. Before his time, thousands of working days were lost by unnecessary quarantine rules. He took a lively interest, not only in the work of his immediate colleagues, whom he greatly encouraged, but also in that of the 2,000 general practitioners all over the country, who acted as local medical officers for the Post Office and now do so also for the Treasury. This activity increased when he became Chief Medical Officer to the Post Office in 1933. He was one of the founders of the Association of Industrial Medical Officers and, later, the first Editor of the *British Journal of Industrial Medicine* in 1944, the first issue

of which was published under his auspices.

At heart, he always remained a clinician, although in his great humility, he disclaimed any clinical acumen. He published papers on tuberculosis and peptic ulcer. Occupational health, to his mind, was mainly a clinical subject and not merely a question of paper administration, or the domain of the public health man. His policy, when in charge, to attract the man with the M.R.C.P., rather than the man with the D.P.H., has borne fruit, and, like himself, his successor and several of his former assistants have become distinguished Fellows of the Royal College of Physicians.

In 1943, Sir Henry Bashford became Treasury Medical Adviser and responsible for a new medical service intended to cover the whole Civil Service, and including, apart from health, advice on welfare and environment. He was also, for a time, a member of the Industrial Health Research Board. Another of his interests was the St. John Ambulance Association, because of the importance he attributed to well-organized first aid. He was Knighted in 1939 and from 1941 to 1944 he was an Honorary Physician to the King.

Literature always remained his great love, and many of us enjoyed *The Corner of Harley Street*, *The Harley Street Calendar*, *Wiltshire Harvest* and, especially, *Doctors in Shirt-sleeves*; this latter he edited for a number of his colleagues, who wrote about their hobbies in a lighter vein. He contributed to medical biography by writing a large part of the latest volume of *Munk's Roll*, short biographies of the Fellows of the Royal College of Physicians.

Next to literature, he loved painting; but travel, fishing, good wine, and good food were also high on the list. He enjoyed convivial gatherings of his many friends, and intelligent and lively conversation.

In all his activities he was most ably supported by his wife, whom he had married in 1908. After many years of an ideally happy married life, Lady Bashford died in 1955, to Sir Henry's deep sorrow. One son and three daughters survive him.

V. C. MEDVEI

BOOK REVIEWS

Paracelsus: Magic into Science. By Henry M. Pachter. (Pp. x + 360; 11 figures. \$4; 30s.) New York: Henry Schuman; London: Abelard Schuman. 1961.

Theophrastus Aureolus Bombastus von Hohenheim, son of a physician, was born at Einsiedeln, Switzerland, about 1493. He died in 1541 and is buried at Salzburg, where his grave was considered to disperse healing vapours. By his contemporaries he was nicknamed Paracelsus—excelling Celsus—and as such he became a legend celebrated in the poetry of Goethe, Marlowe, and Browning and as the original of Dr. Faustus. His admirers have proclaimed him the founder of biochemistry and chemotherapy and a visionary who foresaw the discovery of television and radar. Equally his critics have denounced him as a charlatan and a vagabond.

To doctors in industry Paracelsus has a special interest in that he was the author of the first monograph on occupational diseases. The book entitled *Von der Bergsucht und anderen Bergkrankheiten (On the Miners' Sickness and Other Miners' Diseases)* was written about 1534, thus preceding *De Re Metallica* by Georgius Agricola. Both works were published posthumously, the former in 1567 and the latter in 1556. Paracelsus during his vagrant life worked at the metal mines in Carinthia, Sweden, the Inn valley, and elsewhere and so his writings are based on personal experience. The monograph is divided into three books which successively deal with pulmonary diseases of miners, diseases of smelters and metallurgists, and diseases caused by mercury.

This latest addition to the already voluminous literature on Paracelsus is a scholarly book ranging over every aspect of the doctor's enigmatic life and times. It is commended to all who wish to learn something of the philosophy of medicine during the Renaissance and the Reformation. Each chapter is headed by a quotation, usually from the works of Paracelsus. Does the following suggest that Paracelsus has a further claim to fame in that he foresaw the founding of the International Labour Organization and the promotion of International Congresses on Occupational Health?

"No man becomes master while he stays at home, nor finds a teacher behind the stove. Diseases wander here and there the whole length of the world. He who would understand them must wander, too."

A. MEIKLEJOHN

The Health of People Who Work. By Albert Q. Maisel. (Pp. xiii + 268. 40s.) Oxford: Pergamon Press. 1961.

In March 1959 the National Health Forum held by the National Health Council of the United States discussed "The Health of People Who Work". There were



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Br J Ind Med 1962 19: 78-79
doi: 10.1136/oem.19.1.78

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