

## OBITUARY.

SIR ROBERT BOLAM, O.B.E., LL.D., D.C.L., M.D., F.R.C.P.

BOLAM was a Northumbrian, born and bred, and had all the good qualities associated with his county, clear thinking, plain speaking, and loyalty to his friends. He was born in 1871, one of a family of six, whose father died three years ago at the age of 91. He was educated at the Rutherford College and the University of Durham Medical School in Newcastle. From the University he graduated M.B., B.S. in 1893, and M.D. with the Gold Medal in 1896. One would not have predicted from his earlier activities that Dermatology would be his future, but physiology and pathology and medical jurisprudence, all of which he taught and I am sure taught well, make good foundation-stones.

After graduation he spent some months working under Halliburton at King's College, and on his return home he was appointed assistant in the Department of Physiology; later, while Assistant Physician to the Royal Victoria Hospital, he was appointed Honorary Pathologist, and was associated with Sir Thomas Oliver in his investigations into industrial diseases, unconscious of the fact that these would, later, prove so important in dermatology.

His change-over from medicine to dermatology was, as such changes quite often are, almost accidental. The Skin Department in Newcastle was, as in many other places in those days, in charge of one of the physicians, Dr. James Limont. Bolam was a friend and close neighbour of his, and when Limont's health began to break down—his illness lasted two years—Bolam, always ready to help, used to go to his house and see patients for him, reporting on them to Limont upstairs. Gradually he

became more and more interested in "skins", and when Limont died in 1907, arrangements were made to establish the skin-department as an independent unit, and Bolam was appointed to its charge. He set out to make himself the real practical dermatologist he became. Old members of the Section of Dermatology of the Royal Society of Medicine will remember his frequent attendance at their meetings, and some will doubtless also remember his shrewd and sometimes caustic remarks. In the North Bolam was held in very high esteem, and when we decided to have a Scottish organization we felt we must have Bolam with us, even at the cost of calling it North British—a name not popular in Scotland. We meet three times a year, in succession at Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee and Newcastle, and I think my colleagues will all agree that the best organized of our meetings was the Newcastle one. Bolam was a prince of organizers and never seemed to forget anything.

He was a Territorial officer, and during the war he served as Major and acting Lieut.-Colonel in the First Northern General Hospital, being in command of its venereal department, Wingrove Hospital. It was not till 1917 that the public clinic for Venereal Diseases in the Victoria was started, with Bolam in charge; it is, I understand, linked with, but not a part of the Skin Department; indeed Bolam continued in charge of it for some time after his retirement from the Skin Department.

Mr. Bishop Harman, in his appreciation of Bolam in the *British Medical Journal* of May 6th, referred to a speech made by Bolam at the annual meeting of the British Medical Association in 1916. That speech I believe did more to secure the smooth working of the V.D. Act than any other pronouncement. It was the speech of a statesman. He was a very persuasive orator, and his experience in connection with his work in charge of V.D. in the Northern Command provided him with convincing arguments. The meeting, not too friendly at first, accepted his advice to work the proposals unanimously.

He had many other outlets for his activities. He was an authority on the nearby Roman Wall, and delighted to show it to visiting friends. He was a first-class rifle-shot and regularly visited Bisley, where he was twice in the reserve and once shot for England in the International. He left behind him a cabinet full of the shooting decorations he had won, and a large collection of prizes as a cyclist and a swimmer.

But the memory which will remain most in the minds of those privileged to know him best is that of a completely trustworthy friend. N. W.

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