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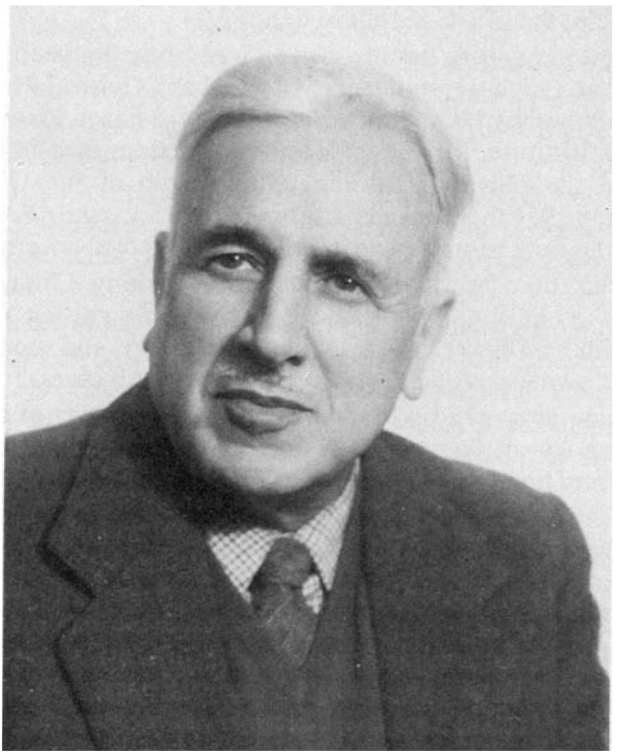
IN MEMORIAM

Charles Skinner Hallpike

C.B.E., F.R.S., F.R.C.P., F.R.C.S.



Born 19 July 1900
Died 26 September 1979

By J. ANGELL-JAMES,* C.B.E., M.D., F.R.C.P., F.R.C.S.

WE are here in this beautiful church in the heart of London to praise and thank Almighty God for the life and work of a great doctor and scientist.

* St. Martin in the Fields—19 November, 1979.

Charles Skinner Hallpike was born in Murree, India, in July 1900. When he was three his family came to London, and thereafter followed a misfortune that affected the whole of his life, when he developed Perthe's disease of the hip. So severe was this, that his school life was gravely interrupted by long periods of recumbency. Nevertheless, he became a Classical Scholar at St. Paul's School. He decided finally to study Medicine and entered Guy's Hospital with a Scholarship in Arts. There he excelled in Pathology, receiving the Beany Prize and qualifying M.R.C.S. and M.R.C.P. in 1924. He obtained the M.B., B.S. London and M.R.C.P. London in 1926; the F.R.C.S. followed in 1931.

His interest in Otology began when he was House Surgeon to the aural departments at Guy's Hospital and Cheltenham General Hospital, and these were followed by his appointment as Bernard Baron Research Fellow at the Ferens Institute, Middlesex Hospital, London, in 1929. In 1930 he was awarded the Duveen Travelling Studentship of the University of London, and in 1931 the Rockefeller Foundation Travelling Fellowship. In 1934 he was the Foulerton Research Fellow of the Royal Society.

During this time he travelled extensively, visiting Clinics and Laboratories in the U.S.A., Canada and Europe. While visiting Wittmaack's Clinic in Berlin he studied temporal bone microscopy, and soon afterwards developed his own techniques, incorporating many advances.

At this time he worked particularly on the physiology of hearing and electro-physiology of the ear. By 1938 he had already made twenty-eight publications and had been awarded the Gamble Prize of the Royal Society of Medicine.

In 1938, with the late Sir Hugh Cairns, he published the first description of the histopathology of Menière's Disease. This was acclaimed throughout the world, and finally and firmly established his international reputation.

Then came the War, and with it some change of direction. Debarred from Service in the Forces, owing to his disability, his immense knowledge and experience was fortunately available as a member of the Flying Personnel and Research Committee of the Air Ministry, from 1938–1955, and the Military Research Committee of the Medical Research Council.

In these he played a most important part in the investigation and management of noise deafness and barotrauma, as well as body armour and missile effects, thus contributing to the general War effort.

In 1940 he left the Ferens Institute for the National Hospital for Nervous Diseases, Queen Square, where he was appointed Assistant Aural Surgeon and Director of the Medical Research Council's Otological Research Unit, on its establishment at that Hospital.

In 1942 a further important milestone was his work with Fitzgerald, perfecting a new technique of caloric labyrinth testing, which is now used world wide, and is acknowledged to be the simplest and most comprehensive clinical test of labyrinth function.

In 1944 he changed his appointment, to that of Aural Physician, a post he held until he retired from the National Hospital in 1967.

Meanwhile, in 1940 he had been appointed to the Scientific Staff of the Medical Research Council, and became liaison officer of the Medical Research Council's Hearing Committees, including the Electro-acoustic Committee whose report on Hearing Aids, published in 1946, provided the scientific basis of the Ministry of Health's subsequent Hearing Aid Programme, and the development of the Medresco Aid.

After the war some of his finest work was produced with further studies of vestibular function and the introduction of the Peep Show technique for audiometary in young children, and intensive interpretation of the loudness recruitment phenomenon and of positional nystagmus.

From 1948 to 1954 he also served the University College Hospital as E.N.T. Consultant.

Many leading otologists from abroad came to visit and work in his Department. Prominent among them were Professor Ledoux from France, Professor Pfaltz from Switzerland, Professor Kristensen from Denmark, and many others.

The influence of his clinical work in the hospital then became apparent in his writings; in this he was working closely with the late Sir Terence Cawthorne. The unique clinical material at the National Hospital enabled him to study and advance the neurological aspects and relationships of ear disease, to such a degree that he was indeed the founder in this country of the new branch of Neuro-otology.

Prizes and honours were heaped upon him:

He was awarded the Gamble Prize again in 1947, the William Mickle Fellowship of London University, the Dalby Prize of the Royal Society of Medicine in 1947, the Shambaugh Prize of the Collegium O.R.L.A.S. in 1955, the Bárány Medal of the University of Uppsala in 1958, the Guyot Medal of the University of Groningen in 1959, and the Hughlings Jackson Lectureship and Medal of the Royal Society of Medicine in 1967.

He was elected F.R.C.P. in 1945. In 1956 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, a unique honour rarely accorded to medical men and never before to an otologist.

He was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1958. He was President of the section of Otology of the Royal Society of Medicine in 1965 and elected an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Academy of Medicine of Ireland.

He had a fundamental interest in precision engineering and was an ingenious designer of equipment. He was particularly known for his original laboratory equipment, rotating chairs, headlights and the monocular ear microscope, which was even adapted by poultry farmers as the best instrument for sexing day-old chicks.

Many of his publications with his colleagues and staff, amounting to

241, are classics, for he had the gift of absolute clarity of description with economy of words.

He was a perfectionist, dogged and determined, and a firm master, but loyal and kind hearted. His staff were devoted to him and worked for him for many years; amongst these should be mentioned Dr. Margaret Dix, Dr. Derrick Hood, now carrying on his work, as well as Mr. Bishop, his technician.

To all his colleagues and collaborators he extended the fullest credit for their help. As a speaker he was in great demand, and held his audiences with rapt attention throughout.

Even after retiring from the National Hospital he continued to work as Director of Research at the Ferens Institute until 1968, and thereafter was writing and publishing his work annually until his death.

His disabilities, which hampered him in so many ways, did not deter him from competitive sport. He was an expert rifle shot. He shot in the Guy's Team and captained the Public Schools Veterans Team at Bisley, as well as winning many important individual trophies. He was also an excellent billiards player and a keen musician, playing the violin, and he taught himself the piano. Music was one of his great relaxations.

With all the demands of scientific and clinical work he was a devoted family man.

In July 1935 he married Barbera Lee Anderson, and she was his ever-present help and support in the many difficulties that faced them. They had three children; Jeremy, born in 1936, now a consultant neurologist in Adelaide; Timothy, born in 1946, now an Officer in the Royal Navy; and their daughter Janet, also a brilliant girl with an Honours Degree in English and Theology at Girton, who died, alas, in 1966.

Now that Charles is dead we mourn with them and offer them our deepest sympathy.

I like to think of Charles as supported by his Christian faith, and I am reminded of what Isaac Newton said of his scientific predecessors, "We stand on the shoulders of giants". I am sure that future generations of scientists will say that Charles Hallpike was one of such—giants.