

SIR STEWART DUKE-ELDER (1898 – 1978)

With the death of Sir Stewart DUKE-ELDER on 27 March 1978 the ophthalmological world lost one of its most distinguished and most famous representatives.

Stewart Duke-Elder was born on 22 April 1898 at Tealing, near Dundee in Scotland. In 1915 he entered St. Andrews University (London), graduating MA with first class honours in natural science. He then became a bachelor of science with special distinction in physiology. In 1923 he graduated MD of St. Andrews with a gold medal for his thesis. In 1924 he became a fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons (London). In 1925 he took a doctorate of science and a Ph D and in 1928 he became consulting ophthalmic surgeon to St. George's Hospital and Moorfields Eye Hospital. All this was achieved by the age of 27.

The earliest interest of Stewart Duke-Elder was the physiology of the eye, which he studied under the direction of Professor Starling. At that time he met Sir John Parsons, who had a profound influence on him. In 1928 he married Phyllis, also an ophthalmologist, who played a rather great part in Duke-Elder's first major and stupendous contribution to ophthalmology, the *Textbook of Ophthalmology* in

7 volumes, which appeared between 1932 and 1954 and which was notable for the elegance of its style and the high scientific standard of its presentation.

Stewart Duke-Elder became very soon the most famous ophthalmologist of Great Britain. After having received a knighthood in 1933, at the age of 35 years, he was the surgeon oculist to the Royal Family over a period of 29 years.

Before the second world war Stewart Duke-Elder published his most important research studies, more than 75, treating particularly of the action of light upon the eye, the arterial pressure in the eye, the intraocular pressure and glaucoma, the intraocular fluids, the vitreous body and the metabolism of the eye. Moreover, he published three books of outstanding quality, which were regularly re-edited: *Recent Advances in Ophthalmology*, *the Practice of Refraction* and *Parsons' Diseases of the Eye*.

During the war Sir Stewart was consultant surgeon to the Army, became Brigadier and received the Bronze Star Medal (USA).

In 1947 Duke-Elder created the well-known Institute of Ophthalmology, one of the first and most productive in the world, of which he was director of research for 17 years before being its Life President.

From 1954 to 1968 Sir Stewart was Hospitalier of the Venerable Order of St. John of Jerusalem and afterwards he became Bailiff Grand Cross of this Order. Offering his services with great enthusiasm, he founded the magnificent ophthalmic hospital, which still hoists its flag in Jerusalem.

In 1958 Stewart Duke-Elder decided that his original textbook needed to be brought up to date and he started on his wonderful and colossal *System of Ophthalmology* in 15 volumes, the last being published in 1976. In an attractive and flowing style he gathered and distilled all of importance that had been written in ophthalmology. As George Scott said, the first volume on "The Evolution of Vision", entirely written by himself, is perhaps one of the best examples of Duke-Elder's intellectual mastery of his subject and command of the English language.

While Duke-Elder was also chairman of the Editorial Committee of the *British Journal of Ophthalmology* and editor of *Ophthalmic Literature*, he still found the time to publish between 1944 and 1977, besides two symposia, one on Glaucoma (1955) and one on the Transparency of the Cornea (1960), more than 80 papers in British and foreign ophthalmological and scientific journals. The subjects were mainly the blood-aqueous barrier, the aqueous humour and the intraocular fluids, glaucoma, corticosteroids, toxoplasmosis, diamox, the virus of trachoma and proliferative diabetic retinopathy.

Sir Stewart was President of the Faculty of Ophthalmologists (Great Britain), which he founded, and President of the Ophthalmological Society of the United Kingdom. He was President of the International Council of Ophthalmology and of the International Federation of Ophthalmological Societies from 1950 to 1962, becoming afterwards their Honorary Life President. During his presidency he wrote, at the occasion of the centenary of the International Congresses, a monograph on "A Century of International Ophthalmology".

It is not astonishing that Sir Stewart Duke-Elder received great recognition for his very important achievements and that many honours were showered upon him. He was a honorary fellow of the Royal College of Physicians (London), the American College of Surgeons, the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology and the University College of London. He received nine honorary degrees: doctor of sciences of the Universities of Manchester, McGill (Montreal) and Northwestern (Chicago), doctor in Medicine of the Universities of Dublin, Utrecht, Ghent, Strasbourg and Athens.

Sir Stewart Duke-Elder was a honorary member of 28 foreign ophthalmological societies. He was elected a member of the Royal Society of Sciences in Sweden, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences, the Royal Academy of Medicine in Belgium, the Medical Academy of Rome, the Royal Academy of Athens and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

He has been awarded 22 medals or prizes, including the Mackenzie, Nettleship, Bowman, Doyne, Lister, Lang and Fothergillian Medals (Great Britain), the Research Medal of the American Medical Association, the Howe Medal and the Proctor Medal (USA), the Donders Medal (Holland), the Gullstrand Medal (Sweden) and Ophthalmiatreion (Athens).

His most prized attainments were the Gonin Medal, the highest award in international ophthalmology, and his election to the Royal Society (London), a reward very rarely given to a clinician.

Sir Stewart was Knight Bachelor, Knight Commander and Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order.

Notwithstanding Sir Stewart Duke-Elder was an illustrious genius and a brilliant author of rare talent, one of the greatest ophthalmologists the world has known, he was nevertheless neither remote nor haughty. He was, on the contrary, completely devoid of pomposity. Great humorist, full of quips and bubbling with life, he was always accessible, being the friend of everyone who approached him. His extraor-

dinary kindness and his common touch were legendary. Gentleman in the full sense of the word, he always showed a great interest in the work and behaviour of the younger ophthalmologists. Hard worker, he was never wholly happy unless he was studying or writing, even during holidays or nights.

Sir Stewart Duke-Elder exerted a unique influence on Ophthalmology throughout the world and laid really the foundation of our modern science. As George Scott wrote, he was a man the like of whom we are unlikely to meet again.

We extend our deepest and most affectionate sympathy to Lady Duke-Elder, who devoted her life to Sir Stewart in the 50 years of their marriage.

Professor Jules FRANÇOIS



Sir Stewart Duke-Elder