SIR ROBERT MORANT.

BY

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MINISTER OF HEALTH.

SIR ROBERT MORANT was more than a great public servant; he was a great patriot, a man of tireless self-sacrifice and deep enthusiasm. He was perhaps better known than many leading civil servants, but, in common with them, the full variety and the greatness of his work could only be fully known to those who worked with him.

My first close personal association with him was during the fierce political controversies which arose over the introduction of the National Health Insurance Act. He grasped at once the immensity of the task and the character and the extent of the organization necessary to cope with the enormous mass of detail involved. Often in the struggle against time, as the day drew near for bringing the different services into operation, he would say in his nervous, masterly way that this or that could not be done, yet it was done. It was done because a man was in charge who had an indomitable spirit, an infectious energy, and a singular capacity for gathering around him a team of younger men whose standard was efficiency. He tolerated no inefficiency, and was impatient of failure to act according to principles laid down; at the same time he was peculiarly sympathetic, often tender, to lowly members of his staff, and I have never known him fail to spare others rather than spare himself. Had his consuming conscientious energy been less active he might perhaps be with us still.

Many a time in those days we tried to forecast the order of development and the nature of a system of organized health services which the nation so sorely needed. None was more conscious than he was of the difficulties in the way and of the time that would be required in overcoming them. Yet he was not dismayed when he realized that it would be necessary to deal with a medley of interests and authorities, an antiquated and cumbrous system of the Poor Law, a lack of trained personnel in all directions, a mass of vehement, deep-rooted prejudices, and, above all, with the common habit of thought that national health services were solely associated with physic and doctoring.

He loved to talk of these things and longed to have a hand in the working. Often enough he would speak despairingly when he thought of the vicissitudes of political life, of the slowness of things, and of the lack and accidents of opportunity. When he fretted thus it was only because his eager spirit was anxious to be at work.

Among the many facts which the war made manifest was the urgent need of an organized system of health services, and I believe that he achieved one of the chief ambitions of his life on the day when it was my high privilege to ask him to become the First Secretary of the first Ministry of Health. He saw before him an opportunity for years of useful work in the things he loved, and as a great practical idealist he rejoiced in the prospect.

He never got lost in the thicket of details, of arrangements, rearrangements, adjustments, conferences, discussions, delays, and difficulties which attend the development of a progressive policy. All the time he knew where he was going, and his smallest actions were purposeful, and designed to help things forward. He had the priceless gift of a wide view whilst retaining command over near and detailed work.

The tragedy of his loss would appal us all were it not for the unforgettable example of his dauntless courage. Those who really knew him loved him even for his foibles. There was nothing petty about him. When a course of action had been decided upon he pursued it; the doubts and questionings that had preceded its decision having been carefully examined and estimated were cast behind him; whether he agreed in all respects or not he went straight on when the course was decided, and that annoying habit of lesser men of bringing up again and again all sorts of pointless questionings was never his. A great reasoner himself, he respected reasoning in others, and his masterful manner did not arise from any love of domination for its own sake, but from what he felt to be the necessities of the case. He was ready enough to subordinate himself and modify his views, and he looked for a similar practice

in others. The cause was the only thing that mattered to him.

He was an inspirer of others, a magnificent chief of staff, greedy for labour in a worthy cause, a despiser of trifles and an affectionate and loyal friend, a tower of strength to whatever he supported, a devoted and splendid citizen. We are made poorer as a people by his loss. We are shocked by the tragedy of his death at the moment when he seemed to have the fullness of his power and opportunity. In our sorrow we can but reverence his memory and pay the tribute that he would value most in striving with all our might to imitate his great example.

Obituary.

PROFESSOR WERTHEIM,
Vienna.

PROFESSOR ERNST WERTHEIM, of Vienna, died from pneumonia on February 15th. About ten years ago he succeeded Chrobak as chief of the second Gynaecological University Hospital in Vienna. For some time he was a pupil of Schauta, with whom he subsequently carried on many discussions, especially with regard to the abdominal and vaginal routes for operating on cancer of the uterus. Wertheim, at a comparatively early stage in his career, elaborated a method for cultivating gonococci which was in common use for many years. He will, however, be best known for his work on cancer of the uterus and for his operation for prolapse. In the nineties he was appointed to the Cancer Hospital established by one of the Rothschilds in memory of his wife who had died of cancer of the breast. This hospital, which was devoted to gynaecological cases, patients with cancer being given preference, was equipped with large laboratories, and was a model of its kind. Here Wertheim evolved the operations on the uterus which have become associated with his name. He was a first-rate teacher and a generous host, freely giving of his best.

Dr. HERBERT SPENCER writes: It was with sorrow that I heard of the death of Professor Wertheim, one of the great heroes of gynaecology, whose name will always be associated with the abdominal operation for cancer of the uterus. It was from reading his early work on that subject, and from finding in 1904 that an extensive growth which could not be removed in a surgical manner by the vagina could be removed by his method, that, as President of the Section of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the Annual Meeting of the British Medical Association at Leicester in 1905, I asked him to come as my guest and read a paper. The paper, written in German, was translated under my supervision in the office of the JOURNAL; it was published with illustrations in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, September 23rd, 1905, and has had a great effect in extending this method of his operation. In discussing the paper at the time, I said that I "considered this paper of Professor Wertheim's the greatest which had been published on the operative treatment of cancer of the uterus, and indeed of cancer of any other organ," an opinion which I have seen no reason to alter. It had since been surpassed by his monumental work on *Die erweiterte abdominale Operation bei Carcinoma colli uteri* (500 cases), 1911. The enormous labour involved in operating, recording, and following up a series of 500 cases of cancer arouse our admiration and gratitude. During the week of his stay with me I was impressed by the zeal and enthusiasm with which he devoted himself to the study of the relief of women from this scourge, and by the pain which the high mortality of his early operations caused him. On the surface Wertheim sometimes seemed a hard man; he was "ever a fighter," but a fighter for the truth. Patients who had been under his care spoke warmly of his kindness, and the apparent harshness of some of his remarks in discussions was due to his sincere belief in the truth of his views, and to his annoyance at criticism based on small experience. Several of my assistants who have visited his clinic have received many acts of kindness and much instruction from him: Wertheim used to seek relaxation in the vacation by deer stalking. I last saw him in Berlin in 1912 at the Obstetrical and Gynaecological Congress,