OBITUARY

WILLIAM HEDLEY SUMMERSKILL

Bill Summerskill, as everybody knew him, died in Portsmouth after a long illness on Wednesday, November 13, 1957.

He was born in 1898 and, although the first world war, when he served in destroyers as probationary Surgeon Sub-Lieutenant, interrupted his medical training at Guy's, he qualified L.M.S.S.A. in 1920. He was in general practice in London from then until 1931, and during this time stood once as Liberal candidate for one of the London constituencies.

His career in ophthalmology started in 1931, in which year he was an undergraduate at Exeter College, Oxford. He held an appointment at the Oxford Eye Hospital, and took the D.O. (Oxon.) in 1933. He then practised in London, holding an appointment as clinical assistant to the Royal Eye Hospital, and qualifying M.B., B.S. During the second world war he served as P.M.O. in troopships, and was finally invalided home.

In 1943 he settled down to practise in Portsmouth, with an appointment as temporary ophthalmic surgeon to the Portsmouth and Southern Counties Eye and Ear Hospital. In 1944 he was appointed ophthalmic surgeon to the Royal West Sussex Hospital, Chichester. He was also visiting ophthalmic surgeon to the Queen Alexandra Ministry of Pensions Hospital at Cosham, and ophthalmic surgeon to St. Mary's Hospital, Portsmouth. The advent of the National Health Service saw his hospital appointments consolidated into an appointment as ophthalmic surgeon to the Portsmouth Group Hospitals which he held until his death.

His contributions to ophthalmology were many. He was an advocate of the transconjunctival approach to the orbit. He made an important modification of Mules's operation. His most notable contribution, however, was his work on intubation as a method of re-establishing lacrimal drainage, and his name, and his operation for this, are known all over the world. His contributions to ophthalmology were marked by the award of the Nathaniel Bishop Harman Prize in 1948, and he won the Treacher Collins Prize in 1957 for his essay on "Diseases of the Lacrimal Apparatus and their Treatment". He was president of the Southern Ophthalmological Society in 1955/56.

Summerskill was a man of great charm, and was always welcome where ophthalmologists gather. He made friends easily and had many, notably among his patients by whom he was much beloved. He had a robust and, at the same time, human approach to the sick, which contributed to the affection in which he was held. His chief interests in later life were sailing (he was chairman of the Royal Albert Yacht Club in 1952 and 1953) and the collection of old medical books. He came of a medical family. The son of a doctor, brother of another, and brother-in-law of a third, his son is a doctor, and he was uncle to doctors in the families of his two sisters. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him, and our deepest sympathy is extended to his widow, and to his son and daughter.