OBITUARY

P. McG. MOFFATT, 1899–1963

We report with deep regret the sudden death on August 27, 1963, of Paul McGregor Moffatt while on a fishing holiday in Cumberland.

Moffatt was a north Countryman, born in Dalston, Cumberland, on March 1, 1899, the son of Dr. Charles Edward Moffatt. During the first world war he served with the Royal Navy in mine-sweepers, mostly in the Mediterranean. On demobilization he decided to study medicine and entered Guy’s Hospital, London. He qualified with the Conjoint Diploma in 1923, obtained the M.B., B.S. (London) in 1924, and spent the next 4 years in general practice in Lancashire with his elder brother.

Moffatt then made the bold decision to specialize in ophthalmology, returned to London, and became a house surgeon at the Royal Westminster Ophthalmic Hospital, and later Registrar both there and at Guy’s. He obtained the D.P.H. (Eng.), D.O.M.S., M.D. (Lond.), M.R.C.P. (Lond.), and F.R.C.S. (Eng.), and was appointed to the staff of the Royal Westminster Ophthalmic Hospital in 1938, joining the staff of the newly amalgamated Moorfields Hospital in 1947. He was also Ophthalmic Surgeon to the Hammersmith and West London Hospitals.

Able, sound, and dedicated, Moffatt was at home in the clinic and operating theatre rather than in the laboratory or lecture room. Patients were always “people” to him and it was with some difficulty that he abstracted from the human story the dry pathological details needed for a scientific paper. He wrote comparatively little but his writing reflects his mature experience. His advice was sought by colleagues and junior staff alike and he was a willing and able teacher. His pioneer work on vitreous replacement was recognized internationally; his long association with the National Institute for the Blind and with Blind Certification led to his establishing the first Visual Aid Clinic at Moorfields.

His expression in repose was unusually dignified but his ready smile was friendly and sincere. His patients loved him. Loyal to all with whom he worked, tolerant of their faults and deficiencies, patient with their difficulties—he was of even temper evoking affection in everyone. Yet he could be a severe critic of careless work and angry at any humbug or insincerity.

Away from work he was a cheerful unselfish companion, a good conversationalist, a sympathetic listener, and a wise counsellor. He was a keen fisherman. He loved art, especially painting. The death of his wife a year ago ended a long and profoundly happy partnership. Thereafter he devoted himself even more diligently to his work but he wore himself out in so doing.

Paul McGregor Moffatt was a man of exceptional ability, integrity, and kindliness, and for these qualities he will be remembered with respect and affection by all who knew him. He was the very stuff of which the enduring reputation of a great hospital is made.