EWEN ALISTAIR JACK

1909-1953

Orthopaedic surgery, and the Edinburgh School of Orthopaedic Surgery in particular, have suffered a grievous loss in the tragic death of Ewen Alistair Jack at the young age of forty-four years. He was born on June 31, 1909, at Hartlepool, where his father was in general practice. He was educated at Fettes College and studied medicine at Edinburgh University. At the University he captained the rugby fifteen before he graduated M.B., Ch.B. in 1932. After house appointments in Edinburgh and Leicester he became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh in 1935. Before returning to Edinburgh as Clinical Tutor in Surgery at the Royal Infirmary, he spent some time in postgraduate study in London. He had thus equipped himself with a sound training in general surgery before, with the outbreak of war in 1939, he joined the Royal Army Medical Corps. His career in the Army was a distinguished one: he served with the British Expeditionary, Middle East, and Central Mediterranean Forces, both as an orthopaedic specialist in charge of a large orthopaedic centre in Cairo, and as an officer in charge of a field surgery unit in Sicily and Italy. Promoted Lieutenant-Colonel, he took charge of the surgical division of a hospital in North-West Europe, and served there until his demobilisation. He was appointed O.B.E. in 1944 in recognition of gallant and distinguished service in Sicily, and the following year he was mentioned in dispatches for his services in North-West Europe. While in the Army, he met his wife, formerly Miss Vivian Weekes, whom he married in Cairo in 1941.

After the war he returned to Edinburgh to his chosen speciality of orthopaedic surgery. There followed an exceptionally busy period when, in addition to his duties in the orthopaedic department of the Royal Infirmary and at the Princess Margaret Rose Hospital, he played a notable part in the development of a comprehensive orthopaedic service for the area. It was typical of his drive that in the middle of this period he obtained the higher degree of Ch.M., and also found time to pay a visit to America.

Physically he was tall and slim with the carriage of an athlete. He first impressed by his charm and quiet self-confidence. As one knew him better, one was further struck by his composure and by the effortless order of his ways. He had a flair for methodical reasoning and the ability to organise his every activity. Everything he did was carefully considered and meticulously executed. Even the elegant neatness of his handwriting mirrored this aspect of his character. There was about him a serenity which sprang from the perfect integration of a happy home life and a dedication to his work. In his home he was both a beloved husband and father. His love and the loveliness of his home and garden bore witness to this sensibility. Here was yet another facet of his character unsuspected by many, which, with his application, created the loveliest of gardens, a garden whose full maturing he was never to enjoy. He maintained his interest in athletics, and did much for the students of the University as Honorary Consulting Surgeon to the Pollock Institute of Physical Education.

As an orthopaedic surgeon his vision embraced the full scope of his work’s many problems down to the ultimate and minute detail of the individual patient’s aftercare. His outlook was essentially conservative, and his opinion was sought and respected by senior and junior colleagues alike. To bear the cachet of Ewen Jack’s approval was proof of worth indeed. It was typical of the man that he would not pass an opinion on any new problem until he had had time fully to consider its every implication.

His special talent of ordered thought and action served him in all branches of his work. His ability as an administrator and organiser, first tried and proved in the war, was finally
confirmed in the management of his own surgical team in the Royal Infirmary. His researches both in the laboratory and by the bedside again bore the stamp of his character and ability. He was particularly interested in lesions of the ligaments and cartilages of the knee joints, and also in the static deformities of the feet. His original experimental work on disruption of the collateral ligaments of the knee joint emphasised the importance of early operative treatment. He put his theories into practice and successfully treated several such lesions, a series which he would doubtless have published. His other contributions to the literature and his dissertation at the recent joint meeting of the Orthopaedic Associations brought credit to himself and the Edinburgh School throughout the world of orthopaedic surgery. As a teacher, his genius was the extraction and presentation of the essentials of every problem. This, coupled with his easy discourse, his quiet humour, and his obvious sympathy for the problems of his audience made him a most popular and cogent mentor. Shortly before his death he presented to a meeting of the local orthopaedic surgeons a series of cases of tuberculosis of the hip joint in children treated by the latest methods. This was one of the most impressive and at the same time thrilling presentations that any of us had ever seen, presaging, as it did, a complete change in outlook on this subject.

As a surgeon he immediately gained the confidence of his patients, a confidence which materially helped them on their way to full recovery. Again his approach was conservative, showing a meticulous attention to detail. His operative technique was an essence of the man himself, carefully planned, beautifully and gently executed, with every last detail receiving careful attention. He was a surgeon who, although he did not scorn assistance, always gave the impression that he required little. If one could fault him it was only in respect of his shyness—and an almost pathological modesty.

His future held much for him and for his School. As he lived we were aware of his worth, but it was not until his death, and the manner of it, that his full stature was revealed. After a prolonged illness he became aware that death was inevitable and was not far removed. He continued to work until three weeks before he died. It was characteristic of Ewen Jack that he finally gave up, not for his own sake, but because, in his own words, he considered that he was “a bit of a menace” to others. At home he continued to work on a paper which even his brave spirit could not drive his body to complete. Fate spared him little, but it did allow him one dispensation; that was a wife who matched and even surpassed him in courage, and whose devoted care was his comfort and support to the end. To her and their two young children goes our deepest sympathy. This family will be a never forgotten inspiration to all who have known them.

W. M. and J. H. S. S.

RICCARDO GALEAZZI
1866-1952

When Professor Galeazzi died last year Italian orthopaedic surgery lost one of its greatest personalities. For thirty-five years he was Director of the Orthopaedic Clinic in the University of Milan, and his example and leadership, both in clinical surgery and in research, were a tremendous stimulus to orthopaedic progress throughout Italy. Under his guidance the Instituto dei Rachitici grew from small beginnings to become an important orthopaedic hospital, and his influence was largely responsible for the inception and development of rehabilitation centres for the care of the crippled and injured.

His many scientific writings testify to his erudition and wide culture. Especially to be remembered is his great work on scoliosis, to which he devoted a large part of his professional life. Notable also were his studies of skeletal tuberculosis, acute arthritis of infants, and