IN MEMORIAM

SVEN KIÆR
1894-1955

Danish orthopaedic surgery and the Institute for the Care of Cripples in Denmark has suffered a great loss through the death of Sven Kier, the leader of department II of the Orthopaedic Hospital, Copenhagen.

The sudden death of Sven Kier on July 20—from coronary occlusion—came as a shock to us all; the day before, he was working as usual at the hospital. In the span of five years we now have lost those three personalities, Guildal, Berntsen and Kier, who developed orthopaedic surgery on modern lines at the hospital in Copenhagen erected in 1935 by the Society and Home for Cripples in Denmark.

Sven Kier's contribution to this development was highly significant. He completed his training as a general surgeon and was also for some time consultant in surgery to the child at one of the children's hospitals in Copenhagen before he became an orthopaedic surgeon at the Society and Home for Cripples in 1930. Influenced by his knowledge of the development of orthopaedic surgery in England, he suggested a plan for an orthopaedic hospital in Copenhagen, where fresh injuries should also be admitted, and the actual building of the Orthopaedic Hospital in Copenhagen a few years later in 1935 was based upon this plan. Sven Kier and Aage Berntsen became assistants to Guildal at this new hospital until Guildal resigned from clinical and operation activities and took over the leadership of the hospital's medical-social functions in 1947, and Sven Kier was appointed chief surgeon to department II.
Sven Kiær’s thorough training and his interests in many different fields of surgery—enlarged by studies in France, England and America—coupled with his administrative, technical and scientific abilities and his remarkable executive power constituted the sound background for the important contribution this gifted personality gave in establishing the recognised standing of the Orthopaedic Hospital in Copenhagen. From his study in France during his training as a young surgeon he brought back his interest in surgery of the sympathetic nervous system. He developed later at the Orthopaedic Hospital as the first of its kind in Denmark an efficient laboratory for the investigation of the function of the vessels and continued to his death to be interested practically and scientifically in the field of vascular diseases and sequels of traumatic injuries. In England he studied plastic surgery and was the first to introduce this field of surgery on a larger scale in Denmark. His work on the refinement and standardising of prostheses and on the treatment of scolioses was also of importance in raising the efficiency of the hospital, and Sven Kiær was one of the first surgeons to introduce acrylic materials in bone and joint surgery.

As a person Sven Kiær was charming. He was loved by his assistants for the comradeship he gave them and for the friendly and happy atmosphere ruling in his department; also for the inspiring example he was to them: Sven Kiær was full of ideas and had the energy to work many of them through to a final conclusion. He was a keen yachtsman, and his summer holidays were often spent on long cruises in Scandinavian waters. Sven Kiær was not only highly esteemed as an orthopaedic surgeon among colleagues in Scandinavia but had many friends among them. Orthopaedic surgeons in other countries also became his friends. We had the good fortune to see many of them from all over the world when Sven Kiær invited them to see the hospital on their way through Copenhagen to the international orthopaedic meeting in Stockholm in 1951. He then organised a "fine show"—a phrase used by one of the distinguished visitors—of the hospital’s makings and doings. He repeated this demonstration on a larger scale last year when the Scandinavian Orthopaedic Association had its meeting in Copenhagen under the presidency of Sven Kiær. He was then the natural centre of the scientific discussion as well as of the social gatherings and it was because of him first and foremost that this meeting was as successful as it was.

Sven Kiær’s ideas on the development of orthopaedic surgery in Denmark were based upon a broad outlook. It is to be hoped that this outlook will be sustained in the future and that we can continue the contacts with other countries Sven Kiær so happily brought about. But no doubt it will be difficult to be without him. We will remember him as an inspiring personality and a fine and charming colleague and friend.

J. M.