



OLE CHIEVITZ

Professor Dr. Med. (h.c.) Ole Chievitz died on the 26th December 1946, age 63 years, after an operation for appendicitis.

Ole Chievitz qualified in 1909. Already as a student he had developed a deep interest in surgery. He had for long periods done voluntary service in the Rigshospital's Surgical Department C, and had also been for several years a voluntary assistant in the University's Institute for Morbid Anatomy. After qualifying he proceeded immediately with his training in surgery, which he did almost entirely at the Rigshospital's Department C under Professor Thorkild Rosving. He pursued his training with

great energy and found an absorbing interest in his work. He completed his apprenticeship in a short time and already in 1919—10 years after qualifying—was made Assistant Surgical Director in the Finsen Institute, and 2 years later Chief of the new surgical department there.

Chievitz' main task in his first years at the Institute was the treatment of patients with surgical tuberculosis.

At the beginning of this century there was a period in the treatment of surgical tuberculosis which was characterised, mainly due to the work of Finsen, Bernhardt and Rollier, by increased conservatism, using especially treatment with sun- and later artificial-light. The possibilities of operative treatment were—after an optimistic period at the end of the last century—regarded with considerable scepticism. It is perhaps true to say that when Chievitz took up his appointment this strongly conservative attitude to the treatment of surgical tuberculosis was already on the decline. Knowledge of the clinical manifestations and course of the disease had increased with the establishment of a growing number of specialist departments, which had been founded with a view to the great importance of open air treatment, and with the introduction of much improved methods of investigation, e.g. better radiographic examination. It appeared that it would now be possible to gain considerable benefit from operative treatment, by, for example, using it less according to rigid principles and more as indicated by the special characteristics of individual cases.

This development was in its beginning in 1921, and Chievitz came to it with quite special abilities for carrying such a development further. Firstly he had (in spite of his exclusively surgical training) an exceptionally live understanding that patients with surgical tuberculosis were first and foremost tuberculous patients, and that control of the tuberculous infection by general treatment and prolonged local immobilisation was the alpha and omega of any treatment of surgical tuberculosis. The task of surgery was the more modest one of supporting and possibly shortening this treatment and of reducing the sequelae of the disease. Secondly, Chievitz brought to his daily work a

quite unusual clinical sense, an ability to come quickly, by a characteristic mixture of sober judgment and imaginative synthesis, to the heart of the disease. General clinical examination at the bedside was always for Chievitz the chief basis for his judgment of a patient's condition—though this is not to say that he did not value the special investigations of the laboratory and of the radiographic department. On the contrary, Chievitz was a very thorough investigator, and omitted nothing which could throw light on any detail of the disease picture; but he had a rare gift for assessing exactly the significance of these special investigations and of fitting them into the general clinical picture.

The effect of these abilities was to make his treatment of his patients extremely individual, little affected by set principles. In his department conservative and operative treatments were combined in a remarkably successful manner, which varied from case to case, but which showed through the years a tendency for operative indications to extend little by little as the experience with this form of treatment was reviewed.

These abilities of Chievitz, an intense interest in and understanding of the pathology of the disease, a wide clinical knowledge and a rare practical clinical gift, marked also Chievitz's work in the other fields of surgery where he had, during the course of the years, opportunity to work: the surgery of cancer and of the thyroid, war surgery, etc.

Chievitz's scientific output was not large, but it was important, and gives to all a lively impression of his outstanding abilities as a doctor. Here will be mentioned only his works on light and sanocrysin treatment of surgical tuberculosis, on the treatment of tuberculosis of the knee joint, on thyrotoxicosis, on parathyroid adenoma and on cancer of the cervix uteri, and finally his works on war surgery.

But Chievitz will not only be remembered as the outstanding doctor by his colleagues and patients. Strong enthusiastic traits in his character took him into activities which will be gratefully remembered through the centuries by the whole Danish people.

The central force in Chievitz's work as a doctor was his

deep human sympathy, which he seldom revealed and never directly expressed. But this well-concealed humanitarian trait was not only the driving force in his mission as a doctor, it was the predominating influence in everything he undertook in his life. Deep in his heart there lay a sincere respect for and belief in the worth of the individual, and the maintenance of the individual's free rights within the frame of the community stood for him as a basic need if life were to be worth living, and as an essential condition for a happy social organisation worthy of humanity. Therefore he regarded with disgust and contempt any form of force or of suppression—whether of individuals or of nations—and consequently used all his powers against the suppressors of freedom wherever he saw opportunity, and without thought of the risk involved.

Three times he served as a doctor in the Finnish people's struggle for independence and freedom, and when his own fatherland was occupied by oppressors his own position was at once clear and unequivocal. By his example and his vigorous and fearless speech he played a part in the rise of the Danish resistance movement. Without men of Chiewitz's character and clear vision the movement could not have attained the strength to achieve the result it did.

Ole Chievitz was a man of exceptional qualities, a man of strong character, but first and foremost a man with an extremely strong feeling for his fellow-men and for justice and freedom. It was this last quality which made Chievitz not just an eminent man, but a great and rare human being.

Johannes Meyer.