

THE ANALYST

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY OF PUBLIC ANALYSTS AND OTHER ANALYTICAL CHEMISTS

Obituary

MABEL BEATRICE ELLIOTT
HONORARY MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY

THE death of Miss Elliott will be felt as a personal loss by many, for she had the great gift of friendship. Born in 1885, she was educated, first at a private school in the north of London, and then at a German convent school in Holland, where she acquired a fluent knowledge of German and Dutch. Afterwards she studied in Brussels and became equally proficient in French. On returning to England she took a course in business training at Pitman's Commercial College, where, incidentally, she was awarded the prize for French and German. She also won in open outside competition the All-England gold medal for speed in shorthand and typing in foreign languages.

When the war of 1914 broke out she was working as foreign correspondent with an engineering firm in the City. Immediately she offered her services to the Postal Censorship, then newly established as a branch of the War Office. Beginning at the bottom as an unknown Examiner, it was not long before she was promoted to be a Deputy Assistant Censor. While she was in charge of a room of Examiners her keen observation led her to suspect that an apparently innocent business letter contained invisible writing, and, on applying heat to the paper, she brought to light a secret message of the German spy, Kuepferle; at the subsequent trial in the Tower and at the Old Bailey this evidence was an essential link in the case for the prosecution. That night Kuepferle hanged himself in Brixton prison, leaving a confession, written on a slate, that he was a German officer. Shortly afterwards Miss Elliott again discovered secret messages in the letters of two more German agents, Müller and Hahn, and her evidence helped to convict them both. A few months later she was promoted to be Assistant Censor, a post demanding organising ability and tact, and so successful was she that in the following year she was chosen to be Censor in control of the whole of the women (over 3000) employed in the Postal Censorship. For these services to the country she was made an M.B.E., and was also awarded the *Palme d'un Officier d'Académie* by the French Government.

After the war Miss Elliott opened a secretarial and translation bureau in Westminster, and this led, in 1921, to her association with the Society, when she was appointed indexer and business manager of *THE ANALYST*. In the following year she became an unofficial assistant to the Secretary, and for the next 15 years she gave efficient and ungrudging service to the Society, being affectionately known as the "O.G." When she retired at the end of 1937 from the secretarial side of the Society's work, the Council showed their appreciation of all that she had done by presenting her with a diamond wrist watch and electing her an Honorary Member—the only woman on whom the Society has conferred this honour during the whole of its 70 years. This retirement did not entirely sever her connection with the Society, for she continued to be the official indexer of *THE ANALYST* to the end of her life.

At the outbreak of the present war Miss Elliott threw herself with her usual energy into the war work of her district in London. She took a prominent part in all the activities of the W.V.S., such as acting as interpreter to Belgian, French and Dutch refugees after Dunkirk, and escorting train loads of women en route to an internment camp. Then, having passed the examinations of the British Red Cross Society, she gave all the time she could spare to nursing. It was soon recognised that she had the qualities of a leader, and she was invited to become Commandant of the 78th Middlesex Detachment. In a very short

while she had won the affectionate loyalty of all who served under her. Many of them will recall the fearless devotion with which, during the autumn of 1940, she tended the old people at a Sick Bay, returning home night after night during the incessant air raids and having to take shelter in doorways from the falling shell splinters.

The gradual failing in her health forced her to take up work less arduous than Red Cross nursing, although her enthusiasm and her will power remained unweakened. Thus, she helped to organise a local branch of the Red Cross Penny-a-Week Fund, becoming its Hon. Treasurer, controlled a local depot of the National War Savings campaign, and worked with the Red Cross Hospital Supply Association to the very last; even when she was too ill to go out she had the meetings of the working party in her own home and supervised them from her bed.

The end came peacefully in her sleep on January 9th. At her funeral at Golder's Greer crematorium she was received by a guard of honour of detachments of the British Red Cross Society and the W.V.S., and within the chapel representatives of the other organisations with which she had been so closely associated were among the large gathering which included her brother, Mr. A. H. Elliott, Mrs. Elliott and other relatives and intimate friends. At his special request the President (who was unable to be present) and Mrs. Melling were represented by the Editor, and the Society was represented by Dr. H. E. Cox (*Vice-President*), Mr. G. Taylor (*Hon. Treasurer*) and Mr. J. H. Lane (*Secretary*). Miss Elliott had asked her old friend, the Rev. W. I. Bulman, Vicar of St. Gabriel's, Cricklewood, to conduct a simple service, and had herself chosen the music for it. Her choice of Mendelssohn's *Spring Song* for the dismissal was a final gesture typical of her whole attitude towards the ills of life; she wanted no mourning.

Mabel Elliott's sympathetic nature and thought for others endeared her to everyone with whom she had anything to do, and so the number of her friends was constantly increasing. Her deep interest in the affairs of others was sincere—not merely a polite convention—and those (and they were many) who came to her with their troubles knew instinctively that she would not spare herself to help them. But she also loved to share in the pleasures of others. Many of us who attended the enjoyable meetings of the North of England Section at Scarborough and Llandudno will recall with what zest she joined in every amusement that was suggested. She had a dry, rather subtle humour, but it was coupled with a sense of fun; one never heard her make an unkind remark or impute unworthy motives. Unquestionably, she was the Good Companion.

Still more outstanding than these traits was her courage. She would not let herself be cast down by troubles that would have made many despond. Even when it came to the last great trial, she faced an operation and a painful lingering illness, which she knew would probably prove fatal, with the same unflinching spirit that she had shown towards the German blitz. A favourite quotation of her's was Hugh Walpole's

"It isn't life that matters! It's the courage we bring to it."

She could have no more fitting epitaph.

C. AINSWORTH MITCHELL



Label B. Elliott