

MY MOORLAND PATIENTS

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649114207

My moorland patients by R. W. S. Bishop

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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R. W. S. BISHOP

**MY MOORLAND
PATIENTS**



A MOORLAND BECK.

[Frontispiece.]

MY MOORLAND PATIENTS

BY A YORKSHIRE DOCTOR
(THE LATE DR R. W. S. BISHOP)

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1922

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Y6 B54

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE¹

READERS of this book who have become interested in the personality of its author may welcome a short account of his life.

R. W. S. Bishop was born and spent his youth at Ripon; entered as a medical student at Leeds (it was before the days of the University), and after some two or three years there went to London and studied at St Mary's Hospital, whence he qualified as M.R.C.S. and L.R.C.P. in 1889.

He then went to Paris, where he studied in the hospitals under Chareot and other famous French teachers. It was at this time that he acquired the love for and fluency in the use of the French language which remained with him to the very last, so that in his dying hours he spoke almost as much French as English.

On returning to England he spent some years as assistant to doctors practising in the neighbourhood of Sheffield, and among the Derbyshire hills before settling at Bradford as House-Surgeon to the Children's Hospital.

But he was by nature no townsman, and finally the call of the moorlands was not to be resisted. He was not only a notable angler, but had a real and deep feeling for wild country and for unsophisticated country people.

Of his prowess with the rod and his love of nature, a contributor to the *Yorkshire Post* writes:—"Dr Bishop was widely known in the North, especially to anglers, and his wonderful gift of memory made him ever welcome on a dull day. He was a member of the Yorkshire Fishery Board, the Yorkshire Esk Fishery, and the Yorkshire Angling Associations; also of the Tanfield Angling Club (of which he was Hon. Secretary for many years), and in his earlier days of several other fishing associations. . . . Many a salmon—in one year thirty-eight—paid the penalty of attraction to his fly on his best-known river, and the trout and the grayling had no

¹ Taken, except where otherwise specified, from notes furnished by an intimate, personal, and professional friend of the late Dr Bishop.

deadlier tempter than he, both there and in the smaller streams to which he had welcome access. Being greatly interested in the free passage of salmon up the rivers, he erected a salmon pass at his own expense at Newby. Birds had in him a firm friend and protector; even the heron, with its predilection for salmon and trout fry, was not banned."

In 1894 he acquired a practice at Kirkby Malzeard (on the edge of the moor north of Ripon), where he worked for twelve years. It was during these years that most of the material of his book was stored in his really remarkable memory. When asked during his last illness whether he had not any notes to assist his writing, he replied, tapping his forehead with a long finger, "Only there."

"As a physician," writes the friend who furnishes these notes, "he was characterised by an extreme conscientiousness. He has told me how after walking home some miles late at night from a difficult case, he has gone to bed and, unable to sleep because of some idea that he had overlooked some point, he has got up and dressed again and trudged off through a winter night over miles of dark lanes back to the patient's house to satisfy himself on the point which he might have overlooked. I can fully credit it. It is just the sort of thing he *would* do. I have naturally met and sometimes attended a good many of his old patients and have been much struck with the powerful impression he had made on them. He understood them so well that he was able to make them do anything he recommended, and they had the most implicit faith in anything that Dr Bishop had said.

"Speaking from the professional point of view, I thought him a very discerning and thoughtful physician. His knowledge was up to date, and he read a good many recent books on medical subjects. Most remarkable was the way in which he gained the confidence of his patients of all classes. I always felt that he would have made a mark in a much wider and more prominent sphere if he had cared to do so. But he loved the country and country-folk, and would perhaps never have been happy in a town."

On retiring from practice Dr Bishop made his home in Tanfield on the River Ure. Here in 1915 he was attacked by a painful and, as it proved, fatal disease, whose progress the best treatment and the most devoted nursing failed to arrest. His book was written during the last year of his life, in the intervals of acute suffering. He died on 31st December 1921 and was buried in Tanfield Churchyard.

THE EDITOR of *My Moorland Patients*.

P R E F A C E

THESE pages are my response to the insistent demand of friends that I would place on permanent record tales I have told them after dinner or over the smoking-room fire of the moorland folk with whose ways and speech my many years of practice on the Yorkshire moors have made me familiar.

Although the period of time covered concludes so recently as the outbreak of the Great War, these narratives may not be without value. Life and character on the moorlands is rapidly changing. With the coming of the motor car and cycle, the charm and seclusion of remote England has nearly departed. No far off moorland lane is now free from their intrusion, and it is fortunate that they cannot yet jump the stone walls and hedges, so that the footpaths are still left to us. What it will be like when the air is thick with flying machines, I will not attempt to imagine.

With so many intruders, the old kindly hospitality is rapidly vanishing. Compulsory standard education is responsible for the disappearance of countless old words and distinctions of dialect. Old customs and usages have been dropped. Superstition is practically dead. Those uplands, so suitable for stock-breeding and

rearing, are now being given over to dairying. The stock-markets, which are everywhere, have limited the frequency and fierceness of the old Yorkshire bargainings.

I should have liked to treat my subject with more of historical, topographical, and archæological detail, but that would have involved the disclosure of my identity.¹ Ninety-nine per cent. of my stories are true, and those that I cannot vouch for are true in spirit if not in fact. Many of my *dramatis personæ* are fortunately still alive, or have only recently joined the majority.

My days are now, alas, filled with sadness and suffering, but the memory of past happy years, when I received the love and affection of so many of my moorland patients, is a compensation that is priceless.

¹ This preface was written by the author who, had he lived to see the book published, desired to maintain his anonymity, but his death and notices of him which have appeared in the newspapers have removed this objection to giving his name as the author.