



GEORGE PLUMMER HOWE

1894-1896

GEORGE PLUMMER HOWE, son of Octavius Thorndike and Elizabeth (Plummer) Howe, and brother of Thorndike Dudley Howe, '99, was born at Lawrence, Mass., December 11th, 1878. After attending private and public schools in Lawrence, he entered St. Paul's in 1894 and graduated in 1896. Thence he proceeded to Harvard entering and graduating with the class of 1900. From college he followed in his father's footsteps to the Harvard Medical School. He took his degree of M.D. in 1904, and spent the next two years as Surgical Interne at the Boston City Hospital.

In the spring of 1906 he went to northern Alaska as a surgeon with the expedition of Ernest Leffingwell, where

24

he spent sixteen months between Point Barrow and the Canadian lines. He returned to San Francisco from Herschel Island on a whaler in the fall of 1907. Then for two years he practised medicine in Lawrence, Mass., and served on the out-patient hospital staff of the Lawrence General Hospital. He was also examiner for the Worcester State Mutual Life Insurance Company. His interest in anthropology and archæology was so keen that he gave up practise in 1909 and entered Harvard Graduate School, where he studied for two years. In 1910-1911 he was Austin Teaching Fellow in archæology. The summer of 1911 he spent in Yucatan, exploring and collecting ethnological information. On his return he began practising in Boston. He became assistant dermatologist at the Carney Hospital, Boston, and served as assistant to Dr. Townsend W. Thorndike at the Boston City Hospital. On September 20th, 1911, he married Marion Dudley Endicott, of Boston.

In the spring of 1917 he volunteered for the Medical Officers' Reserve Corps, obtained the commission of lieutenant and was sent abroad unattached. He was assigned for duty with a British engineer battalion, and at the time of his death, September 28th, 1917, was medical officer of the 10th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers.

While on duty at Tower Hamlets, near Ypres, he was hit by a shell and killed. The following is taken from an official communication relative to his death: "We were stopping a counter-attack. Capt. G. P. Howe was killed by shell. He was wounded slightly before, but he carried on. I saw the body after and helped to bury him. There was a military funeral. The American flag was used and he was buried at Godezonne Farm, with a cross on the grave."

In the British army the Battalion Medical Officer goes over the top with his battalion, in order to give first aid and

direct the stretcher-bearers. Howe was thus with his men when the enemy shell that killed him instantly exploded no more than a yard or two away. His body, sent back, was buried with full military honors in the British cemetery at Kleine Vierstraat, and has since been moved to the permanent British Cemetery at Lyssenthoek, near Poperinghe.

Howe's record as a fighting doctor is rounded out by General Pershing's posthumous award of the Distinguished Service Cross, in the following terms:

"Howe, George P., First Lieutenant, deceased. Medical Officers' Reserve Corps, attached to 37th Division, B. E. F. Although wounded in the head on the morning of September 28th, 1917, during the operation on the Tower Hamlets spur, east of Ypres, he displayed conspicuous courage and devotion in attending the wounded under very heavy and continuous shell-fire, refusing to leave and continuing to aid his post until killed by a shell."

Dr. Townsend W. Thorndike, his chief at the Boston City Hospital, writes as follows: "He found his last exploit in an environment in perfect accord with his ideals of life, dying the way he had lived, in the midst of adventure, useful to the last. His saddened friends may well envy this glorious termination of his career."

Howe had been, from the start, an earnest student of the war and was eager for service in the cause of his Country. In 1916 he attended the first Plattsburg Camp, and because of his interest in military affairs, he became a member of Battalion "C" of the Massachusetts Militia, while practising medicine in Lawrence, and was transferred to Battalion "A" when he moved to Cambridge.

*For many of the facts in this article we are indebted to the "Memoirs of the Harvard Dead in the War Against Germany."*