

# Death of Dr Michie while serving at Archangel

## **A Popular Medical Man**

News of the death of Dr Michie, on the 31<sup>st</sup> December, at Archangel, reached Mrs Michie on Saturday evening last, from the Officers' Casualty Office, Whitehall. The sad news spread like wildfire through the village, and was at first received with incredulity, but numerous inquiries elicited the fact that the report was only too true. Needless to say the sad event is the sole topic of the district, and feelings of deepest regret at this death and heartfelt sympathy for his young wife and child, not unmingled with a considerable tinge of bitterness that he should have been called up at all at such a late stage in the war, are heard on every hand.

Dr Michie had placed himself at the disposal of the Medical Tribunal at its institution, but was not called upon till September last. The arrangements made by the Medical Emergency Board for carrying on the practice by the Bathgate doctors raised a storm of protest, and had to be abandoned. Subsequent events, such as the fresh outbreak of influenza, amply justified the workers' attitude. While anxious to retain Dr Michie, the workers agreed to his calling up if a resident substitute was supplied, and on such being provided, Dr Michie duly reported at Blackpool on 29<sup>th</sup> October, and embarked for the North shortly after the signing of the Armistice.

## **Anywhere but North Russia**

He expressed to his friends the pride in the opportunity to do something in the Great War, although the break from his happy home would entail sore sacrifice. His only desire was to be sent anywhere but Mesopotamia or North Russia. Unfortunately, the bleak, inhospitable shores of the White Sea proved to be his destination and, alas, his grave.

His letters home all furnished proof that his forebodings of the depressing influence of winter conditions in North Russia were quite realised, and an intense longing to see his wife and child. One unavoidable and tragic circumstance of service there is scarcity of mails, and at the date of his last letter home he had received none of the many letters sent him.

Dr Michie gave the district faithful and diligent service. His cheery presence was ever welcome in the homes of the sick, and his coolness and skill at the numerous colliery accidents was often the subject of remark. He was an ideal working class doctor. Himself a son of the people, he was entirely free from "side", and held in scorn the cult of "superiority".

## **First-born of ten**

Dr Michie's career is an example of strenuous self-help. Born of humble and much respected parents in Alva, he was the first-born of ten. His parents, Mr and Mrs James Michie, respected citizens of the beautiful Hillfoot town, and six of the family now survive. The doctor served his apprenticeship in the local chemist's shop, and at the age of 18 went to Glasgow. He qualified in pharmacy at 21. After managing a pharmacy for a Glasgow doctor, he acquired a business in Paisley. He prospered in his first venture, and later bought a business in Dennistoun. This also was a

success, and putting a younger brother in charge, he set himself to realise his long-cherished dream and began his courses in Medicine, qualifying at the age of 28. He often laughingly recalled that his only stiff hurdle was the 'Prelim', and spoke lovingly of the nights he spent in the Manse with the parish minister of Alva, wading through Caesar and Virgil.

### **Manly effort**

After qualifying he spent a summer in the Hebrides, and acted "locum" in several places, including Newmains, Shotts, and Whitburn. On Dr Campbell giving up, he offered Dr Michie, whom he held in high esteem the opportunity to purchase his practice. This he did, and settled down after a long term of manly effort. He married in October 1916, Nan, the elder daughter of Mr Harry Allan, to whom he was a most devoted husband, and by whom and a baby girl he is revived.

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