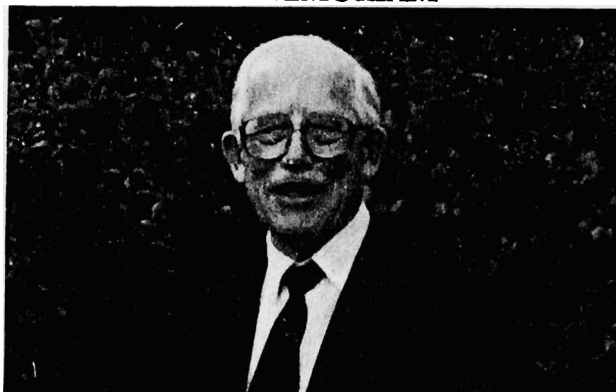


IN MEMORIAM



Oliver Fitzgerald (1910-1987)

The death of Professor Oliver Fitzgerald, a former editor of the *Irish Medical Journal*, took place on December 1st, 1987, just as this final edition of the *Journal* was at press. Time and circumstances do not, therefore, permit the inclusion of a full appreciation and obituary in this journal of one of Ireland's most distinguished medical figures, but it would be remiss if an expression of condolence and appreciation did not appear on the pages to which he once devoted much editorial attention.

Distanced from him by the fortuity of medical school, hospital and years, I was able to appreciate the personality that was Oliver Fitzgerald only from afar. A student or young doctor brought into the distinguished company of senior figures who command respect, sometimes finds that closer acquaintance and a more critical ability to assess achievement which is the consequence of maturity, tarnishes the image and leaves a void. Oliver Fitzgerald's persona never dimmed; in fact, it magnified with passing years and closer acquaintanceship. My generation looked to him for example, and we tried, however inadequately, to emulate his achievements. What then were those qualities that elevated Oliver above so many of his generation for us of a younger age? Integrity, of course, springs instantly to mind. This quality was evident in his gentle demeanour, and courteous manner. His was a keen intelligence, which, though not tolerant of stupid or insensitive behaviour, never presumed to embarrass or denigrate the less knowledgeable. His appreciation of standards was, of course, reflected not only in his approach to practice but also by some thirty years service on the Council of the Medical Defence Union. As a researcher, Oliver often astounded the young Turks with the depth and range of his reading and in this he epitomised the basic tenet of the scientific mind in that his reading brought him outside of his own discipline and well away from the small island that was his home, and he could as readily discuss the contents of the imminent issue of *Nature* as of his own journal, known during his editorship as the *Journal of the Irish Medical Association*.

He espoused literature and history not alone for the pleasure he obviously derived from the indulgence but because he knew the human experience to be profound in its depth and expression. I recall him at a lunch in Maynooth College, disposing of a Jesuitical conundrum by drawing on the writings of Goethe, Popper, and the French physician, Bichat, to construct an argument if not entirely valid, which, was of such erudition that none in the company was qualified to contest its substance. I detected then a mischievous twinkle in his eye almost as characteristic as the warm chuckle that was the outward manifestation of a hearty sense of humour. These endearing qualities endowed Oliver Fitzgerald with considerable charm, which with manners not often found nowadays, gave him the mien of a true gentleman.

When the *Journal of the Irish Free State Medical Union* was founded in 1937, it was edited by Robert J. Rowlette and John Charles Flood, a close friend of Oliver Fitzgerald. In 1943, Flood departed for the priesthood, and he entrusted his editorial duties to Oliver and his brother Paddy. When Rowlette died in 1944, Oliver, assisted by Paddy, took over the editorship. The brothers devoted themselves to the task of communicating not only scientific endeavour but also medico-political events in Irish medicine, with style and clarity. To look back on the *Journal* during their editorship is a joy, and the extent of reportage and the range of scientific work published is testimony to their achievement and contribution to Irish medicine. It would have pleased Oliver to see the tradition he so ably established being carried on by his son in the pages of this issue. In 1952, after almost a decade of service to the *Journal*, the Fitzgerald brothers handed over the editorial reins to William Doolin. It is appropriate, therefore, that this final issue of the *Irish Medical Journal*, should be dedicated to the memory of Oliver and Paddy Fitzgerald, former editors. *Requiescat in pace.*

E. O'B.