Obituary

Matthew Harris O'Connor

Matthew Harris O'Connor, Professor of Pathology and Dean of the faculty of Medicine of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, died at his home, 15 Fairfield Place, Rathgar, Dublin, on 20 June 1963.

Born in 1895 when his parents were for a time living in New York he was brought to Ireland at the age of 6 and educated at Corbally College, Ballinasloe. He won an exhibition to the National University of Ireland and proceeded to study medicine at the University College, Dublin, graduating with honours in 1918. He was, for a short time, in dispensary practice, but joined the Free State Army Medical Service in 1922 and was appointed to command St. Bricin's Military Hospital and later the Curragh Camp Hospital. Five years of military medicine engendered such an interest in environmental hygiene that in 1927 he took the D.P.H. and the B.Sc. in public health. This was followed by the award of the M.D. on his published works. On retirement from the Army he was appointed pathologist to the Richmond Hospital. The presence of

an active neurosurgical unit at that hospital stimulated his interest in neuro-pathology and for a time he studied under the late Dr. J. G. Greenfield at the National Hospital, Queen Square, London.

Appointed Professor of Pathology to the Royal College of Surgeons in 1943, he fulfilled the duties of that office with distinction. He was not only a good teacher but was extremely popular with the students, so that he was asked to preside over many of their societies. He also took an active and often a leading part in many of the local medical societies. Among others he was President of the section of Pathology of the Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland, President of the U.C.D. Medical Society, and President of the section of Pathology and Bacteriology at the B.M.A. meeting in Dublin in 1952. A keen senior member of the Association of Clinical Pathologists, he frequently attended meetings throughout Great Britain. He was co-founder and former President of the Irish branch of the Association, whose interests he always promoted and cherished.

His work in medical education was recognized when he was appointed Dean of the Medical Faculty at the Royal College of Surgeons. The burden of responsibilities of this dual office were onerous. He had a heavy teaching programme instructing students in the principles of pathology as a basis of scientific medical practice. He acted as examiner both in the undergraduate examinations and also in the Fellowships of the Royal Colleges of Surgeons of Edinburgh, Ireland, and London. At the same time he ran a diagnostic laboratory service for a number of hospitals in Dublin.

An eminent scholar and also a keen sportsman, he played cricket, rugby and tennis while at medical school, and captained the University teams in all these sports. He afterwards took up golf and was at one time Army golf champion and a captain of Portmarnock Golf Club.

In 1947 Matt O'Connor fell victim of an all too common cardiac ailment which required a considerable readjustment of his life. He continued to fulfil the duties of his office as Professor of Pathology and indeed he was actively engaged in the College examinations at the time of his death.

In medical education in Ireland Matt O'Connor has played a noble part. In his dealings with students and colleagues he was helpful and understanding. He was a man of many activities, broad in culture and with a charm of manner and a fluency of speech, so that his host of friends delighted in his company.

Although his later years were clouded by illness and the loss of his beloved wife, he found comfort in his home and relaxation in occasional trips to his favourite haunts in the west of Ireland to fish the familiar lakes and rivers.

He will be long remembered as a distinguished scholar, stimulating teacher, and a wise and cultured citizen of the world.

M. G. NELSON