

MAC

“ Everything that is worthwhile is worth the struggle and hard work necessary for its attainment. It is up to general practitioners themselves to start work at once . . . ”

(McConaghey, 1951).

IN this issue we record with great sadness the death of Dr R. M. S. McConaghey, the family doctor who founded this *Journal*.

Richard Maurice Sotheron McConaghey was born in India into a military family from which he learnt to discipline himself and to face adversity with equanimity. He himself served in India in the R.A.M.C. during the second World War, reaching the rank of Lt Colonel. After the war he obtained his M.D. from Edinburgh University and began to develop an interest in medical writing.

He was devoted to his wife and family and in his later years took great delight in his grandchildren. His death, at the age of 68, occurred on 21 August at his home in Dartmouth, where he had practised all his life. It came after a long illness which he had endured with his characteristic dignity and he leaves his wife, mother, sister, and two married daughters.

In Devon

Mac, as he was universally known, played a big part in the life of Dartmouth, where he worked with the St John's Ambulance Brigade and founded the Dartmouth League of Friends and the Dartmouth Rotary Club. He also helped to create the Northcott Medical Foundation. His Presidency of the Dartmouth Swimming Club was illustrated to his many visitors who were often pressed to join him in a cold early morning bathe in the Dart!

He was well-known figure in the medical world, contributing substantially to many different organisations, including the Torquay and District Medical Society, of which he was a former President, the Torquay Division of the B.M.A., which he served as Chairman, representative, and President of the South-western branch, the Devon and Exeter Local Medical Committee and its standing committee, and the former Devon and Exeter Executive Council. Nationally, he enjoyed his work as a member of the Council of the Medical Defence Union, until his final illness forced his retirement.

The College

The watershed in his career came in the early 1950s: “ Those of us who have watched the flow of the tide have been in no doubt of the outcome, and we have tried to meet it as best we can. Hence the clamour for increased status for the general practitioner; hence the call for a College of General Practitioners.” (McConaghey, 1952).

The creation of the College in 1952 represented a unilateral declaration by general practice of its academic independence. Mac was selected to join the Foundation Council of the College being the only general practitioner from the whole of the South-west region. Here he found his academic home and threw himself enthusiastically into the work. Although travelling from Dartmouth was never easy, and expenses were not paid in the early days, he managed to play a leading part. He was a member of most of the committees and chairman in his time of the Awards Committee, the Library Committee, the Publications Committee and, for no less than 17 years, the Editorial Board.

He helped to found the South-west England Faculty of the College, was the first Vice-chairman of the Faculty Board, and later served for two years as one of the early Provosts. He delivered the eighth Gale Memorial lecture in 1964 (McConaghey, 1965) and eventually became the Faculty's most distinguished native member.

Editor

Standing on the classic tripod of the family doctor—a happy home, proud of his practice, and contented in his community—Mac accepted responsibility in 1954 for the Research Committee's newsletters. We have already described his achievement in transforming those roughly produced private notes into a scientific medical journal with an international circulation (*Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, 1972).

He aimed high, he worked hard, and he had to struggle at times. "Everything that is worthwhile is worth the struggle and hard work necessary for its attainment. It is up to general practitioners themselves to start work at once . . ." (McConaghey, 1951).

Ahead of his time, he foresaw before it happened that general practitioners would increasingly report original research from general practice itself. He deliberately fashioned an instrument of communication which would foster the highest standards and would appropriately represent his discipline. He was always greatly helped and loyally supported by the Journal's first business manager, Miss Irene Scawn. He strove for quality rather than quantity and the *Journal* became the academic voice of general practice.

As an honorary part-time medical editor he broke new ground, his achievement was unique and made him the leading part-time medical editor in the western world. McConaghey was for the part-timers what Fox and Garland represent for the professionals.

Mac the man

As a man he was strangely shy for one who had held high office for so long. His reserve made him appear remote at times and concealed the great warmth and kindness of his personality. He had a majestic mind, which he exercised regularly, being widely read in many fields. As a quiet scholar he was perhaps more at home in the smaller, peaceful College of the early years; he preferred Dartmouth to London and a quiet chat with a colleague to a formal committee.

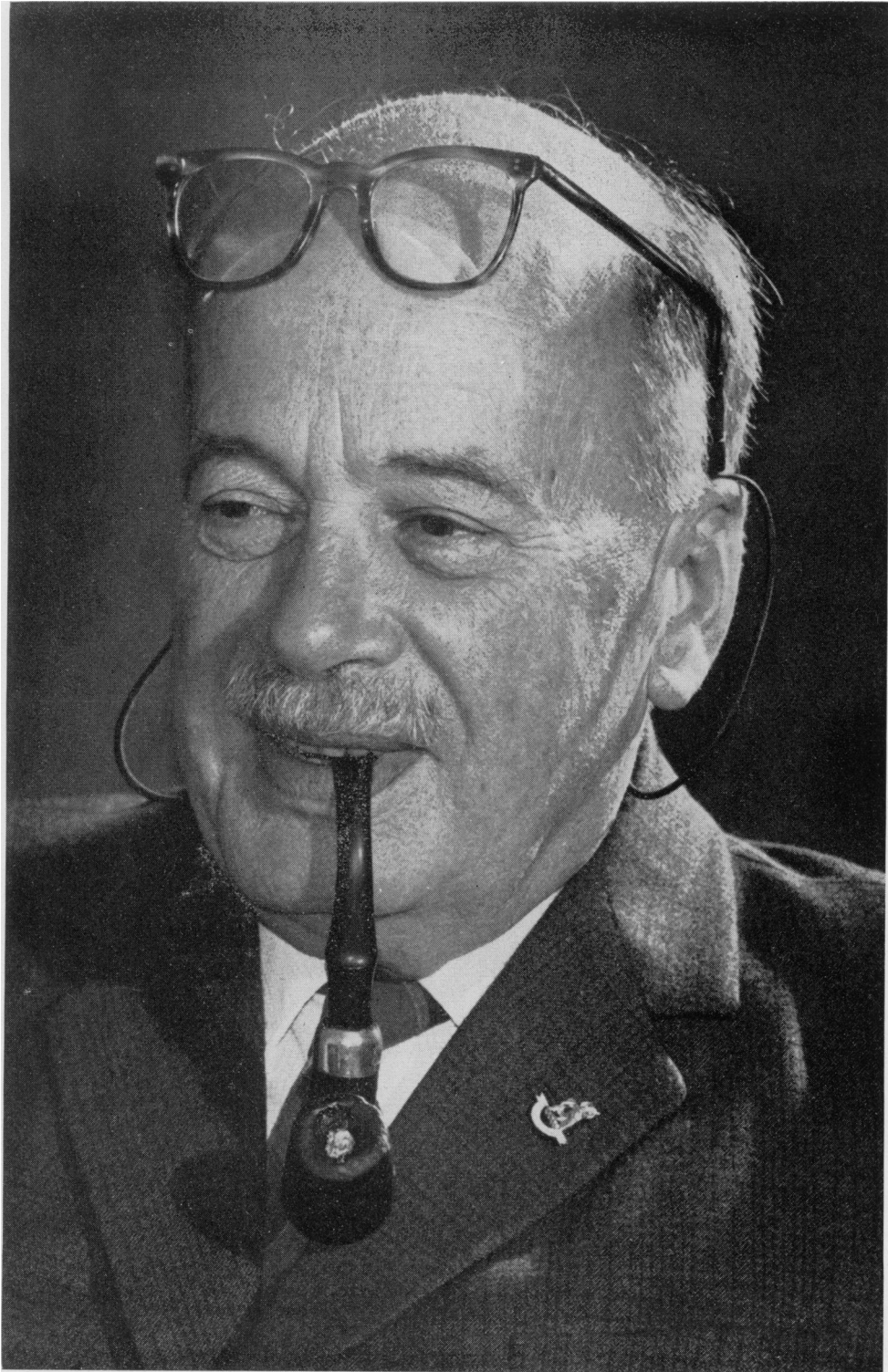
He was appointed an *O.B.E.* in 1965, gave the James Mackenzie lecture the same year (McConaghey, 1966) and was in the first list of Fellows of the College in 1967. He was presented in 1970 with the first George Abercrombie Award for his contribution to the literature of general practice and for his work on this *Journal*.

Mac was a great medical historian (McConaghey, 1972), the essence of which is skill in identifying significant events and discerning how they came to pass. But he not only analysed the history of general practice, he helped to make it. In the difficult years of 1951–55 the future and fate of general practice hinged on a handful of people; Mac will always be remembered as one of those men who was there when it mattered and guided the destiny of his discipline onto safer ground.

Si monumentum requiris, circumspice.

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