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J. Harding Fisher

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DR. JAMES J. WALSH

AN APPRECIATION

By J. HARDING FISHER, S.J.

RECTOR OF FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

It is with the deepest regret that we chronicle the death of the Editor-in-Chief of THE LINACRE QUARTERLY. Throughout the entire period of its existence, he was an indefatigable contributor to its pages, and to find his successor will not be easy. To his bereaved family—his wife, son and daughter—we extend our heartfelt sympathy. We have no hesitation in saying that the medical profession, the Catholic Church and the world in general will be poorer for his decease.

Dr. Walsh was born in Archbald, Pa., on April 12, 1865, and at the time of his death was completing the seventy-seventh year of his extraordinarily full life, a life from beginning to end filled to repletion with activity. He received his degree of Bachelor of Arts at Fordham College in 1884, and his Master's degree the following year. He then entered the Society of Jesus, in which his varied and scholarly attainments soon made themselves felt. After a few years, however, he came to realize that he was not called to the religious life and, at his own request, he was freed from his vows; but his early love of the Jesuits persisted and grew with the lapse of the years, and it was a source of great consolation towards the end of his life to receive

from the General of the Order a letter in which Father Ledochowski commended him and thanked him most emphatically and sincerely for his long continued and unflinching loyalty. In the year 1889 he received the doctorate in philosophy from Fordham College, and then entered the medical school of the University of Pennsylvania. It took him only two years to complete his studies and he was graduated with honors in the year 1895, being the first student at that medical school to finish his course in so short a time. At his graduation, it is said, he divided most of the prizes with his brother. Then followed three years of study, mainly in medicine, in Paris, Vienna and Berlin. After this long period of formation, he returned to the United States and began the period of labor that is synonymous with his name.

Dr. Walsh's learning was most unusual in its extent. Besides the degrees already mentioned, he received the degree of Doctor of Laws from Georgetown, the doctorate in letters from the Catholic University, and the doctorate in science from Notre Dame. He also received the Lactare medal. He was an honored member of many learned societies. He was the author of fifty books. He

published innumerable articles, in both technical and popular magazines. He was a tireless contributor to the columns of newspapers and reviews and medical and historical periodicals. He was on the staffs of schools, colleges and universities, and he lectured before almost every conceivable group of listeners on a varied list of subjects. He was familiar with the modern languages, and kept himself abreast of the developments of science and especially medicine, and the latest pronouncements of the great scholars of the world. His acquaintance with the latest researches gave him a unique place in the field of medicine, and he was frequently called into consultation by his colleagues, not only for purposes of diagnosis but particularly for the latest methods of healing. He founded the Fordham University Press.

His interest, however, in learning was never exclusively academic or scientific. He was a Catholic above all things and at all times. This is evidenced by the fact that the Holy See made him a Knight-Commander of the Papal Order of St. Gregory and also a Knight of Malta. He was always interested in Catholic projects, always ready to come to the defence of Catholic causes, always ready, competent and eager to give the Catholic point of view. The Catholic Encyclopedia had his services both as an associate editor and collaborator. The Commonwealth owes him a deep debt of gratitude, which it has already graciously acknowl-

edged, both for his service as a member of its Editorial Council, and as a contributing editor. America, also, voices its heartfelt appreciation of the large share he had in whatever success it has achieved in the defence and propagation of the faith and the general interests of the Church. The number of Catholic periodicals that will bear testimony to the valued assistance and loyal cooperation given by the Doctor, generously, constantly, without respect to their pride of place or lowliness, will be just short of legion. His association with the Fordham Medical School, of which he was the first Acting Dean, was typical of all that he did. He was concerned with the healing of his fellow men, but always a Catholic healing. He was anxious to take part in the formation of doctors, but he wished that they should be Catholic doctors, doctors after the heart of the Church, doctors safeguarded from the ethical confusion so much to be deprecated in some physicians today.

It is safe to say that few of the articles which he submitted to editors were rejected. What he wrote was actual, vital, concerned with the problems of the moment. His extremely active mind was intensely alive to the subjects that were vexing or holding the mind of the public, at any particular time; and his vast knowledge and general acquaintance with literary, scientific, historical and medical backgrounds enabled him to give immediate treatment to mat-

ters under current discussion that was facile, illuminating and satisfying. To Catholic editors in particular he was especially welcome, because he was so sound a philosopher, theologian and historian, and so deeply imbued with the Catholic spirit that his orthodoxy could be taken for granted.

As a stylist Dr. Walsh achieved considerable distinction. Certainly his style was his own. His writing was the very opposite of pedantic; there was never any parade of scholarship; he never labored for literary brilliance, and it would be difficult to find in all his voluminous writings a single passage that give the impression of a purple patch. If perfect writing is ordinary talking committed to writing, then Dr. Walsh was an accomplished stylist. His literary work, whether written or spoken, was, like himself, simple, without complexities, honest and unassuming. It must be admitted, however, that the advent of his articles did not give the editor unmixed consolation. Grammatical niceties and the fine art of punctuation, as such, never challenged his serious attention, and it cannot be said that he was a perfectionist. He studied his subject, digested it, selected the material, and then dictated rapidly, and dispatched his article at once, at times not even bothering to read over and correct the manuscript. Those to whose lot it fell to prepare his manuscript for the printer, did not always rejoice over the task; but they seldom failed

to appreciate the real worth and charm of the article, and they thought it well worth their while to wrestle with minor details. After all, something must be conceded to genius.

There was another quality that flowed from the character of Dr. Walsh to his written page, and that was his joyousness. He smiled on life and on the people in it. He could not be caustic, or pessimistic or unfair. His was a gracious attitude towards the world, and the kindness of his thoroughly cultured and Catholic soul found expression not only in his work, but also in his manners and even in the tone of his voice. Although he indulged in endless controversies, he was never a controversialist in the technical sense of the word. He seemed to be un-failingly conscious that there was another side to the question under discussion, an erroneous side perhaps, but another side for all that, and demanding courtesy of treatment. At times he could not be tolerant of the views of those with whom he disagreed, but even his intolerance was a gracious thing. His ever-present sense of humor kept him from being too utterly serious, and imparted to his work a lightness that was very attractive, and made up, most probably, much of his charm.

It was thought at times that he had abdicated his title of doctor. This was far from the case. He was always the healer, and he never lost sight of his vocation to cure the ills of humanity. He did

not, it is true, confine himself to sickness of the body, and it is equally true that with his advance in years he inclined more and more to the healing of souls, but even his most humanistic studies were directed to the ministry of health. There was nothing of the dilettante about him, everything he did fell into place in his general scheme of helpfulness. His early aspirations for the teaching career and the priesthood, his more mature and lifelong studies of formal medicine, his exhaustive investigation of the ebb and flow of man's happiness in the process of history, his interpretation of current events in the light of Catholic truth, his tireless exposition of the consequences and connotations of revealed principles, all had their

share in making him a physician in the broadest and best sense of the word.

Dr. Walsh was a fine gentleman, a loyal son and defender of the Church, a Catholic unashamed and unafraid of his faith, a learned and scholarly and tireless seeker of truth, a lover and benefactor of humanity, a highly prized friend and a delightful companion. He was a man who did much for Catholicism and for whom Catholicism did inexpressibly much. He was one of the most prominent and deserving of our Catholics in the United States. He died full of years, merits, accomplishments and achievements; but to many his death will seem to have come much too soon.

Important Notice

A meeting of the Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds will be held in Atlantic City while the American Medical Association is in session from June 8 to 12. The tentative date set for the meeting is Wednesday, June 10, probably at the Hotel Traymore, but complete details will be found in the daily Convention Bulletin of the A. M. A.

A large attendance is desired, as there will be an election of Federation officers.

We Need Your Help!

In these troubled days when changes of address are many, it is highly important that the Secretaries of the Guilds keep us informed of any changes of address that may occur among their membership. We have to pay double postage for all copies of LINACRE returned to us as not deliverable.