

AN APPRECIATION BY DR. A. W. S. SICHEL

In undertaking to write an appreciation of my lifelong friend, Dr. J. S. du Toit, I realize that I have set myself a difficult task. I scarcely know how to begin and what to say because there is so much that could be said, but what I intend to say is very personal.

It would be redundant for me to record factually the many positions which he held both within and without the profession in a life ripe with achievement, except that such record would be impressive. The wonder is that he could apply his mind to the multifarious affairs in which he was interested with such satisfying results.



Dr. J. S. du Toit
Cape Times

J.S. and I have been so intimately associated with each other in our professional careers and in our work for the Medical Association of South Africa over so long a period that the parting leaves me for the moment unable to give more than an outline of what the years have meant to us.

My first contact with him was in the spring term of the year 1907, when we found ourselves fellow medical students at the University of Edinburgh. For a while we lived together in 'digs', where an opportunity was afforded me to appreciate at

close grips his virtues and his weaknesses—qualities inherent in all human beings. This insight into his character was to prove invaluable to me in the years that ensued.

We graduated together in 1912, after which our ways parted for a while until on my return to South Africa in 1920 we found ourselves practising the same speciality in Cape Town. Of more significance, however, is the fact that in that same year we first became associated in our work for the Cape Western Branch of the Medical Association, out of which there ripened a friendship which remained unshaken to the last. As office-bearers we were members of the Branch Council, on which we have served continuously from 1921 to the present time.

Du Toit had been a member of the Federal Council prior to 1935, the year when I was first elected to that body, and since then we have served as members of the Council, and of its Executive, until a year ago, when he relinquished the office of Honorary Treasurer of the Association, which post he adorned for over 30 years. The Benevolent Fund of the Association was his special baby and it is due largely to his individual effort that it has gone from strength to strength, so that today we are able to give material financial assistance to our less fortunate colleagues and their dependents. It was du Toit's original idea that gave rise to the system of sending votive cards instead of flowers at funerals of

colleagues who had passed on. The opportunity now occurs for all who admired him and his work to carry out his idea and so augment the Benevolent Fund.

My mind goes back to the numerous occasions on which we travelled together to attend Association meetings, in the earlier days always by train, on occasion by car and in recent years exclusively by air. Away from the worries of practice J.S. became more boyish in spirit and entered into everything with zest and good humour. I still have ringing in my ears his characteristic exclamation 'Oh Lordie' when told something which occasioned surprise.

Attendance at Federal Council meetings in the 'good old days' was a pleasurable experience and even dissension among members or groups was friendly. In recent years the meetings are made of sterner stuff but the anticipation of acrimonious debates and possible unpleasantness did not deter du Toit from playing his part when duty called. Although his oratory may not have been impressive and if he lacked ability in the tactics of debate, nevertheless he succeeded in holding the attention of the meeting because he spoke from his heart and resisted the temptation of gibing at his opponents.

In his very person J. S. du Toit was the greatest binding force in our time, in that his long and loyal service to the Association undoubtedly has kept its ranks united when a rift so easily could have occurred. We who are left to carry on must always feel inspired by the wonderful example he set, and by the honesty of purpose he displayed in serving the interests of his fellow members.

Our close association as friends and colleagues remained unbroken from the day of graduation to the last days of his life. In our special sphere of practice, where we might be termed opponents, there was nothing but harmony and ethical imputations were unknown. For 17 years we were Joint Ophthalmic Specialists to the Railways and Harbours Sick Fund and for 12 years Joint Lecturers and Heads of our Department in the University of Cape Town. We were honoured by the award of the Association's Gold Medal at the same ceremony during the Congress in Johannesburg in 1952 and barely a year ago we were again honoured by presentations made by Federal Council members to us in Durban on the occasion of relinquishing our respective offices. It is my proud boast that throughout the long period of 50 years since first we met, when jealousy or little-mindedness so easily could have caused a quarrel, never once did an angry word pass between us. This to me is a great consolation in the loss of such a friend.

At the funeral service held in the Groote Kerk, Cape Town, it was said of him by one of the officiating ministers that 'he was a good man'. Not only was he a good man, he was a big man, big in heart and big in his achievements. He was a devoted husband, father and grandfather. Many of the things he did and said must be viewed in relation to his family environment, in that he put happiness in his home life before everything else. Our hearts go out in deep sympathy to his widow and all those who have been bereaved.

Du Toit was scrupulously careful in his person and in his mode of living. He was a non-smoker and an abstainer while taking precautions in many little ways to preserve good health, but despite all the care he exercised in order to keep fit it was beyond his power to counter the fatal cardiac blow when it fell so suddenly.

His long and devoted service, and his loyalty to his Association

will be an inspiration to those of us who are left to give guidance of the type for which he always strove, and will serve as a pattern to our younger colleagues who may aspire to play their part in the organized activities of our profession.

Recently the following passage which I quote happened to catch my eye and it seems to me an appropriate note on which to end:

'When the sun goes below the horizon, he is not set; the heavens glow for a full hour after this departure. And when a great and good man sets, the sky of this world is luminous long after he is out of sight. Such a man cannot die out of the world. When he goes he leaves behind much of himself. Being dead he speaks.'

'N WAARDERING DEUR DR. J. K. DE KOCK

Die onverwagte en skielike heengaan van dr. J. S. du Toit was vir my persoonlik 'n baie groot skok, maar wanneer ek daaroor nadink, het gebeur wat ek baiekeer voorspel en ook in die stilte verwag het: Hy het heengegaan soos hy dit sou verlang het—hard aan die werk, met toewyding, opoffering en entoesiasme, tot die dag voor sy dood.

As iemand wat 19 jaar in noue verband met hom saamgewerk het, wil ek graag meedeel hoe ek hom geken het. Ek het met hom as 'n pasiënt 37 jaar gelede kennis gemaak. Die indruk wat hy toe op my gelaat het was 'n netjies geklede, bekwame jong dokter wat sag en min gepraat het. As student aan die Universiteit Kaapstad het ek die vriendelike gasvryheid van dr. en mev. J. S. du Toit, aan hul woning in Seepunt, baie waardeur en op prys gestel.

Hierdie man het my hele mediese loopbaan en toekoms verander toe hy my beweeg het om die algemene praktyk vaarwel te sê, my as oogarts te bekwaam en by hom aan te sluit. Sy leiding, raad en hulp sal altoos 'n aangename nagedagtenis wees. Nie alleen het hy dit aan my gedoen nie, maar daar is ander wat desgeelyk kan getuig.

As senior oogarts van Kaapstad was hy 'n uitstaande persoon en bekend oor die hele land. Sy werk was van 'n baie hoë gehalte

en hy het 'n baie besige en groot praktyk gehad. Met sy geweldige gees, werkkrag en uithoudingsvermoë het hy homself nooit gespaar nie. Hoe hy dit alles jaar na jaar kon bybring en volhou, was vir my altoos 'n raaisel. Min mense sal hom dit kan nadoen. Die verskillende rade, komitees, direksies, ens. waarop hy gedien het, is voorbeelde van sy belange en aktiwiteite, buiten dié van sy groot praktyk. Daarby het hy nog in boerdery belanggestel en was hy die eenaar van twee plase.

Gedurende die 19 jaar wat ons saamgewerk het, het hy nooit een werklike vakansie gehad nie. Sy vakansies het bestaan uit die bywoning van vergaderings van die Federale Raad en van die mediese kongresse. So af en toe het hy 'n lang naweek afgeneem om te gaan jag of na sy plaas te gaan of die Skool vir Blindes in Worcester te besoek.

Na aan sy hart was die Mediese Vereniging van Suid-Afrika en sy troetelkind: die Liefdadigheidsfonds van die Vereniging. Sy 32 jaar getroue diens as Tesourier is hiervan bewys. Vir die Volkshospitaal, Kaapstad, het hy, as ere-Superintendent, 'n baie sagte plekkie gehad. Hy het 'n besonder goeie deursig van geldsake gehad en hy het ook die Groote Kerk, Kaapstad, as voorsitter van die finansiële komitee en ouderling gedien.

Vir liefdadigheid het hy 'n ope hand gehad en het hy altyd ruim bygedra. Die minderbevoorregtes het hy altyd tegemoetgekom en daar is baie wat hom hierom sal mis. Hy was sterk gekant teen verkwisting, soos die half-duim potlood op sy lessenaar, die saamgeperste stukkie seep op sy wasbak en die oopgekeurde koeverte, wat gebruik is vir ruwe aantekeninge, getuig het.

Dr. du Toit was 'n man met 'n sterk persoonlikheid, ondernemingsgees, deurstellingsvermoë en hy wou graag aan die spits van sake staan. Hierdie eienskappe het hom soms met van sy kollegas en ander, met wie hy in nou verband gestaan het, in meningsverskil gewikkel. Uit sy oogpunt beskou, was hy voortuig dat hy reg en opreg handel. Hy was 'n moeilike en gedugte teenstander; dog as vriend was hy heelhartig aan jou kant.

Ek persoonlik sal hom onthou as vriend en iemand wie aan my goed gedoen het.