

EDITORIAL : VAN DIE REDAKSIE

PROFESSOR FRANK FORMAN

In December 1963 Professor Frank Forman retired from the staff of the University of Cape Town Medical School after having served the University, first as lecturer and later as professor of clinical medicine, for 40 years. His retirement, however, was not complete, and he has continued his association with the Medical School by accepting part-time duties at Grootte Schuur Hospital.

Professor Forman has been associated with the University of Cape Town since the day of its inception on 5 April 1918. In fact, after having matriculated at Paarl, his home town, in 1915 (he was awarded the Gould Adams medals for achieving top marks in the Union of South Africa in mathematics and physics) he entered the South African College as a B.A. student to major in anatomy and physiology. He was unable to write the final B.A. examinations in 1918 owing to serious illness acquired while he voluntarily assisted with medical work in country districts during the influenza epidemic. Even at this stage it was obvious that he was endowed with the same highly developed sense of duty, love for clinical medicine and sympathy for his fellow men, which have remained his outstanding attributes.

Having gained the B.A. medical degree in February 1919, he left for Aberdeen University where he graduated in medicine in 1922, with distinction, and was awarded the clinical medal for his year. After his internship with Professor Ashley McIntosh he attended the course for the Primary Fellowship, but he had to miss the examination because of mumps, and he returned to South Africa at the beginning of 1924. He was awarded the M.D. of the University of Aberdeen in 1932 and in the same year obtained the M.R.C.P. In 1942 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians.

Since 1924 he has been on the staff of the Medical School of the University of Cape Town, first as clinical tutor in medicine and lecturer in bacteriology. Four years later he became assistant to Professor Falconer (also from Aberdeen), the first Professor of Medicine to be appointed to the University. On the retirement of Professor Falconer at the end of 1937 two Chairs were created in the Department of Medicine, and Dr. Forman was appointed to one of them—the Chair of Clinical Medicine. This Chair he occupied with distinction from 1938 to 1954 when he decided to resign from the professorship, but to the great joy of his students and colleagues, he continued his association with the Medical School as full-time senior

lecturer (he remained 'Professor', of course). At the end of 1963 he reached retiring age and, much to the sorrow of all concerned, was obliged to vacate his post.

All but the first two medical students of the University of Cape Town, who have graduated since that first memorable day on 19 December 1922 when the late Dr. Louis Mirvish and J. B. Solomon received their degrees, have passed through the hands of Professor Forman. The second batch of six graduates became housemen at the New Somerset Hospital where he was their tutor and mentor, and the rest were taught by him as undergraduate students, while many benefited from his teaching after graduation. All these students—more than 3,000 of them—could not have failed to learn from his example the devotion to duty, honesty, sincerity, sympathy, knowledge and skill which go to the making of a good doctor. Many of them have achieved academic and professorial status owing to his influence, and through them his reputation has spread afar and stands high throughout the world.



Professor Forman

There are numerous anecdotes which testify to the character of this man. Graduates of the 1920s will remember Frankie working in the hospital 'Punch and Judy' laboratory at the New Somerset Hospital until the small hours of the morning. This laboratory consisted of a trolley in the middle of Parsons Ward with an adjacent table supporting a microscope. The microscope together with the light and Frankie's head was shielded by a box with green curtains to avoid disturbing the patients. Others will remember how he assisted the interns with the administration of anaesthetics, blood transfusion and even tonsillectomies.

Graduates of the 1930s will remember his painstaking efforts in getting Professor Jolly's electrocardiograph to work at the top of the stairs at the New Somerset—after hours, when all was quiet and lifts were not in use. Some of them may recall the day he married Dr. Golda Selzer in September 1934. To save time and avoid fuss the two were quietly married at noon. A note was left for Professor Falconer which read something like this: 'Have just gone off to be married. Will be back at 2.00 p.m.' At 1.55 p.m. he was awaiting the arrival of the class for a tutorial. By this time he had already impressed on all and sundry his phenomenal memory—'Mr. B— who occupied the third bed on the left in King Edward Ward in 1923 suffered from . . . and complained of . . .'

Graduates of the 1940s will remember the active role he

played in establishing postgraduate seminars and his participation in lively medical discussions at an extremely high level. His finest years must have been in this decade of the three B's—Berk, Bull and Boedtz-Olsen—when he was able to sit back and watch the keen clashes between three of his outstanding protégés. For this has been his major contribution over the years—the stimulation and encouragement of innumerable students to reach for the sky.

The 1950s witnessed the retirement of Professor Forman from the Chair of Medicine. On that occasion his students, after referring to his selfless devotion to the teaching and practice of medicine, his colossal powers of clinical observation, his fantastic memory and encyclopaedic knowledge of all branches of medicine, his kindness and gentleness and his personal integrity and fearlessness, paid him the following tribute: 'It is almost unbelievable that all these qualities could be gathered together in a single human frame, but this is certainly so in the case of Frank Forman'. After he relinquished the Chair of Clinical Medicine the Frank Forman Foundation was formed by his colleagues and students in recognition of his devotion to medicine and with the object of promoting the continuance of his influence.

The advent of the 1960s found Frankie as busy as ever in his capacity as senior full-time physician on the staff of the hospital, now unanimously accepted as the 'super-consultant'. Students continued to benefit from his teaching while he still remembered 'Mr. B— who occupied the third bed on the left in the King Edward Ward in 1923 suffered from . . . and complained of . . .'

But all good things must come to an end and even Frankie could not outwit Anno Domini. In December 1963 Professor Forman relinquished his post as senior

physician on the Joint Medical Staff. Fortunately, however, he has not yet left our precincts. Although his post has now been filled, Frankie is still around in a part-time capacity much to the delight of all his colleagues who continue to benefit from his knowledge and wisdom.

On 22 January 1964 a highly successful function was held in the Medical Library of the University of Cape Town in honour of Professor Forman. At this function a bust of him was presented to the University by the Trustees of the Frank Forman Medical Foundation. This bust has been placed in one of the reading rooms which the University Council has named the 'Frank Forman Reading Room'. At the ceremony the Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Dr. J. P. Duminy, paid tribute to Professor Forman's illustrious achievements and pointed out that in naming part of its precincts after him the University was conferring upon him the only kind of 'honorary degree' it could confer on one of its own graduates.

Frankie Forman has become a legendary figure among students and graduates of the University of Cape Town Medical School. Much of the glory and renown which the school has achieved may be attributed to his personal example, his great integrity and his vitalizing influence. We have learned to admire him as a wonderful teacher and clinician and we have also learned to respect him for the man that he is. He has given his best towards the building up of a South African tradition of medicine and his name will always be indelibly linked with the development of medical education in South Africa. The good wishes of all his colleagues and his friends throughout South Africa will go out to him for further long and happy years.*

*The above Editorial article was written for the *Journal* by Prof. Jannie Louw, of Cape Town, and the other articles published in this issue of the *Journal* were all written by one-time students or colleagues of Professor Forman—Editor.

'N GROOT LEERMEESTER

Met die publikasie van hierdie fees-uitgawe van die *Tydskrif* wil ons hulde bring aan die werk en lewe en persoon van een van die heel grootste leermeesters in die medisyne wat ons land opgelewer het—professor Frank Forman. Oor 'n tydperk van veertig jaar was hy nie net baie nou verbonde aan die Geneeskundige Skool van die Universiteit van Kaapstad nie, maar deur sy wye belangstelling en ywer het hy direk of indirek sy stempel gelaat op nagenoeg elke geneesheer in ons land. Die besonderhede van sy loopbaan is aan almal bekend, en ons herhaal hul'e weer kortliks hierbo. In hierdie artikel wil ons egter net 'n kort karakterisering gee van die mens wat professor Forman is en van die soort indruk wat hy op almal maak met wie hy in aanraking kom.

Een van die mees uitstaande kenmerke van sy persoonlikheid was altyd en is nog steeds sy belangelose toewyding aan die kliniese medisyne. Dit kan inderdaad van hom gesê word dat hy in hierdie opsig nooit afgewyk het van sy vooropgestelde ideaal nie—om met passiewolte toewyding en met onkreukelbare integriteit altyd die saak waarvoor

hy lewe eerste te stel.

Ook was daar by hom deur al die jare heen 'n heelhartige aanvaarding van die roeping om studente op te lei op so 'n manier dat hulle nie net goeie akademiese geneesheer kan word nie, maar dat hulle in die eerste en laaste instansie met kennis en waardigheid die mediese beroep kan oefen ooreenkomstig die lig van hul gewete en met liefde. Benewens hierdie opvoedingstaak—wat hy altyd veel breër gesien het as 'n opleidingsplig—het professor Forman ook die essensie van self student wees en student bly, gedurig uitgeleef.

Die hoogste lof wat ons aan hom kan toeswaai is om te sê dat sy lewe vir almal van ons wat bevoorreg was om hom te ken, die verpersoonliking is van die geloof van die ideale geneesheer—wat die lewende altyd hoër stel as die dooie, die siel van die mens bokant sy liggaam en verstand, die wesenlike bokant die skyn, en wat steeds vervulling soek in die vereenselwiging van homself met 'n ideaal wat gerig is op die gedurige en nimmereindigende ontdekking van die waarheid.

PERSONAL TRIBUTE

It is a great pleasure to me to be able to write a brief introduction to the special issue of the *Journal* commemorating the magnificent services of Prof. F. Forman

over a period of 40 years to the medical school of his original Alma Mater. It seems hardly necessary to try to add anything to what was called 'the Frankie Forman

tradition' in a delightful ceremony for the naming of the 'Frank Forman Reading Room' at the Medical Library of the University of Cape Town and reported, with a happy picture of him, in the *South African Medical Journal* of 1 February 1964, page 98.

My contribution should perhaps be a personal tribute to a partnership of over 28 years which was both a privilege and a pleasure. When we were appointed in 1938 joint heads of the Department of Medicine, Professor Forman had been working in the medical school already as a member of staff for 12 or more years, and had been for a number of years the ubiquitous and never-failing understudy to the 'Oubaas'. Apart from his temporal advantage I could never have hoped to compete with the memorizing efficiency which gave him his unique experience of clinical cases and of the surrounding medical literature. I had therefore to regard my contribution as complementary

rather than competitive. Throughout the 28 years it was always illuminating to ask his opinion on any unusual facet of a clinical case or of the clinical literature. Although he retired from his Chair in 1953 his activities were hardly disturbed because he continued, as a full-time physician, to do the work which he really enjoyed and in which he excelled. In administrative matters affecting the growth and development of the Department I relied more and more on his wise judgments on principle and personality; advice which was seldom proffered but always gladly given on request. His retirement at the end of 1963 would have been a bereavement to many of us if it had not been softened by the continuation of his services in a part-time and consultative capacity with all their old freshness and wisdom.

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