

Obituary

O'DONEL BROWNE, Litt.D., M.B., M.A.O.
F.R.C.P.I., F.R.C.O.G.

W. R. writes: May I add to your obituary notice (August 23, p. 447) a tribute to the late Professor O'Donel Browne? He came up to Dublin from Campbell College and entered Trinity College on the same day with me. He was very young and exceptionally handsome. We walked down O'Connell Street and he pointed out the great hospital of which he later became the Master. He told me on that day in June, 1920, that the Mastership of the Rotunda was his greatest ambition. Writing to me in 1946, he spoke again of the coming election to the Mastership and of his hopes and fears. "The work will be very exacting," and, "I can assure you it is no bed of roses," he wrote. I know that he gave of his best in the days of his Mastership and there can be little doubt that he gave his life as well. O'Donel never forgot his old friends, and it was wonderful to meet him again when returning to the Irish shore. A great man and a brilliant doctor has passed on. I cannot speak of his quality as a teacher in his later years, but I can say that in his generation, first in Dublin as a demonstrator of anatomy and later as a clinical clerk in the Rotunda Hospital, he possessed the rare quality of the perfect teacher. He could express himself in simple language and few words. O'Donel Browne was a lover of all beautiful things and he took care to give heed to the history of the past. His old friends and former students will long remember him and mourn his loss.

Dr. J. G. CUTTS died suddenly in London on August 18 at the early age of 37 from acute anterior poliomyelitis after a brief illness lasting barely six days. Born on April 29, 1915, John Geoffrey Cutts was educated at Oakham School, Rutlandshire, where, in his last year, he was head boy. He spent his early life in Nottingham until he became a medical student at St. Mary's Hospital, London. He qualified M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. in 1940, and then held a series of house appointments, first at Park Prewett Hospital, Basingstoke, as anaesthetist and later as ear, nose, and throat house-surgeon, and then at Paddington Hospital as house-surgeon. In 1942 he returned to St. Mary's as resident anaesthetist, and in the following year he went to Harefield Hospital in Middlesex as house-surgeon to the chest unit. Dr. Cutts entered the Royal Navy in 1944, and after a period in H.M.S. *Arifex*, was appointed ear, nose, and throat specialist to H.M. Hospital Ship *Tjujilengka*, which was in service in the Far East and which helped to evacuate some of the first prisoners of war from Japan. On leaving the Service and after a post-war registrarship, he entered general practice at Hatch End, Middlesex, and was soon appointed to the staff of Northwood, Pinner, and District Hospital, and to it he gave much of his time. He was a most competent anaesthetist, and particularly skilled in ear, nose, and throat surgery.

M. G. S. and D. M. B. write: Geoffrey Cutts was an outstandingly good general practitioner. He kept himself well up to date, but at the same time he seemed to have acquired at an unusually early age the wisdom and humanity of a much older doctor. He managed to work a very long day, but at no time did he appear to be too busy to give help and wise counsel if they were needed. He was held in high esteem by all of us as a doctor and as a man. He loved the hospital, and as secretary to the medical committee and as a member of the house committee he did great work for it. A few months before he died he read a paper at a local clinical meeting on chest conditions in general practice, in which he showed the keen observation, the thoroughness, and the understanding with which he approached his patients. He had a most charming personality and a keen but kindly sense of humour. In this community

in the short time he was with us he had become a sane, wise, and imperturbable part of the pattern of our daily life, and the ways in which he will be grievously missed seem numberless. He was very musical and also an enthusiastic lover of rugby football and of cricket. He latterly played for Northwood, and did much refereeing of rugby football in the locality, as well as serving on the committee of the Pinner R.F.C. He leaves a widow and two children. To them, and to his parents, we extend our deepest sympathy.

With the death of Dr. A. E. LARKING at his home in Sussex on August 31 at the age of 90 the British Medical Association loses one of the few remaining members of the first Representative Body. Arthur Ernest Larking was born on August 18, 1862, and was educated at the University of Durham and at Guy's Hospital, where he was a prizeman. He qualified in 1883 by taking the M.R.C.S. and the L.S.A., and three years later he obtained the Durham M.B., proceeding M.D. in 1888. He took the D.P.H. of the University of Cambridge in 1898. The first Annual Representative Meeting of the British Medical Association was held at Swansea in 1903, when Dr. Larking was the representative for Ashford, Dover, and Folkestone. He represented the same constituency at the Annual Representative Meetings in 1904 (Oxford) and 1905 (Leicester), and he was a member of the Central Council of the B.M.A. in 1908-9. After qualification he became visiting medical assistant to the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Dispensary, and then he moved to Brighton, where he was honorary surgeon to the Brighton, Hove, and Preston Dispensary. Later he practised at Chesham, Buckinghamshire, where he became honorary medical officer to the cottage hospital and medical officer of health for the urban district council. Returning to the south coast of England, he was in practice at Folkestone for some years and became surgeon-captain to the 1st Volunteer Battalion of the East Kent Regiment. He then moved to Buckingham, where he held the appointments of medical officer and public vaccinator to the Buckingham Union and medical officer to the Post Office and to the old London and North-western Railway. During the first world war he worked for a time as resident medical officer in the No. 2 Anglo-Belgian Hospital in France. For some years he was secretary of the Bucks Panel Committee, and was also a justice of the peace for the borough of Buckingham. About 30 years ago he returned to the south coast, this time to Hastings, where he practised until 1931, when he retired and went to live at Beckley in Sussex.

Dr. C. R. TAYLOR, who died at Bournemouth on August 23 at the age of 64, was a highly respected and popular practitioner in Bridlington, Yorkshire, for 28 years. Cedric Rowland Taylor was born at Cresswell, Northumberland, on August 20, 1888, the son of the Reverend Robert Edward Taylor, who lost his life in a drowning accident when his son was only an infant. Cedric Taylor was educated at St. Edmund's School, Canterbury, where he won a Tancred studentship to Caius College, Cambridge. He graduated B.A. in the Natural Sciences Tripos in 1909 and then proceeded to St. Bartholomew's Hospital for his clinical training. After qualifying M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. in 1912 he went to Liverpool as a house-physician at the Royal Southern Hospital, and then as an assistant in a practice at Ealing. He took the degrees of M.B., B.Chir. in 1914, and proceeded M.A. and M.D. in 1921. On the outbreak of war in 1914 he entered the R.A.M.C. and saw much active service. After a spell in Egypt and in the Dardanelles campaign he was sent to Mesopotamia with No. 3 British General Hospital, and for his services there was awarded the O.B.E. He arrived at Bombay in March, 1919, en route for home, just in time to be caught up in the Afghan war, and he spent the next six months in the operations on the North-West Frontier, being mentioned in dispatches. He finally reached home and was demobilized in 1919. In 1920 he joined a practice in Bridlington, where he spent the rest of his active professional life. When the Home Guard was

formed in May, 1940, he joined up with enthusiasm and was medical officer to the Bridlington battalion, holding the rank of major.

Dr. C. J. Gordon Taylor writes: "C. R.," as he was universally known by his friends, was a practitioner of the best type. He was on the staff of the Lloyd Hospital, Bridlington, for 28 years, and was for many years an active member of the East Riding Panel Committee and, on its formation, of the East Riding Executive Council and the local medical committee, from which he resigned only about a year ago. Always full of energy and bubbling over with fun, he was exceedingly popular with his patients and with his colleagues. He was a keen sportsman, playing cricket, hockey, and tennis in his younger days and enjoying shooting and fishing when the time came to give up the more robust forms of activity. He continued to act as a hockey referee till he was well on in his fifties. When the change-over to the National Health Scheme became imminent in 1948 he decided to retire from practice. He went to live in the country, where he found that all his time and energies had to be given to the care of a lovely garden and a considerable assortment of livestock. His friends often teased him that he had given up one exacting job for one even more strenuous. Some two years ago he underwent a serious operation and, though apparently making a good recovery, found his agricultural activities were too much for him, so he gave them up, and early this year he went to Bourne-mouth, where he hoped at last to be able to live a quiet life. But it was not to be: death claimed him after only a few months. I was closely associated with "C. R." and in daily, and almost hourly, contact with him for a quarter of a century. Through all that time, with its many vicissitudes, not once was an angry or unreasonable word spoken and not once arose cause for bitterness or resentment. "He was my friend, faithful and just to me." If called upon to name "C. R.'s" most outstanding quality, of all the good ones he possessed I would, I think, mention before all his outstanding kindness and generosity. He was indeed the perfect host and enjoyed to the full the stimulating company of the young of both sexes. Dr. Taylor married in 1915 Frances Muriel, daughter of Mr. Frank Peto. To her and their three daughters we offer our profound sympathy.

The members of the Ashton-under-Lyne Division of the British Medical Association heard with regret and with a sense of personal loss of the sudden death while on holiday of Dr. W. K. SPENCER, at the early age of 41 years. In his youth William Kenneth Spencer had suffered from an illness which left him with impaired health. In spite of this he led a very active life. After graduating M.B., Ch.B. from the University of Manchester in 1934 he held a number of house appointments at Oldham Royal Infirmary and he then succeeded to an old-established family practice in Ashton. By his diligence, tact, and kindness he increased the respect and reputation with which the family name had long been held in the town. His death was acutely felt by large numbers of Ashton residents, and the public funeral service was held in a church packed to capacity. For many years Dr. Spencer was treasurer of the Ashton-under-Lyne Division of the British Medical Association, and was a keen and regular attendee at the meetings of the Division. The deepest sympathy of all his friends is extended to his widow. —D. M.

The Services

The *London Gazette* has announced the appointment of Lieutenant-Colonel B. L. P. Brosseau, M.C., R.C.A.M.C., as O.B.E. (Military Division) in recognition of gallant and distinguished services in Korea.

The *London Gazette* has announced the award of the R.N.V.R. decoration to the following officers: Surgeon Commanders A. D. Petro and R. W. Carslaw, R.N.V.R., R. F. Matters, R.A.N.V.R., and J. E. Hughes, R.A.N.R.; Surgeon Lieutenant-Commanders S. A. Swanson and I. Martin-Scott, R.N.V.R.

Medico-Legal

STRAFFEN

[FROM OUR MEDICO-LEGAL CORRESPONDENT]

John Thomas Straffen was born on February 27, 1930. On November 30, 1939, he was put on probation for two years at Bath for stealing a purse from a little girl. In June, 1940, after breaking his probation, he was certified under the Education Act, 1921, as a mental defective. He remained in institutions for mental defectives until March 31, 1946, when he was discharged because he had reached the age of 16. He then got a job as an errand boy.

On October 10, 1947, he was tried at Bath Quarter Sessions, and 14 larcenies and two housebreakings all committed during that year were taken into consideration. Two further incidents were disclosed at the trial. On September 12, 1947, in order to spite a girl friend with whom he was displeased, he had wrung the necks of five chickens belonging to her parents. On September 27, 1947, he had assaulted a 13-year-old girl on an allotment, put his hand over her mouth, and said: "What would you do if I killed you? I've done it before." The girl escaped injury.

Arising out of this trial he was certified to be a mental defective, and was removed to the appropriate institution. He twice escaped, and offered violence to the police when they caught him. In April, 1951, he was let out on licence to live with his parents, and got a job in a market garden in Bath.

Murders at Bath

On July 15, 1951, Brenda Goddard, aged 6, was murdered by manual strangulation near Bath. Straffen was seen by the police in the course of their inquiries into this murder on August 3. On August 8, 1951, another little girl, Cicely Batstone, aged 9, was murdered in Bath by manual strangulation.

Next day Straffen was again seen by the police and charged with the murder. From what he told the police and the doctors while he was on remand it appears that he strangled both children with the motive of spiting the police. He was committed for trial to Taunton Assizes.

Where a person committed for trial appears to the prison medical authorities to be insane and they so report, the proper course is for a jury to be empanelled to try the question whether he is sane or not. If he is found insane, and therefore unfit to plead to the indictment, that finding is recorded, and he is ordered to be detained during the Queen's pleasure. The reason is that it is not right to try the criminal responsibility of someone who is so apparently out of his mind that he will not appreciate what the trial is about. When this procedure is followed it is for the prosecution to prove the prisoner's sanity. He is not required to prove, as he is when the defence of insanity is raised at the trial, that he is not criminally responsible for his act because he comes within the M'Naghten Rules and so lacks the necessary intent. In practice the evidence of the prison doctors alone is called, and the verdict and detention during the Queen's pleasure follow as a matter of course.

Sent to Broadmoor

It is not surprising in view of his history that this was the procedure followed when Straffen appeared at the Assizes on October 17, 1951. The only evidence called was that of Dr. Park, the medical officer of Bristol Prison, where Straffen had been detained on remand. In his direction to the jury empanelled to try whether Straffen was fit to plead Mr. Justice Oliver told them that to try him would be like