

## G. W. T. H. Fleming

As if to mark further the closing of an era in its history, the *Journal* has to record with deep regret the passing on June 19th, 1962, at the age of 67, of Dr. G. W. T. H. Fleming, its Editor-in-Chief for many years.

To summarize his career briefly: he qualified in 1920, and, taking up the study of psychiatry two or three years later, held appointments at Claybury Hospital, at the Sunderland Mental Hospital, (now Cherry Knowle) and at Herrison Hospital, Dorchester. It was during this time, in 1930, that he was awarded the R.M.P.A.'s Gaskell Gold Medal and Prize, the examiners taking the unusual course of reporting a special distinction in his case. In the following year he was appointed Medical Superintendent of the Hereford Mental Hospital at Burghill, and in 1937 he was made Physician-Superintendent of Barnwood House at Gloucester—a post which had been held in the past by such well-known figures as Sir Frederick Needham and Dr. J. Greig Soutar. The superintendency of what were then the Registered Hospitals had for many years carried a special prestige and these posts were much sought after, for their independence and financial freedom afforded far better opportunities for initiative in therapy and research than were to be had in most County mental hospitals.

Fleming was quick to seize his opportunities, and within a very short time had organized in his hospital one of the foremost psychiatric research departments in the country. He was convinced of the paramount importance to our specialty of the basic sciences, especially of physiology in its widest sense, and he attracted to his laboratories such outstanding workers as Grey Walter and Ross Ashby. There was a good deal of collaboration with the Burden Neuro-

logical Institute in Bristol, and in his later years Fleming was Chairman of its governing body. He was equally prompt in therapeutic initiative, and Barnwood House disputes with Warlingham Park the honour of having performed the first E.C.T. treatment and the first leucotomy in Britain.

His scientific writings included communications on these treatments, and articles on haematological and pathological subjects, on mental tests, and on visual hallucinations, with special reference to superstition and witchcraft—the latter being one of the para-psychiatric studies in which he was especially interested.

Fleming's connection with the *Journal* dates back to 1926, when his name first appears as signatory to a number of reviews and abstracts. Later he took over the organization of the epitome section, and after the death of J. R. Lord in 1931 he became one of the four Editors, along with McRae, Hamblin Smith and Walk. In 1938 a Committee of the R.M.P.A. decided that there should be an Editor-in-Chief and two Co-Editors, and Fleming was appointed to the senior position. He devoted himself to the task of enhancing the prestige of the *Journal* and of using it as an instrument to raise the standard of scientific psychiatry in this country. Although he was assisted by a Journal Committee and an Advisory Editorial Board he took a pride in personal responsibility for its contents; and comparing the volume and quality of the articles appearing in 1960 with those of 1930, and allowing for the changed circumstances of psychiatric work, there can be no doubt of his very great success.

During his Editorship, Fleming projected a series of volumes, under the title of 'Recent Progress in Psychiatry', to be published at

approximately five-yearly intervals. The first appeared in 1944 and contained contributions from many of the foremost authorities on their respective subjects. Two further volumes were published in later years.

His outstanding services to the R.M.P.A. were recognized by his election, first to the Chairmanship of the South-Western Division (1942-44), and ten years later to the Presidency. The Annual Meeting held at Barnwood House in 1953 reflected his major psychiatric interests, the papers being mainly concerned with neurophysiology and with the assessment of physical methods of treatment; but for his Presidential Address Fleming went, as he put it, "with a measure of relief and a cheerful heart" to one of his hobbies—the study of botany and the collection of old herbals—and spoke on the subject of "The Insane Root"—the mandrake or mandragora that "takes the reason prisoner"—one of

the earliest known psychotomimetics. He was in fact a keen bibliophile and naturalist, a Fellow of the Linnean Society and member of other cognate societies. Mountaineering was another of his recreations and one which he maintained almost to the end of his life.

Ill-health compelled Fleming to lay down the heavy burden of being Editor-in-Chief early in 1961, and the R.M.P.A. showed its wholehearted appreciation of his work by electing him an Honorary Member. He remained a Co-Editor and a member of the Council until his death.

The present Editors—one of whom had worked with him for over thirty years—wish once more to express the Association's gratitude to a man who did so much on its behalf and who has an assured place in the history of British psychiatry.