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PROFESSEUR DOCTEUR JULIUS CITRON
MEDECIN EN CHEF DE L'HOPITAL ISRAELITE
DU CAIRE
(1879—1952)

Memorial Service for Professor Julius Citron

A moving tribute by Professor H. Picard

The administration and medical staff of the Israeli Hospital in Cairo invited friends of the deceased Professor Julius Citron to attend a memorial service held Sunday before the General Assembly.

A large crowd gathered together for the very moving ceremony. Among those present: Professors Soliman Azmi Pacha, Mohamed Kamel Sami Pacha, Naguib Bey Maccar, Bitchai, Shafik Ghali, Zoheir Khayat, Doctors Max Meyerhof, A. Boccara, E. Schlesinger, Guido Riso-Lévy, T. Ballog, Zamter, Bellin, and I. Menaché, among others.

After Dr. Picard's address, two minutes of silence were observed by those present. M. Clément Harari, on behalf of the hospital administration, and Dr. Molco, representing the medical staff, also spoke in memory of Professor Citron.

Here is the complete text of the eulogy given by Dr. Picard, both longtime friend and colleague of the late Dr. Citron.

Eulogy Address by Dr. Hugo Picard

"Your excellency, Mr. President, ladies and gentleman, today, in commemorating the death of our deceased Professor Citron, I speak to you on behalf of the medical staff and personnel of our hospital, as well as on behalf of the Royal Society of Medicine of Egypt, of which he was a member. These words I shall pronounce with a profound sadness.

My thoughts go out first to his three children who, although far from us and scattered among three continents-- a tragic sign of the times --are in our thoughts as we mourn together, with great grief and broken hearts.

I then think of the anonymous multitude of those who were treated and cured by Dr. Citron and of those to whom he dedicated his life. I also recall the numerous students he taught and who became doctors of great integrity and conscience and who are now spread throughout the world. I have met several of them and they remember their mentor with the utmost respect and veneration.

My thoughts go out, finally and most particularly, to all his friends who, with us, have not ceased to mourn his passing.

It has been barely three months since Professor Citron left us forever. Yet his longtime presence within our hospital walls remains such a vivid memory for us that we can hardly believe that he will never return.

Allow me to evoke those aspects of his life which should not be forgotten by us.

Professor Citron was the only son of a wealthy, religious family of Berlin. He always spoke of his parents with great tenderness and respect.

His first studies were in Berlin and then, his horizon broadened by his travels, he attended the universities of Munich, Freiburg, and finally Berlin, where he passed his medical exam. He recalled his years as a student in southern Germany with great warmth and happiness. It was to the south that he felt attracted and, once his medical studies were finished, he worked there as an assistant in the clinics of the University of Geneva, in Italy. It was there, no doubt, that he had his first taste of Mediterranean culture and history, both of which captivated him for the rest of his life.

His later travels to Istanbul, Asia Minor, and Palestine brought him to Cairo for the first time in 1906. Upon return from these trips which had so enriched his life, he dedicated himself resolutely and with great confidence to a scientific career. It was during this period, under the influence of Louis Pasteur and Louis Ehrlich, that bacteriology and serology constituted the foundation of all medical research. That is why he decided to enter the Robert Koch Institute of Berlin as assistant to August V. Wassermann.

The result of several years of research in close collaboration with Professor Wassermann led to the discovery of the famous "Wassermann Reaction." Although associated with the discovery, Professor Citron remained modestly in the shadows, leaving the glory of the discovery to his mentor.

His modesty and self-effacing manner were soon to find their reward, as he was shortly afterward named Chief of the Scientific Laboratory at La Charité and Clinical Assistant of Professor Kraus. Then followed his appointment as Professor Emeritus at the University of Berlin.

Then came the war of 1914-1918, during which he was a doctor for the armies. Once the war was over, he started a family. Three children were born to him and were all his pride and happiness.

We met for the first time in 1919 at my brother's home and from that time on remained close both personally and professionally, as we were both associated with La Charité in Berlin.

In 1923 Professor Citron asked me for the first time to collaborate with him. The subject of our research was local immunity. In 1925 we shared our findings with the Medical Society of Berlin.

I shall never forget that meeting where, after much heated debate, Dr. Citron's findings finally triumphed. No doubt his success was due to the merit of his research and the value of their result, but it was also due to the noble qualities he showed that day and that he would always demonstrate in discussion.

In 1930 Dr. Citron was named Pathologist to the clinic that I was directing. Our collaboration and friendship deepened.

It was also during this time that Dr. Citron had the honor to be named Professor of Internal medicine for dental students.

Then came 1933: the political catastrophe in Germany. My wife and I shall always remember Dr. Citron's last evening spent at our home before leaving Germany. It was to be his last night ever in that country. We lived the tragedy and cruelty of that time so intensely and often remembered that evening spent with Dr. Citron because it marked the end of an era for us.

Fortunately, our paths were to cross again. When the position of pathologist became open at our hospital in Cairo I thought immediately of Dr. Citron and encouraged him to accept the offer. He hesitated a long time; he was then living in Palestine, surrounded by his children and almost retired.

It was especially thanks to the influence of our President that we were able to convince him to accept the position and he quickly filled a gap. He also found himself reunited with several of his former students from Berlin as well as others he had helped prepare for their doctorate, one of whom now holds the highest position in the hospital. Dr. Citron's strong personality, his leadership qualities and level-headedness, his experience and wisdom, all made him an exemplary doctor in our hospital as well as a respected mentor for his assistants. Within very little time he earned the esteem of the medical staff and established himself securely as a medical consultant. It took only a few years for him to gain the confidence and respect of both doctors and patients from all segments of the population. One could truly say that he was inspired by the divine spark.

It was at the height of his valuable work that, while vacationing in Cyprus, he told me about the first symptoms of an illness which was benign in appearance, but which he immediately suspected was terminal. It wasn't until I saw him in Switzerland that I was able to confirm, with great sadness, his diagnosis. Thus began the tragic end of his life, an end which he accepted selflessly and with the greatest nobility of soul.

Although only for a short time, we succeeded in hiding from this intelligent and experienced doctor the extent of seriousness of his case. (It was, for our part, a most difficult mission for us to accomplish both as colleagues and friends! How we would have liked to fool ourselves in the face of this hopeless situation!)

All we could do was make ourselves available at his side and stay with him until the very end, gripped by the inexplicable nature of Death.

To speak of the last stage of his life I can find words no more consoling than those of Winston Churchill--for whom he had the greatest admiration--upon the death of the King of England: "In the last months the King walked with Death as a companion. In the end, Death came to him like a friend."

With one last sad look at the life of this eminent man, I can say, to sum up the exceptional nature of his personality, that he was as much a great mind as a great human being.

I shall always remember his last day. I found him sitting on the edge of his bed, a scientific volume in his hands. It was clear that death was approaching. I asked him what he was reading and he answered: "I'm looking for the solution to a problem!..."

The words which Goethe had Heaven speak to the dying Faust, also must have been spoken by the angels to our dying friend: "Wer immer strebend sich bemueht, Den koennen wir erloesen." (He who has always strived the hardest and who has found himself in suffering, we shall deliver him.)

And now I ask you to stand with me and to observe two minutes of silence so that we may remember and pray for Dr. Citron."

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