

IN MEMORIAM

JAMES W. DUNCAN
1878-1952

JAMES W. DUNCAN of Montreal died on Oct. 24, 1952. His medical career was extraordinary, extending over a fifty-two-year period. During this time he contributed considerably to the progress of the specialty of obstetrics and gynecology.

James Duncan graduated in medicine from McGill University in 1901. Several years of general practice and special postgraduate studies fitted him admirably for the specialty of obstetrics. He was appointed to the Montreal Maternity Hospital staff in 1907 and a short period afterward he received an appointment as demonstrator in obstetrics at McGill University. These long years of practice afforded him a vast clinical experience. This background in combination with a patient disposition and a natural talent for imparting knowledge established him as an outstanding teacher in the medical school. Many hundreds of undergraduate and postgraduate students profited by his teaching.

Of particular note is the fact that Dr. Duncan organized the first prenatal clinics throughout Montreal; these six stations were supervised by the Montreal Maternity Hospital. In addition, problems of the indigent patients and those concerning the unmarried mothers necessitated the formation of a social service department. Under his direction with two volunteer workers this was inaugurated in 1909. Two years later a full-time Social Service Department was created. This was a pioneer venture in social work.

Dr. Duncan became interested in various activities, too many to enumerate at this time. However, one activity had a direct bearing on McGill University and the Montreal hospital situation. For several years he had been elected president of the Medical Arts Building and Medical Arts Hospital. In a true spirit of cooperation he amalgamated the services of the Medical Arts Hospital with those of the Montreal Maternity and Royal Victoria Hospitals. This facilitated the formation of a maternity centre—the Royal Victoria Montreal Maternity Hospital which opened its doors in 1927.

At this time Dr. Duncan was clinical professor at McGill University. He served in this capacity until 1942 when he was retired from the active staff. Nevertheless, he continued teaching in a voluntary capacity until the younger members of the staff returned from overseas five years later.

His interests were not confined within the borders of Canada but rather had an international scope, extending to the United States and to Great Britain. In these countries personal friends were numerous and in several instances theirs were regarded as his most cherished friendships. In addition to being a member

of many Canadian societies, he was a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Canada, a Fellow of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Great Britain; Fellow of the American College of Surgeons; Fellow of the American Gynecological Society, and member of the American Gynecological Travel Club.

Undoubtedly the greatest disappointment suffered during a long life of service was in the untimely death of his son Bob. This son had chosen to follow the father's footsteps, graduating from McGill Medical School in 1939. Acting from a keen sense of patriotism he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force as soon as it was possible. In October, 1943, while completing special experiments during active flying he was killed in a plane crash.

Though this loss was irreparable, Dr. Duncan continued some teaching and a very active practice to the very time of his death. His philosophy included the theme that all his students and doctors would be his successors in continuing work which he had commenced. Our friend will rest in peace knowing full well that scientific knowledge imparted to hundreds of students, now scattered throughout the world, will be assimilated and employed to alleviate the suffering of mankind.

N. W. Philpott