Obituary

JOHN FARQUHAR FULTON
1899–1960
When Professor John Farquhar Fulton died on May 29, 1960, he left a heritage of teachers, a school of neurophysiology, and a host of friends. The Yale Medical Historical Library now stands as an enduring monument to him and to an outstanding friendship with two other great bibliophiles, Arnold C. Klebs and Harvey Cushing. Professor Fulton was also a great humanist whose moving spirit will be ever with us, to be remembered for his positive attitude toward life and toward those about him that made him so beloved of all.

Born in St. Paul, Minnesota, on November 1, 1899, the son of a physician, who helped to found the University of Minnesota and later its Medical School and of the same family as Robert Fulton, pioneer of the steamboat, he seemed destined to excel. He was graduated from St. Paul High School at the age of 16 and enrolled in the University of Minnesota, later transferring as an Army veteran to Harvard from which he was graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Science magna cum laude in 1921. Early promise was shown in the publication of his first scientific paper in *Acta Zoologica* (1920) while he was still an undergraduate, and in the appearance of another five scientific papers the following year including the first on his studies of neuromuscular transmission. He was chosen as a Rhodes scholar and was admitted to Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1921. Early during his stay in England he went to Cambridge for a time to help Sir Arthur Shipley in the preparation of his classic of elementary biology, entitled *Life*, which Sir Arthur later dedicated to him.

The year 1923 was a happy and memorable one. He married Lucia Pickering Wheatland, of Salem, Massachusetts, his constant companion and source of inspiration throughout his life, and Oxford granted him the degree of B.A. with first class honors in physiology, appointed him Christopher Welch Scholar, and made him University Demonstrator in Physiology, with the privilege of working in Sherrington’s laboratory. His energy seemed boundless, and within the next two years he had increased the number of his scientific publications to 27, including studies of neuromuscular transmission which were to culminate in a monograph of 644 pages, entitled *Muscular Contraction and the Reflex Control of Movement*, published in 1926.

He received his D.Phil. from Oxford in 1925 and returned to Harvard where he was awarded his M.D. magna cum laude in 1927.

The year 1928 was spent with Harvey Cushing, and this association resulted in a life-long friendship which began at Harvard and ended at Yale with the establishment of one of the greatest collections on the history of medicine in the world. Already recognized as a brilliant young physiologist he showed himself to be an equally brilliant clinician with a remarkable capacity to see the implication of clinical problems and to work imaginatively with clinical material. This wedding of clinical neurosurgery with experimental physiology later gave birth to the *Physiology of the Nervous System*, in the preface of which Dr. Fulton underscored this union between laboratory and clinic when he wrote, “The present monograph is essentially an exposition of the experimental physiology of the nervous system in which material has been assembled that will aid those whose ultimate objective is the study of clinical medicine.” In that year, as associate in neurological surgery, he managed to write five clinical papers as well as four in neurophysiology. His clinical energy and ingenuity were demonstrated in his paper entitled *Observations Upon the Vascularity of the Human Occipital Lobe During Visual Activity* (1928), which concerned a patient who had an angiomata of the occipital lobe. Dr. Fulton’s observations were made simply by listening over the skull with a stethoscope during visual activity. The clinical record copiously annotated may be seen by all those interested at the Cushing Tumor Registry at Yale.