OSCAR BRENNER

Oscar Brenner died in Birmingham on June 19, 1965 at the age of 63. A coronary thrombosis brought swift and merciful release from the relentless grip of a disease which progressively restricted his walking and fettered his speech. Undaunted by increasing disability, he continued to work until

a few days before his death, seeing patients, discussing research, and examining in the final M.B.

He rarely missed a meeting of the Cardiac Society. In 1958 he was elected to the Council and in 1962 the Society met under his Chairmanship. This honour pleased him and delighted his friends,

but he was too humble and unassuming to admit how much the Birmingham meeting owed to his guidance and inspiration. Many members of the Society visited his home and experienced the warmth of his hospitality. He and his wife, Dorothy, had been students together and their home was a source of happiness and contentment where Brenner found relaxation from the demands of an exceptionally busy practice.

As an intellectual diversion he studied mediæval history and he found an artistic outlet in cultivating the dahlias which filled his garden with colour in late summer. He was a keen fisherman with a special interest in rainbow trout. Taking up the sport relatively late in life he set about the task of learning to cast a dry fly with characteristic diligence.

Brenner worked hard all his life. After a brilliant career at Aston Grammar School he entered the University of Birmingham with a scholarship and, in the same year, passed the primary F.R.C.S. examination with distinction. He qualified M.B. at the age of 21, winning gold medals in medicine and in surgery and a prize in neurology. Two years later, in 1925, he obtained the M.R.C.P. and was awarded his M.D. for a thesis on "Puerperal sepsis as a cause of albuminuria and nephritis". In 1937 he was elected F.R.C.P.

In early childhood he and his family left the Austrian village where he was born and moved to England. They settled in Birmingham, and Brenner remained in the city of his adoption throughout his life except for a year in America when he was a Rockefeller Fellow in 1931. He held resident posts at the Midland Nerve Hospital and at the Queen's Hospital, where Dr. J. G. Emanuel was taking a particular interest in cardiology. In 1926 he was appointed Pathologist to the hospital and a year later Physician to Out-patients. Later, when the Queen's Hospital closed, he moved first to the General Hospital and then to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Brenner's research in Boston was a revelation of patience and thoroughness. With meticulous atten-

tion to detail he studied the microscopical anatomy and pathology of the pulmonary blood vessels, recording his findings in five classical papers published in 1935 in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*. Quite recently, at a meeting in London, when the Thoracic and Cardiac Societies were engaged in a joint study of pulmonary vascular disease, speaker after speaker paid tribute to the fundamental importance and accuracy of this work. Out of this stay at Massachusetts General Hospital came a deeply valued and lasting friendship with Dr. Paul White.

An insatiable desire to discover more about the function of the heart, kidneys, and lungs in health and in disease kept Brenner busy with research until the very end. All his papers were concerned directly or indirectly with the circulation. He published nothing trivial but recorded important original observations on the adrenal glands, on thyroid function, and on electrolyte disturbances. Most of his life and energy were devoted to his patients and he was at his happiest when in his cardiac clinic discussing clinical problems with registrars and housemen. His capacity to observe accurately and his clear and logical mind made him an excellent and popular teacher. As a consultant his services were in great demand all over the Midlands and he had been President of the West Midlands Physicians Association.

Brenner looked serious and to those who did not know him well he might have seemed austere and difficult to approach. In fact he was kind and generous and was blessed with a quiet sense of humour, but he was very shy. The growth of Nazism and Fascism distressed him beyond measure, not only because of their brutality—32 members of his family perished at Auschwitz—but also because of his passionate belief in human freedom and happiness. He lived in the hope that through peaceful co-operation Man would achieve freedom to advance in knowledge, prosperity, and contentment. It was a privilege to know him.

CLIFFORD PARSONS