IN MEMORIAM

LUDWIG HEILMEYER

FOR ALL OF US—his friends, colleagues, associates and students—it is still hard to accept that Professor Ludwig Heilmeyer will not be among us to preside over the opening ceremony of the International Congress of Hematology on August 1, 1970 in Munich. He died unexpectedly on September 6, 1969, while enjoying apparently good health and towards the end of a relaxing vacation in Austria and Italy. His death has deprived his wife, his family and with them, all of us, of a personality full of humor, optimism and intellectual courage. His art of managing difficult situations with ease but with firmness, and his enormous spectrum of knowledge in so many fields of medical science,
particularly in hematology as well as in the liberal arts, philosophy and literature constituted a truly irreplaceable combination of human traits.

The late President of the International Society of Hematology was born on March 6, 1899 in Munich. He received his degree as a Doctor of Medicine in 1925 in Munich, became successively Assistant, and Associate Professor in Jena, and finally full Professor in 1945, in Düsseldorf. In 1946 he accepted the chair of Internal Medicine at the University of Freiburg. During the more than 20 years that he directed the medical department, he created out of a destroyed hospital a most modern university department of internal medicine which became one of the focal points for medicine and hematology not only within Germany, but also far beyond its borders.

The attributes which brought to Ludwig Heilmeyer recognition from patients as well as colleagues as one of the most distinguished physicians of our time were a sound grasp of the natural sciences combined with an unusual gift of imagination, which allowed him to extract the essential points of a variety of arguments and to synthesize them into a new thesis which could form the starting point for fresh adventures in science. One of his first and lasting contributions to medicine was the introduction of quantitative methods for the assessment of biological phenomena in human beings. When he started his scientific career in the late twenties, it required a scientifically oriented and trained mind, for instance, to relate a quantitative measurement of the color of urine to kinetic aspects of hemoglobin metabolism. If it is a routine today to illustrate serum iron levels and to relate them to certain disorders of red cell production, one must not forget that Ludwig Heilmeyer was among the first to introduce and develop this type of approach to medical science. It was out of such continuing scientific interest that he was able to stimulate and motivate his many associates throughout the years to undertake medical research in so many different areas. Ludwig Heilmeyer’s department will remain one of the few in which a widely acclaimed complete textbook of Internal Medicine has been written under his guidance by many competent associates on the basis of active research experience in the various fields.

It appears to be a natural consequence that a physician and scientist of the standing of Ludwig Heilmeyer, honored with doctoral degrees by the Universities of Santiago de Chile, Athens, Leuven, Vienna and Frankfurt, and with honorary memberships in many scientific academies and societies, should be called upon to serve as an advisor to the governmental organizations of his own country. Thus, in 1963 he was appointed as the chairman of the founding committees of the Medical School in Lübeck and in 1964 of the University of Ulm. His plan for the new University of Ulm as a school to integrate the natural sciences and medicine in research and teaching received wide recognition in Germany, Europe and abroad, and serves in several aspects as a model to meet requirements of medical teaching, research and practice for decades to come. In 1967 he became the Founding-President of the new school at Ulm, and in 1969 his seventieth birthday was celebrated among his many friends at the International Institute of Scientific Cooperation, Schloss Reisensburg, near Ulm. This oldest castle in this southern German region was acquired through Ludwig Heilmeyer’s initiative and will serve now as a center of intel-
lectual stimulation and exchange to scientists from many disciplines and regions of the world. The highlight of his “second” career, however, was the laying of the cornerstone for the new university buildings in Ulm, this “Universität unter einem Dach.” It is a great tragedy that he was not permitted to experience the completion of this gigantic task, that is the creation of a new university for medicine and sciences.

Ludwig Heilmeyer will be remembered by all of us as one of the few physicians of our time in whom a clear scientific mind was combined with a warm humanity so that whoever met him—his patients, his friends, his associates or students—was infected by his enthusiasm and left stimulated and encouraged to give his best.

THEODOR M. FLIEDNER
In Memoriam: Ludwig Heilmeyer

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