

Bernard Emms Read

May 17, 1887—June 13, 1949

His many friends in the world of science will be grieved to learn of the passing of Dr. Bernard E. Read in Shanghai several months ago. Almost to the last this true scholar attended to the business of conducting the affairs of the Lester Institute of Medical Research whose Director he had been since 1946. Severe illness could as little prevent him from doing his duty as could the Japanese occupants of Shanghai during the war.

Born in Brighton, England, Bernard Read had his fundamental training in pharmacology in London and received the degrees of M.P.S. and Ph.C. in 1908 and 1909 from the London College of Pharmacy. He then went to China to be Lecturer in Chemistry and Pharmacy at the old Peking Union Medical College. In 1918, on reorganization of that institution by the Rockefeller Foundation, he was sent for further training to the United States, where he attended Johns Hopkins, Chicago, Harvard, and Yale Universities, receiving his M.Sc. in biochemistry in 1918. The following years were devoted to teaching of biochemistry and pharmacology at P.U.M.C., until in 1923 he once more took two years at Yale, returning with his Ph.D. in 1925 to Peking to become Professor of Pharmacology.

The following seven years were devoted mostly to researches on Chinese drugs, results of which were published in the *Bulletin of the Peking Society of Natural History*, and in separate volumes also published by the same learned society. In 1932 he finally accepted a call by the Lester Institute in Shanghai to head its division of physiological sciences, a position he held until after Pearl Harbor.

As pointed out before, Dr. Read thought it his duty to remain in China though shortly before the outbreak of war American and British citizens were given an opportunity to leave the endangered city. Even when exchanges of civilian prisoners were arranged during the war, Dr. Read did not avail himself of this opportunity to rejoin his wife and son who had left for America, but stayed on, finally to be interned by the Japanese. In camp he ceaselessly endeavored to improve the lot of the aged and ill among his comrades, and his special knowledge of nutrition undoubtedly helped to keep many of the prisoners alive under these most trying conditions.

When Japan collapsed, Dr. Read was at last free to leave China, but he took only a short furlough to bring his family back, and then assumed directorship of the Lester Institute on the death of his colleague Dr. Earle. For two more years he worked hard to rehabilitate the institute and succeeded therein under the very difficult postwar circumstances in China. Research work was once more going on, equipment and library were put in working order, and he looked forward to a further number of years devoted to constructive work. Fate, however, willed otherwise; an insidious illness forced him to fly to England to undergo a drastic

operation. Once more he returned to his post, only to be felled within a few months.

Dr. Read's life work has been his research on Chinese drugs, medicinal plants, and materia medica, based on the historical medical literature of that old civilization, with translations of the six parts of the venerable textbook of Chinese pharmacology, the *Pen T's'ao* or Herbal. He undoubtedly planned many more contributions in this field, but these unfortunately were cut short by his untimely death. He was also active in the work of the North-China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society at Shanghai, serving several terms as President, Vice-President, and Editor of its Journal, also contributing articles and giving lectures in that institution, mostly dealing with his special subject—ancient Chinese medicine as viewed by modern science. He was also a charter member of the Chinese Society of Medical History. In whatever capacity he was active, he knew the secret of creating an atmosphere of good will and kindness around him, which turned all his collaborators and assistants into devoted friends and admirers.

In the death of Bernard Read we have lost a scientist of fine quality, a scholar of rare devotion to his work, and last but not least, a man of sterling character, combining the gift of an excellent brain with that of a warm and kind heart. We shall not easily find his equal.

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