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ADOLPHE FRANCESCHETTI, 1896—1968

One of the great figures of contemporary ophthalmology has gone from the stage on which he had played a leading part for many years, and in every country in the world his colleagues will mourn his loss. Born in Zürich on October 11, 1896, he studied medicine in that city where he became assistant to Sidler-Huguenin and Vogt in 1921; in 1925 he went to Brückner’s clinic at Basel, and finally in 1933 he was called to succeed Gourfein as professor of ophthalmology at Geneva, a position he occupied until he retired from the university.

An adequate review of Franceschetti’s contributions to ophthalmology, which number more than 300, would fill a volume, dealing not alone with ophthalmology but also with genetics, general medicine, and neurology. His many-sidedness became apparent early in his career in Basel when he made important researches into the blood-aqueous barrier and several muscular and neurological anomalies in which the eye shared. At the same time, he showed an intense interest in hereditary diseases which was maintained throughout his life, describing an immense number of rare syndromes, many of them new. Among these probably the best known is the complete syndrome of mandibulo-facial dysostosis (1944) which now bears his name. In this connexion two of the greatest services he did for the progress of genetics were the creation in 1951 and thereafter the direction of the Institute of Medical Genetics in Switzerland, an amazingly complete and useful register, and the founding and editing of the Journal de Génétique humaine (1951). On this subject, apart from a continuous flow of original papers, he wrote the section on heredity in Schieck and Brückner’s “Kurzes Handbuch der Ophthalmologie” (1930), and was a Reporter at the International Congress of Ophthalmology in London in 1950; he also contributed to “L’Encyclopédie française” (1955), to the first of the two volumes of “Genetics and Ophthalmology”
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(1961), and to the two magnificent volumes on chorio-retinal hereditary degenerations for the French Ophthalmological Society (1963).

Apart altogether from genetics, Franceschetti interested himself with all his enthusiasm in everything in medicine, neurology, and biology. He was no mean surgeon and was one of the pioneers in keratoplasty—for this his trephine is still widely used. As a medical ophthalmologist he was superb, and his clinic at Geneva—always a joy to visit—was one of the most active and exciting in Europe and also one of the most happily conducted. Visitors, no matter how humble, were always welcome there, and to his innumerable friends in every continent Franceschetti was an equally welcome guest. In his country house near Geneva with its unique library he was an equally gracious host. At international meetings, ophthalmological, genetic, and neurological—and he went to most—he was always a dominating figure, contributing richly and entering fully with his multilingualism in discussions, and entertaining everyone in the evening with his stories, now in French, now in English, now in German, now in Italian. Equally in international organizations he played a prominent part; following Bailliart in 1954 he became the very active President of the International Association for the Prevention of Blindness, and in 1955 a member of the International Council of Ophthalmology, positions which he held until his death. A member of the Légion d'Honneur and an honorary or corresponding member of 35 foreign societies and academies, it is good that his value and his unique personal qualities of enthusiasm and friendship were widely recognized.

To his delightful wife, Antonia, who did so much to support him, to nurse him back to health after a severe motor accident some years ago, and to entertain his guests with all the grace and generosity of a born hostess, and to his son and daughter and their families, we extend our sympathy.

S. D.-E.