

LEWIS JEFFERSON MOORMAN, M. D.

By Gaston Litton

In the person of Lewis Jefferson Moorman, M. D., Oklahoma had not only one of its greatest physicians but also a most active and productive historian—a fact which may not have been known to the distinguished membership of this learned Society.

Dr. Moorman, whose death occurred at St. Anthony's hospital on August 2, 1954, had been living in partial retirement at his home in Oklahoma City. For the past fifteen years Dr. Moorman had been busy, primarily, in the multiple chores of editing the *Journal* of the Oklahoma State Medical Association. This assignment had an ideal incumbent in Dr. Moorman who had ample training in the classics, bolstered by a strict discipline acquired in the Medical School of the University of Louisville, a lifetime devoted to the study of human problems, some international travel, and the constant stimulation gained from colleagues during long and intensive work in professional organizations on the city, county, state, regional, national, and international levels. In his post as editor-in-chief of the *Journal*, Dr. Moorman attended the primary functions of presenting a wide range of articles on the many aspects of medicine. Happily for medical historians of Oklahoma, he also gathered data of a biographical nature on many colleagues and worked this information into the magazine year after year. Dr. Moorman's editorials reflect his specialities in medicine, his attitudes on government and medicine, the role of the family doctor today, and other topics written in a pungent style and reflecting in their total output a major contribution to medical literature. Other medical journals were happy to publish articles of the physician from Oklahoma City, whose name steadily gained prominence. A bibliography of these writings of Dr. Moorman, as yet only partially completed, is extensive and impressive.

Dr. Moorman also wrote several books. One of these was a scientific treatise on the cystic disease of the lungs. Another discusses industrial and domestic gas hazards arising through the production, refining, and consumption of petroleum and its products. For the American Sanatorium Association Dr. Moorman contributed the third number in its historical series. His book called *Tuberculosis and Genius*, published originally by the University of Chicago Press in 1940, was reprinted by the National Tuberculosis Association in 1950, and widely circulated in Spanish-speaking countries in a special translation. He was also author of an engrossing autobiographical account published in 1951 by the University of Oklahoma Press, under the title *Pioneer Doctor*, which reflects the life of a professional man in Oklahoma after the turn of the century and includes six chapters on tuberculosis written primarily for the layman.

Dr. Moorman carried his historical interest into his teaching. Soon after the founding of the University of Oklahoma Medical School Dr. Moorman was invited to join the faculty. From that time until his death, he was associated in some capacity or other with the School, filling the deanship for four years during the troublesome thirties. Dr. Moorman early displayed great charm as an anecdotist and raconteur, and many physicians over the state today owe their appreciation of the "historical approach" to medicine to Dr. Moorman's lectures at the Medical School.

At some unknown moment in the unfolding of Dr. Moorman's service to Oklahoma, he conceived the idea of a multiple-volume history of medicine in the state. He contemplated a comprehensive treatment of the subject, which would open with medicine among the American Indians, continuing through the changing territorial period into the present century which has seen so much medical progress within Oklahoma. Dr. Moorman was constantly drawing old friends and new acquaintances into a discussion of this subject, spreading his contagious enthusiasm to them. At one such conference on the campus of the University of Oklahoma there was born an idea which has since come to be called "The Medical History Project." This project has as its major goal the collection of medical archives, which would form the core of original source materials for the proposed medical history. The fundamental appropriateness of the program was immediately apparent. The Oklahoma State Medical Association endorsed and gave material support to the project. The University's Division of Manuscripts undertook its activation. Today, the collection of archival treasures basic to the history of medicine proceeds on schedule.

Dr. Moorman was first, last, and always a physician. Yet he has enriched Oklahoma's chronicles with his own numerous writings and by the writing which he, personally, stimulated through his editorial work. He endowed an entire generation of young doctors with a larger appreciation of the history of the noblest of all professions. He set the course for a pilot project to assemble the basic materials reflecting the work of all of Oklahoma's pioneer doctors. This man's remarkable career in our state was yet more remarkable for the fact that he was not a native son of Oklahoma. Born in Leitchfield, Kentucky, on February 9, 1875, Dr. Moorman took up residence in Oklahoma Territory in 1901. Influenced by a country doctor to study medicine, Dr. Moorman spent six years of his professional life as a country doctor—first at Chickasha, briefly, and then at Jet. Following post-graduate work at the University of Virginia medical school and a brief period of study at the New York Polyclinic Hospital, Dr. Moorman returned to settle at Oklahoma City. He was named almost immediately to the staff of St. Anthony's Hospital, remaining in active status until 1950 when he accepted a change to an honorary capacity. Dr. Moorman's early attraction to the study of tuberculosis led him to found in Oklahoma City in 1914 the first private

sanatorium in the state for the treatment of this disease. For more than thirty years Dr. Moorman maintained this sanatorium.

Dr. Moorman, as an organizer and leader, made a signal contribution to the medical professional. For twenty-nine years he served as president of the Oklahoma County Public Health Association and, at the time of his death, he was honorary president of the association. At one time or another he filled the presidency of numerous other professional organizations, including the Oklahoma County Medical Society; Oklahoma State Medical Association; Southern Medical Association; National Tuberculosis Association; American Trudeau Society; Oklahoma City Academy of Medicine; Southern Tuberculosis Conference; Southern Sanatorium Association; American Medical Writer's Association; American Clinical and Climatological Society.

Many honors came to Dr. Moorman during his lifetime. He was elected to the Oklahoma Memorial Association in 1935; he was made honorary member of Phi Beta Kappa, 1950; he became a member of Alpha Omega Alpha, national honorary medical society, 1953. He belonged to the Filson Club of Louisville, Ky., and to the Men's Dinner Club of Oklahoma City.

Dr. Moorman was married to Mary Christian in 1909, and their honeymoon was combined with a trip to Vienna where Dr. Moorman did post-graduate work. The Moormans became the parents of three children: Mrs. Charles D. Tuller of Atlanta; Mrs. George Grant of San Antonio; and Lewis J. Moorman, Jr., also of San Antonio. Dr. Moorman is survived by Mrs. Moorman, their children and several grandchildren.

Dr. Moorman will long be remembered in Oklahoma as a pioneer doctor who practiced for several years at Jet, as the founder of a clinic for the treatment of tuberculosis, and always as a most accessible and understanding physician. It is both fitting and proper that this great Association—the Oklahoma Historical Society—should pause to mark the disappearance of a medical historian whose contributions to the history of our State and his profession give every indication of reaching far into the times of future generations of Oklahomans.