

Eric Benjamin Strauss (1894–1961)

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Eric Benjamin Strauss, M.A., M.D., D.Sc., F.R.C.P., died on 11 January, aged 66. He had but recently retired from his post as Physician in Psychological Medicine at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, and at the North Middlesex Hospital. His main distinctions were those of a clinician and the path that he chose to clinical psychiatry was typically his own.

Initially he intended to enter the diplomatic service and studied languages in preparation therefore. But at Oxford, reflecting on his proposed career, he underwent a change of heart and decided to study medicine. At King's College Hospital he had, as a student, a clinic in hypnosis, while acting as a clerk for Dr. Bristow, and intended to take [44] up neurology. Events decided otherwise, however, and he spent a year at Marburg with Ernst Kretschmer before specializing in psychological medicine. He then worked with T. A. Ross at the Cassell and was associated with the Tavistock Clinic in its prewar days.

The contributions in clinical psychiatry for which he will perhaps be most remembered were varied. He championed an eclectic and freethinking clinical approach; he sponsored many an able refugee psychotherapist; he husbanded hypnosis through years of discredit; he welcomed advances in treatment from any quarter and established the first outpatient clinic for electro-plexy in this country. He drew attention to the work of others, notably of his old chief Kretschmer, in typology; of Margaret Lowenfeld in child psychology and of Andrew Salter in hypnosis.

In his own department he chose his men and women with intuitive skill and left them to their own devices in great part. This may well have been why he was regarded with so much loyalty by those who worked with him.

He was president of the British Psychological Society in 1956–7 and of the Section of Psychiatry of the Royal Society of Medicine in 1953–4.

One of his early contributions was on the psychogenic factors in asthma in the Guy's Hospital Reports of 1926, and later he advocated the theme of multiple aetiology in his Croonian lectures published subsequently as *Reason and Unreason in Psychological Medicine*. His skill in bare simplicity of statement was well shown in a series of newspaper articles later published under the title of Psychiatry in the Modern World, and his contributions to the dissemination of the current trends of research work were well known in the form of *Recent Advances in Neurology* which he published with Sir Russell Brain.

As a person Eric Strauss kept many varied interests alive, including an active attention to current literature, especially space fiction; a great enjoyment of boxing, especially of the Stepney Boys' Boxing Club, and of people in his numerous friends and friendly acquaintances. His love of music was well known to all who knew him. A bachelor, he is mourned by his two brothers and a sister, and by the very many colleagues and friends who formed the circle of what he sometimes referred to as his wider family.

Jonathan Gould