

# James Ewing

*December 25, 1866 — May 16, 1943*

The death of James Ewing on May 16, 1943, after an illness of several months, brought to a close the long career of one of the most distinguished members of the faculty of the Cornell University Medical College and one of the foremost of the world's leaders in the great field of cancer research.

The son of Thomas and Julia Hufnagel Ewing, Doctor Ewing was born in Pittsburgh and there obtained his preliminary schooling. He then entered Amherst College, from which he was graduated in 1888. His undergraduate years must have been happy as well as profitable ones for they left him with a love for the study of philosophy and an attachment for some of his old teachers which remained with him throughout the many crowded, strenuous years of his life.

Entering the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University in the autumn of 1888, he soon came under the spell of the distinguished Professor of Pathology, Doctor T. Mitchell Prudden, for whom he developed a deep admiration and affection and by whom his future career was profoundly influenced.

After graduation in Medicine in 1891, and after a medical internship in Roosevelt Hospital, he returned to Prudden's laboratory and there began his life-work in pathology.

Much of his time during the next few years was spent in a study of the pathological changes in the cells of the blood which resulted in the publication in 1901 of his treatise *Clinical Pathology of the Blood*. The book immediately won wide recognition and did much to arouse deep and general interest in this important subject. During the Spanish War, in 1898, some months were spent at the camp for returned soldiers at Montauk Point, in an intensive study of malarial fever, to the knowledge of which he made a number of significant contributions.

In 1899, one year after its founding, he was made Professor of Pathology in the Cornell Medical College, and for the next thirty-three years he remained one of the most virile and effective members of its faculty. Perhaps no teacher in the history of the school has left so deep an imprint of his personality upon both students and teachers. His profound knowledge, and his unlimited capacity for work, his brilliance as a teacher, and his friendly and sincere interest in his students—all these combined to win for him a very unusual measure of admiration and popularity.

The study of tumors, which gained his attention early in his career, came more and more to be the chief interest and concern of his life, and it was characteristic of the man that this interest should extend far beyond the purely

pathological aspects of the subject to the vastly important humanitarian ones of treatment, prevention, and cure.

This absorption in the study of tumors and his growing authority in that field, led to his appointment, in 1912, as pathologist to the Memorial Hospital for the Treatment of Cancer and Allied Diseases, to which institution thereafter so much of his activity was to be devoted.

About this time began his association with the late Doctor James Douglas, a wise and understanding philanthropist, whose chief purpose in life was to use his large fortune for the advancement of knowledge which might ultimately lead to the cure of cancer. Doctor Douglas came to lean heavily upon Ewing for advice as to how he could best help in advancing the work of cancer research, and the association led to very generous financial aid to the Memorial Hospital and to the development of greatly enlarged facilities for cancer research, especially in the field of radium and the x-rays.

In 1913, Memorial Hospital became affiliated with Cornell University Medical College, and Doctor Ewing was made President of the Medical Board of the Hospital. He subsequently became Director of Cancer Research and, upon his retirement from the chair of Pathology at Cornell in 1932, was made Director of the Hospital, a position which he held until his retirement in 1939.

In 1919, after ten years of unremitting labor, he published his great work on tumors, entitled *Neoplastic Diseases*, which was to establish him as an authority upon that subject. The book has since become a standard text all over the world, is now in its fourth edition and has been translated into several foreign languages.

Although the dominant note in James Ewing's whole life was work —unremitting and indefatigable work—and although he allowed himself few relaxations, there was one form of sport in which he indulged with enthusiasm and which gave him deep enjoyment. He was an ardent tennis player, in spite of the fact that an illness in early life had left him with a shortened leg and a pronounced limp. Even with this serious handicap, his tennis game was far above the average for normal players and he was a formidable antagonist for any but the most expert. His association with the West Side Tennis Club of New York continued for a great many years. He served as its president in its early years, was active in its councils, and could be counted upon to be on hand for every important tennis event, even when he was no longer active as a player.

Doctor Ewing was one of the founders of the American Society for the Control of Cancer and of the *Journal of Cancer Research*. At the time of his death he held the position of Professor of Oncology in the Cornell Medical College and that of Consulting Pathologist to the New York and Memorial Hospitals.

Even an incomplete list of the distinctions and honors conferred upon Doctor Ewing is long and impressive. He was given a doctorate in science by his alma mater, Amherst College, by the University of Rochester, the University of Pittsburgh, and Union University. The degree LL.D. was conferred on him by Kenyon College and Western Reserve University. His international honors included the Order of Leopold (Belgium), the Order of the Southern Cross (Brazil) and an honorary doctorate from the University of San Maro in Peru, the oldest university in the Western Hemisphere.

In 1933, he received the Janeway Medal from the American Radium Society; in 1940, the Clement Cleveland Medal from the New York City Cancer Committee; and, in 1941, the Distinguished Service Medal and Award of the American Medical Association.

Doctor Ewing was married, in 1900, to Miss Catherine Crane Halsted whose untimely death a few years later caused a profound and lasting change in his personal and domestic life. His one son, Doctor James Halsted Ewing, is now a lieutenant, U. S. N. R.

To those of us privileged for so many years to enjoy close association and close friendship with James Ewing, the memories of him that remain most vivid will be, not those of his extraordinary achievements in his chosen field, but rather those of the homely virtues of honesty, sincerity, generosity, and unfaltering loyalty to his friends which he possessed in such unstinted measure.