



STEPHEN BALLAGI
(1893—1955)

OBITUARY

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In spite of his long lasting disease, the death of Professor STEPHEN BALLAGI was an unexpected event for his friends and for the Hungarian dermatologists. He was born in 1893, thus, he left us too early at the age of 62 years. He began his university work as a young physician in the University Clinic for Skin- and Venereal Diseases at Budapest. His inclination to science was a tradition in his family, because his grandfather was professor of theology and member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, his father was professor of history and also Rector Magnificus of this university. It was by these traditions that he was attached to this university as its devoted servant. As early as in the first years of his studies he was attracted by experimental work. At this time, he started with the study of mycologic problems and he became soon the leader of the mycologic laboratory of the Clinic, which he had reorganized and made well known by his work. When he started his work at the Clinic this branch of dermatology was hardly cultivated in our country, and so he had to approach it by a new pathway. As a follower of the great Hungarian mycologist, DAVID GRUBY he was one of the first scientists engaged in methodical mycology in this country. It is his unforgettable merit that he gave others his abundant experience collected by the difficult work of long years. In this way he made a great contribution to the development of Hungarian mycology created first of all by his work.

Beside this, he participated in the official life of dermatology. He was one of the founders of the Hungarian Dermatological Society, later he became secretary, then general secretary of the same Society. He was also general secretary of the IXth International Dermatological Congress held in 1935 at Budapest. For this Congress he collected an unparalleled mycologic material which was at that time one of the greatest fungus collection in the entire world. In the *Corpus Iconum Morborum Cutaneorum* edited by the Congress, 398 photos were published from this collection. Among these the cultures of 310 different strains were presented. Aside from his unforgettable personality and his papers published here and abroad, the first Hungarian Textbook on Dermato-Mycology is a valuable piece of his legacy. His work was in the field of mycology manifold. He described a new fungus strain (*Tr. nigrum*) and first in this country acremoniosis. He was concerned with the mycosis of nails caused by *Scropulariopsis brevicaulis*, and with

the problem of mycids. As for the latter, he demonstrated by culture that in the mycids arising by a hematogenous route fungus elements also may be present. He studied the pathogenic role of common moulds and demonstrated their affinity to the cutaneous tissue rather than to the epidermis. He had a prominent part in the organization of the prevention of fungus diseases, and in the practical achievement of this work. Later he was appointed as chief of the department of dermatology to a hospital. He continued, however, as head of the mycologic laboratory of the Clinic. While taking leave from this prominent personality of the official life of Hungarian dermatology, we felt that our loss was irreparable.

To take leave from the friend was harder than the official farewell. He was generally beloved by his co-workers, and everybody who was acquainted with him. We were working for many years at neighboring laboratory tables and were associated in life and profession for several decades. He was, as I saw him, always cheerful and unwearied. He was attached as a friend to everybody. His humane behaviour never wavered and never changed. He remained a man and a friend to everybody under all circumstances, as a faithful possessor of the high thoughts bequested to him by the home of the parents. In last years he came rarely to see us, because of his disease. Yet, his old spirits were always present and he was always ready to help others. It was by these humane and medical qualities that he was highly esteemed, his friends were so deeply attached to him and these qualities will preserve his memory.

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