

M. A. FITZSIMONS In Memoriam—1912-92

Matthew Anthony Fitzsimons, the long-time editor of this journal, died on October 14, 1992. Although he retired as editor nearly as long ago as he held the post, he maintained his association with *The Review* and was clearly the choice of the present editors to write the special sesquicentennial piece in this issue. So, by an irony that would have amused and intrigued him, his last intellectual endeavor was to revise a portion of it. He died as he had lived.

What he lived for was mainly the life of the mind, and he prepared himself for it in humility and sincerity. These lovely virtues are apparent in the intellectual autobiography so prominent in his essay which appears here. In it he speaks of his education "in the discipline of languages, literature and mathematics" before embarking on a brilliant career at Columbia University, capped by a two-year scholarship at Oxford. That gave him an academic specialty in British history which he used in earning a doctorate at Chicago after he came to Notre Dame. But he was no specialist.

Fitzsimons was an old-fashioned polymath. He took on the whole of the humanities for his province. His appetite for knowledge in all its branches was voracious. He had the prodigious and accurate memory of the best historians, but he ranged far beyond most of them. It was no accident that he founded at Notre Dame courses in world history and no surprise to his colleagues that he needed no special preparation for them.

But, rich in erudition as his teaching was, it was with *The Review* that he found the fulfillment of his great abilities. All the varieties of his knowledge, from Boeotia to Bloomsbury, all his skill at languages, all his industry, were called up by the demands he heaped upon himself during his editorship. He served a long apprenticeship to the founding editor, Waldemar Gurian, one of the many refugees from Nazi Europe whom Notre Dame welcomed in the late 1930s. In the article in this issue Fitzsimons described his work as that of "language therapist and editorial sergeant." But he was also the friend and confidant of the mercurial Gurian, his match in learning and education, and his mentor in introducing him to the American scene. As for Europe, Gurian

knew just about every important Catholic intellectual from Dublin to the Danube. He brought many of them to Notre Dame in person or through contributions to this journal, which he founded in 1939.

When Gurian died in 1953, Fitzsimons was his logical successor. For seventeen brilliant years he poured out his superb energy to stabilize what Gurian had founded, to adapt it more firmly to its American home, and to strengthen its commitment to the philosophical and historical approaches to political realities. In doing so he kept in close touch with the life of the University and its progress toward understanding the brave new world that followed World War II. We at Notre Dame, knowing his worth, loaded him with work he should have refused. We put him on every committee, drafted him for every intellectual endeavor and program, and sought out his advice and assistance as he worked in harmony with Gurian's successor in European studies, the admirable Stephen Kertesz. To all of these he sacrificed time with his family, who admired him as they missed him, and with the wide circle of his friends who delighted in his wit and modesty.

It is no wonder that one of Fitzsimons's favorite words was "human." He uses it in the title of this article, toward the end of which he speaks of the "human predicament." The phrase suits him. He had above all a compassionate sense of its meaning. This was the best gift he gave his students and colleagues. As his old friend and former colleague Tom Brown wrote, he was a good man in a world and time when they are not thick on the ground.