

SIR CHARLES FELIX HARRIS (1900-1974). M.D., B.S. (Lond.), M.R.C.S. (Eng.), F.R.C.P. (Lond.), Hon.LL.D. (Lond.), Hon. F.R.C.S. (Eng.). - Dean of St Bartholomew's Hospital Medical School and Vice-Chancellor of the University of London.

"He held himself rather aloof and seemed to enjoy his ability to keep people guessing about his true beliefs and his true intentions. This could be carried to the extreme of opposing what he really wanted in the first round."

British Medical Journal (1974).

Charles Felix Harris (1900-1974) [Epsom College 1914-1918. Entrance Scholarship. Ann Hood Exhibition] was the son of G. F. Harris, a ship-owner of Sidcup, Kent. He was born in New York but spent much of his early childhood in Australia before receiving his later education at Epsom College, where he was head prefect, and winner of the Rosebery, Hugh Vardon, Engledue Essay, and Sterry Prizes. From St Bartholomew's Hospital where he qualified M.B., B.S. in 1923; winning the Lawrence Research Scholarship and Gold Medal, he was appointed house physician at the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street. He took the M.D. (Lond.) in 1925 and passed the M.R.C.P. Examination a short while after.



From Great Ormond Street, Harris travelled to the United States where, having obtained a Rockefeller Fellowship, he joined the paediatric department of Johns Hopkins Medical School, Baltimore before returning to St Bartholomew's Hospital as chief assistant in the children's department and, in 1928, assistant physician. At that time the department was only represented in out-patients, and children who needed in-patient care were placed in adult wards under the care of a general physician. As assistant physician Charles Harris became the first physician in charge of a separate paediatric department with its own ward accommodation. This appointment marked the end of his prolonged struggle to obtain recognition for a department devoted to the medical surgical care of sick children, and was a personal triumph. At the commencement of the Second World War, Charles Harris was appointed medical officer in charge of St Bartholomew's Hospital under the Emergency Medical service. It was then that he was able to demonstrate his remarkable administrative qualities. He organised the hospital for its wartime role, maintained the medical school activities and education, and at the same time continued his teaching of paediatrics. In 1945 he was appointed Dean of St Bartholomew's Hospital Medical School.

It was not long before his administrative skills were recognised by the University of London. He was appointed Chairman of the Deans of Metropolitan Medical Schools and, in 1950, was elected to the Senate of the University and one year later to the University Court. He was Chairman of the Academic Council and Vice-Chancellor from 1958-1961. He was then elected Chairman of Convocation. In spite of his extremely busy schedule, he found time to help in the governing bodies of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the School of Pharmacy. The part that he played in the establishment of the Institute of Basic Medical Sciences at the Royal College of Surgeons was recognised by the award of an Honorary F.R.C.S. Charles Harris was knighted in 1968, and his distinguished service was further recognised by the University of London by the conferment of an Honorary LL.D. Apart from his appointment as Consultant Paediatrician at St Bartholomew's Hospital he was Physician to the Westminster Hospital for Children and consultant Paediatrician to the London County Council. From 1934 to 1938 Charles Harris edited the *Archives of Disease in*

Childhood and, in 1962, was elected President of the British Paediatric Association.

In his obituary it was written: "he gravitated to a position of control in every one of his activities. He had that natural authority which is essential for the conduct of affairs, is recognised by colleagues after more or less of a struggle as being irresistible, and is only troublesome when, by misfortune, two of a kind are concerned with one task. At school, in hospital, in the medical college, in the University of London, Harris achieved eminence and considerable power. Charles Harris was a remarkable chairman and member of committees. His grasp of a situation and his judgement were based on careful study. He could therefore be a formidable opponent and a remarkable advocate."