HERMAN MORRIS ADLER

On December 7, 1935, Herman Morris Adler, Professor of Psychiatry on the Faculty of the School of Jurisprudence, died of pneumonia in Boston. Professor Adler was born in New York in 1876. His father, Isaac Adler, was a distinguished New York physician. His uncle, Felix Adler, was Professor of Political and Social Ethics at Columbia University and founder of the Society for Ethical Culture.

Herman Adler was graduated from Harvard College in 1897 and Columbia Medical School in 1901, thereafter pursuing medical studies in Europe. From 1912 to 1917 he was an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School and Chief of Staff of the Boston Psychiatric Hospital. During the war he was a major in the Medical Corps with special duty in disciplinary psychiatry at the military prisons. He participated in many notable crime surveys and in 1917 was appointed State Criminologist of Illinois by Governor Lowden. He added to his duties the Directorship of the Juvenile Psychopathic Institute and Professorship of Criminology and allied subjects in the Medical College of the University of Illinois. In 1913 he came to the University of California as Professor of Psychiatry and, beginning with 1935, expected to devote himself to research on individual behavior with special reference to its medico-legal relations and to teaching in the School of Jurisprudence.

Dr. Adler brought to his work in criminology a rare combination of a practical knowledge of criminals and of psychiatry. For him psychiatry was the study of the human personality and he was entirely free from the distorted views of those whose experience is exclusively with psychotics. For him the foundation of psychiatry lay in the basic sciences and in the face of powerful opposition he maintained in his Institute research in pure psychology with full confidence that the results would justify the expenditure. He was a keen critic of routine procedures and conventional generalizations. With unerring analytic skill he exposed the faulty logic, emotional bias and unproved assumptions on which our beliefs and practices rest. He was as relentless a critic of his own work and theories. Yet he was no cynical destroyer. He had the vision of a sounder integration of the mechanism of human personality and it is the tragedy of his untimely death that his conception cannot be adequately constructed from the sketches in his fragmentary publications. For the School of Jurisprudence there is an irreparable loss, a loss to the growing number of students who were turning to him for instruction and advice that no other could give; for the colleagues who knew him well, the loss of a courteous, generous, loyal, affectionate friend.