

# Sir Gordon Arthur Ransome \*-A Profile of the Man

Professor Seah Cheng Siang

Professor Ransome was born in Salop, England, on 6th May, 1910, the son of the Rector of Pulverbatch. He attended school at Dauntsey's and after happy childhood days and still in his youth, he began to show an interest in doctoring. It was not surprising therefore, that in 1933, he obtained a licence to practise medicine from the Royal College of Surgeons and Physicians of London. . .

Foremost, Professor Ransome taught by example. Himself a well-trained clinician, he has handed down to hundreds of doctors, clinical methods which were learnt from his teachers and also those innovated by his own increasing experiences. . .

He has a fine art of percussion of the chest and together with auscultation, the signs elicited are put together and the **X-ray appearances** predicted. This has often been confirmed when X-ray films of the chest became available. His capability in the examination of heart has also been well recognised. . .

Per abdomen, he is supreme in palpation and many an enlarged viscus would be felt where others found difficulty. This skill is only possible with subtle variations to classical palpation. The finer points of the art have been acquired by those who have been fortunate enough to watch closely his method of examination. . .

It is in the examination of the central nervous system that he excels. Having learnt from Master Neurologists, he has, from constant practice, developed this acumen to a very high proficiency. . .

From the signs culled, and with the results of some laboratory tests, he has nearly in every instance been able to arrive at a definitive diagnosis. A firm diagnosis by this method and not by intuition, is always teachable. He converted many a doctor from practising intuitive diagnosis into exercising a perceptive scientific method. . .

In the pre-war years recruitment in the Medical Service and employment ran in two separate channels with marked disparity of conditions between the local and expatriate doctor. When a unified medical service was sought for, Professor Ransome gave considerable assistance by his unequivocal support for complete parity in the conditions of the service without discrimination. . .

With considerable foresight and with keen interest on postgraduate medical education Professor Ransome inaugurated a meeting of medical specialists in his own home in July 1957, with a view to the formation of an academic body. . .

His devotion to students of medicine and to patients aside, Professor Ransome has also distinguished himself in public duties. His contribution to society at large and to communities beyond our own shores has earned him recognition by way of honours bestowed on him. . .

In person, Professor Ransome is kind, soft spoken and essentially human. He is generous and his memory becomes conveniently poor when remember-

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\* Extracted from the **first** Gordon Arthur Ransome Oration "The Life and Times of Gordon Arthur Ransome" delivered on 5th August 1971 at the Opening Ceremony Of the 6th Singapore-Malaysia Congress Of Medicine.

ing is unessential. He has the supreme serenity to accept the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that can and wisdom to know the difference.

He taught those around him not only medicine. During bedside teaching and at chance meetings he has always thought fit, now and then, to wax philosophical. In some of Life's difficult situations he has a firm belief in the ultimate pattern to be determined by destiny rather than a dependance on so-called human wisdom. Further, he often decries worry which is the incumbent destroyer of clear thinking. He is indefatigable when aid is sought for by a fellow colleague. A cry for help is always answered with alacrity and he is always available at all times of the day and night for consultation in homes or in hospitals.

He is always ready to render a helping hand when a fellow doctor himself is in trouble. In this regard he has an ever constant ear which in itself is therapy. Time appears to him to be of no consequence when it comes to giving it to someone else. The distressed talks on and he listens. A few careful chosen words of advice now and then provides the panacea.

Up to a few years ago he hunts keenly and have been seen riding on the pillion of a friend's motor cycle, in jungle green with a gun slung across the shoulder. Plovers, snipes, pigeons are favourite targets and occasionally the wild boar. Fishing in the off-shores is another sport he pursues and many a picture in the family album testifies to his skill in this respect.

In reading, history fascinates him, especially facts relating to great men, the wars and medicine. He has taught many the value of the medical writings of the past. He regularly scours the medical library for old books about to be discarded inadvertently. He has also been known to have unwittingly annexed a few volumes which are invaluable in his own eyes.