

Editorial

FRANCIS P. GARVAN

The untimely death of Francis P. Garvan, on Nov. 7, 1937, at the age of sixty-two, will be felt in many fields, in none more than that of cancer research. For years he had not been well, but despite bad health he remained, until a few days before his death, extremely active in the varied interests with which his versatile mind was occupied. He was a man of strong opinions, which he expressed freely, was devoted to his family, a willing helper to those to whom misfortune had come, whether through poverty or ill-health, a connoisseur of old furniture, glass, and silver, a lawyer of competence, and a farseeing political economist with ability to apply his ideas practically, while his service to chemistry was perhaps greater than that of any chemist in America.

It is with The Chemical Foundation of New York, which he organized to purchase the foreign patents seized by the United States Government during the World War, that the name of Francis Garvan is most closely linked. Previous to this period the chemical industry of the United States had been seriously hampered by competition from the established industries of Europe, which it was unable to meet in any effective way. Coke was still being made by the old beehive coke oven, but all the by-products were wasted, so that when war broke out in Europe not only was America deprived of dyes but it had no equipment with which to obtain large quantities of either the fundamental products or the intermediates which are necessary for their manufacture. In addition, a large number of valuable medicinal products could not be made in this country because, as is so often the case, essential steps were omitted from the patent specifications. Patents covering these basic products and other chemical processes, including those for making synthetic nitrogen and stainless steel, were acquired by the Chemical Foundation under the direction of Mr. Garvan and were leased on a royalty basis to individuals and corporations. The infant organization suffered from a number of suits from the original owners of the patents, but the United States Supreme Court finally decided that the purchase was legal and that the patents were the lawful property of the organization.

All of the proceeds from royalties on these acquired patents were devoted to the advancement of science and scientific industry, and the United States will long benefit from the wise expenditure of these funds in the support of research in the numerous phases of theoretical and applied chemistry and physics. The South will profit for all time from one of the most recent developments fostered by the Foundation, a method for manufacturing wood pulp from southern slash pine, making the newsprint industry potentially independent of foreign markets. Another important discovery has been that of the chemical engineering process for the production of alcohol from agricultural products in so pure a form that it can be mixed with gasoline in a certain percentage without the necessity of altering the ignition system of the

current motor cars. Mr. Garvan held that the way to bring agriculture out of its depression was to encourage the farmer not to diminish his crops, but to raise all that he could consistent with the proper use of the soil and turn the products into materials which would have a ready sale. For this purpose he founded the National Farm Chemurgic Council, of which he was the President, and to which The Chemical Foundation has donated nearly \$1,000,000 within the last two years.

Of late years Mr. Garvan became interested in various aspects of medicine and supported researches on a great variety of subjects, including the common cold, the development of the cyclotron, and the Sloan radio frequency generator for the production of 1,000,000 volt x-rays. He also, in most generous fashion, met the deficit on the AMERICAN JOURNAL OF CANCER, which, because of the highly technical nature of its contents, could not be self-supporting. He was much interested in a *Diagnostic Atlas of Tumors*, which is in the course of publication under the auspices of the International Union against Cancer, for he felt that such a volume would be of the greatest value in codifying the present knowledge of neoplasms and thereby standardizing diagnosis so that therapeutic methods could be placed upon a more secure foundation. With the same idea in view he underwrote the publication of two special books, one on tumors of bone and the other on cancer of the skin. While the expiration of many of the patents which the Foundation controlled reduced its income so that it can no longer carry out all the scientific work on so generous a scale as has been possible in the past, there is no doubt that Mr. Garvan's family, his friends and others interested in the advancement of science will support as far as possible the splendid program which he laid down.

The extent of Mr. Garvan's personal charities will never be known. He had the kindly heart of that Celtic race which has contributed so much to the spiritual side of our civilization. A particularly appealing incident, known to only a few of his associates, gives a picture of the man's attitude, his sympathies, and his hold upon the simple people who filled the great Cathedral for his obsequies. For many years Mr. Garvan had been under treatment for a severe diabetes. In conversation with the famous physician under whose care he was, he learned of the problem presented by a large number of diabetic children from families of moderate means, who after the disease is under control have to return to their homes, often to receive inadequate supervision and especially an insufficient dietetic control. "If," said the physician, "each one of these small patients could have a dog, the kind that needs a good deal of care and a well regulated diet to keep it in health, the child would have demonstrated to him in practical fashion the importance of such control and would learn how he also must adapt himself to live within the limits of his disease." Nothing further was said, but in a few weeks a kennel of cocker spaniels was established by Mr. Garvan and the children that left Dr. Joslin's care thereafter received well-trained cockers for their pets. This is only one of the quiet, unadvertised charities by which Mr. Garvan brought help to thousands. There are many persons who never heard of The Chemical Foundation or of the wider interests of its founder, who will deeply miss his kindly smile and generous spirit.