Editorial

The lives of journal editors are constrained by datelines. After 21 years as Editor of this Journal, Stuart Mason has set his own dateline and decided to relinquish the editorship to live at a slightly less hectic pace and find more time to devote to his many hobbies which include fine writing, history and cartography. This, then, is the first issue of the Journal since its inception in 1966 to have gone to print without his name on the masthead.

When the Royal College of Physicians decided to produce its own Journal, after a gap of about 200 years, the first and most important task was to find the right person to be its editor. In Stuart Mason they found the man with the necessary qualities: an editor with a clear view of the kind of journal that would attract a potential readership and who wrote with a stylish pen. These qualities were expressed in the editorial of the first issue and it is timely to quote his words again: 'No journal should be launched on this flood tide of print without some explanation.' 'This Journal was conceived as a commentary on the whole medical scene and dedicated to plain speaking, because inflation has debased the printed word and jargon has alienated the enquiring reader.' 'The aim of the Journal is to provide for contributors and readers time for reflection, an opportunity to derive theory from fact and to judge the value of techniques in the service of patients.' How close to these concepts Stuart Mason has kept can be seen at a glance by looking at the varied contents of the last issue produced under his editorship. Truly, papers 'catering for every branch of medical science.'

The Journal, in the words of the preface to the 1772 Transactions of the Royal College of Physicians, is 'ready to receive any medical papers that shall be presented to them in order to publish the most useful,' but the decision as to which papers are the most useful, and appropriate, rests with the editor. Here, Stuart Mason's touch has been masterly and unfaltering. Whatever his personal likes and interests, the editor is under obligation to consider the whole readership, and it would be difficult to find a more diverse range of interests within a learned profession than among the Fellows and Members of this College. It is impossible to satisfy everybody all the time, but the editor must hope that his selection will please many of the people much of the time.

The Journal has reached its majority under Stuart Mason's care and guidance. He has set very high standards: it is now the joint responsibility of contributors, readers and the editorial office to maintain them. Fortunately, we have his continuing counsel and support to help us.