

MASTER SURGEONS OF AMERICA

EDWIN BRADFORD CRAGIN

EDWIN Bradford Cragin was born in Colchester, Connecticut, October 23, 1859. After a notable career, he died in New York City, October 21, 1918.

He represented the early New England lineage and the early New England ideals to a remarkable degree. His father, Edwin Timothy Cragin, who had been a captain in the Seventh Regiment during the portion of his life which was spent in New York City, died at a comparatively early age in Colchester. His mother, Ardelia Elizabeth Cragin lived to an advanced age. She expressed in her character and activities the fine traditions of New England life. She was a direct descendant of William Bradford, one of the original settlers of the Plymouth Colony, who came to this country in the Mayflower and became the first governor of that colony.

Dr. Cragin's boyhood was passed in Colchester. He entered Yale College in the class of 1882 and there received the degree of A.B. He then spent a year in study and travel in the west. In 1883 he entered the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City, and was graduated in 1886, receiving the first Harrison purse of five hundred dollars for proficiency in examination. He served his internship in the Roosevelt Hospital. In June, 1889, he was appointed assistant gynecologist to that institution. In the same year, he was also appointed assistant surgeon to the New York Cancer Hospital. He served regularly in the Roosevelt Hospital on the gynecological division for 10 years, doing a large amount of very successful work there. At the New York Cancer Hospital, he served for 4 years and then resigned.

His services to the College of Physicians and Surgeons were very important. From 1893 to 1895, he was assistant secretary and from 1895 to 1899 he was secretary of the faculty of that institution. In 1898 after the resignation of James W. McLane, he was made lecturer in obstetrics, and in 1899 he was appointed professor of obstetrics in the College and attending obstetrician in the Sloane Maternity Hospital.

For 20 years he carried on the duties of these offices with marked success and ability. During 14 years of this time, the professorship of gynecology was also joined to that of obstetrics. He believed that these departments should not be

separated. His conduct of the joint work of these departments was so successful that in 1909 Mr. and Mrs. William D. Sloane erected at their own expense and provided for the maintenance of a gynecological pavilion for the hospital which bore their name. This institution was then named the Sloane Hospital for Women, instead of the Sloane Maternity Hospital. He thus directed for many years a wonderfully equipped unit of college and hospital work, consisting of the professorship of obstetrics and gynecology and an obstetrical service of 128 beds and a well equipped though smaller gynecological hospital service.

His unusual executive ability enabled him to do this as few men could have done. He was particularly rapid and accurate in his thought and in his action. His decisions and his movements were so rapid and definite that it was difficult really to appreciate how much he was accomplishing or to keep abreast of his work. He was very far sighted in his plans. He had a remarkable capacity for eliminating unessential details and focusing his efforts with wonderful power and rapidity on what was really important. In all things, his procedure was determined by a strong adherence to principle and to the right as he saw it. Nothing could swerve him from his adherence to principle and to duty.

There was a very strong religious element in his character. He was connected with the Central Presbyterian Church for at least 30 years and occupied important offices there. His beneficence was great. He was one of the few men who believed that a tenth of his income should be given to charity in some form or other. His benefactions in the church were large and particularly unostentatious. Those who knew him would occasionally hear in some unexpected way of some of his generous actions. He built a hospital in China and supported a physician in attendance there. This hospital is still carrying on the work which he was so influential in starting. He founded a library in his native town of Colchester. When the war came on, it was his great regret that his health prevented him from going into active service, but he at once gave so large a sum of money for the support of the families of men who were in the service that it was more than sufficient and was in part returned to his estate after the war had closed and thence was used for other benefactions.

As an author, he made many contributions to his specialty. At first in the nature of primary books on gynecology and articles in the periodicals; and then finally by the publication of his treatise on *The Practice of Obstetrics*, a masterful volume of 839 pages which was published in 1916 and is accepted as an authoritative exposition of the subject. His contribution concerning the toxic effects of chloroform during parturition was one of the most valuable contributions of the time.

As a teacher, he was always particularly popular. His statements were clear, the arrangement of his subject was methodical, and he had in marked degree the ability to hold the attention and interest of his audience, with a diction so

clear that there was no question about its meaning, and an enthusiasm which was captivating and inspiring.

Yale University appreciated the notable work which he was doing and in 1907, in response to a request from his classmates, conferred upon him the honorary degree of master of arts. Many important hospitals also appreciated the benefit of his counsel and friendship and elected him to their consulting boards. Among them we may mention the Roosevelt Hospital, the Presbyterian Hospital, the Lincoln Hospital, the Infirmary for Women and Children, the City Hospital, the Nursery and Child's Hospital, and the Italian Hospital, all of them in New York City, and St. Luke's Hospital, Newburgh, New York.

His family life was particularly happy. His marriage to Mary Randall Willard of Colchester occurred in 1889, and they and their children Miriam, Alice, and Edwin Bradford were most congenial. They formed a family circle of the real New England type.

In thus studying the character and actions of this notable man, we find a character of the Puritan type with its strong adherence to duty and right, a very unusual executive ability, ability which would have placed him in the first rank in any occupation which he had sought. We find a great kindness and generosity, a love for people and an appreciation of their needs, a broad-minded sympathy, a wonderful courage and conviction. He was truly one of nature's noblemen.

After Dr. Cragin's health began to fail in 1916 and 1917, he still kept at his work with great energy, but even his constitution could not withstand the strain and he passed away in the autumn of 1918.

Anyone who witnessed the great honor paid to his memory, at that time, could appreciate that he was one of the great masters among men and among surgeons.

CHARLES N. DOWD.