

MASTER SURGEONS OF AMERICA

JOHN THOMPSON HODGEN

JOHN THOMPSON HODGEN was born at Hodgenville, La Rue County, Kentucky, January 29, 1826. His father was Jacob Hodgen, his mother Frances Park Brown. His early education was received in the county school at Pittsfield, Illinois. Later he attended Bethany College in West Virginia. In March, 1848, he graduated from the medical department of the University of the State of Missouri, at that time known as McDowell's College. He served as assistant resident physician and afterward as resident physician to the St. Louis City Hospital from April, 1848, to June, 1849.

He began his work as a teacher in 1849 as demonstrator of anatomy in the Missouri Medical College, was professor of anatomy in 1854, being appointed by Dr. Joseph Nash McDowell, and filled this chair until 1858. Subsequently he filled the chairs both of anatomy and physiology from 1858 to 1864.

During the Civil War he served as surgeon general of the Western Sanitary Commission, as surgeon of the United States Volunteers from 1861 to 1864, and as surgeon general of the State of Missouri from 1862 to 1864. He was consulting surgeon to the St. Louis City Hospital from 1862 to 1882 and from 1864 until his death in 1882, he taught clinical surgery at the City Hospital.

In 1862 he was called to the St. Louis Medical College, filling respectively the chairs of physiology and anatomy. On the resignation of Dr. Charles A. Pope in 1865 he was made Dean of the College, which position he occupied until his death. He was honored by the local profession as president of the St. Louis Medical Society in 1872, was chairman of the surgical section of the American Medical Association in 1873, and served as president of the Missouri State Medical Society in 1874. He was one of the original members of the American Surgical Association. He was president of the American Medical Association in 1881.

He died April 28, 1882, after an illness of 2 days, of acute peritonitis, caused by a pin hole perforation of a small ulcer of the gall bladder.

For 33 years Dr. Hodgen was a teacher. A keen and accurate observer, his interest was not limited to the sick room. He was a student of nature, quick to grasp and interpret its laws aright. Alert to all the phenomena of life, his wonderfully active sympathy with every phase of human nature gave him powers of illustration which fixed facts in the mind of a hearer in a way to make them

truths not to be forgotten. In the East and the West, in the North and the South, his fame as a teacher is a glory to St. Louis. He was exceptionally concise, practical, and comprehensive. As a teacher of surgery he was incomparable. His influence was, however, impressed not only upon individuals, it also controlled institutions. As dean of the faculty of the St. Louis Medical College he originated and consummated measures for its establishment on the basis of learning. During the time that he was a potent factor in shaping its course the St. Louis Medical College established an advanced standard of work which no other institution in St. Louis dared to attempt until years later and then only under the pressure of enforcing laws.

The high standard of the work of Washington University and the steady advance in the demands of the St. Louis Medical College, not only upon the students, but upon the earnestness, the unselfishness and the capability of the teachers, finally led, some years after the death of Dr. Hodgen, to the union of the two institutions in the way that he had anticipated and desired. Dr. Hodgen's last public speech was made before the alumni of the Washington University. That speech was the echo of his life's striving, a cry for "more knowledge, more light." As a surgeon he was conservative always, but quick, precise, and dexterous. The quick precision of his actions was but the outward sign of a mind singularly active and exact.

The difficulties of a case never seemed to surprise or overwhelm his judgment. He had resources at command adequate for any emergency. His keen powers of observation, ever on the alert, quickly seized the phenomena of disease and with precision his analytical mind traced them to their causation and led him to just conclusions as to the nature of the disease and its rational treatment.

He had, to a noteworthy degree, mechanical genius, which found play in the application of mechanical means to the uses of surgery. Extensive observation with vast experience inspired his creative faculties, which ever evolved original thought, new methods, and admirable instrumental inventions. The most noteworthy of his inventions were—a suspension splint for fracture of the femur, a modification of the Nathan R. Smith anterior splint, which was especially designed during the Civil War for the treatment of compound, gunshot fractures of the femur—a suspension cord and pulleys which permitted flexion, extension and rotation in fracture of the leg, a forceps dilator for removal of foreign bodies from the air passages without tracheotomy, a wire suspension splint for treatment of injuries or fractures of the arm, a hair pin dilator for separating the lips of the opening in the trachea in tracheotomy, an excellent adaptation of simple means to an end.

Dr. Hodgen's time was so fully taken up during the latter years of his life that his writings were not extensive. Among his contributions were articles on "Wiring the Clavicle and Acromion for Dislocation of the Scapular End of the

Clavicle," "Modification of Operation for Lacerated Perineum," "Dislocation of Both Hips," "Two Deaths from Chloroform," "Use of Atropia in the Collapse of Cholera," "Three Cases of Extra-Uterine Fetation," "Skin Grafting," "Nerve Section for Neuralgia," "Report on Antiseptic Surgery," and "Shock and Effects of Compressed Air as Observed in the Building of the Eads Bridge."

Dr. Hodgen had a big, warm, generous nature, well recognized by those who came to know him as he was; but these qualities sometimes went unrecognized because of a somewhat reserved, even austere manner. He was full of a kindly humor. His quick perception, ready, active, and all pervading sympathy inspired and made strong friendships. The poor and the afflicted looked with confidence to his helping hand. The rich and powerful knew that they dealt with a just and humane man. The city was rich in his presence. He was a refuge in sorrow and sickness. His fame as a surgeon was widespread.

He made for himself a place unique in the profession. No one before him had so clearly obtained first place in the hearts of the people and in the profession. The conditions now existing can never evolve a man of such wide and varied capacity. But man is for a brief time. He was cut off in the prime of life, in the zenith of his fame. As a great teacher and a great surgeon he exemplified the genius of humanity whose qualities abide from generation to generation but speak only now and then in the process of time in the individual.

He died as he had lived, "in the harness," a friend to humanity. He had always wished to go before his usefulness was in any degree impaired. Honest, frank, direct, a great soul; "We shall not see his like again." H. G. MUDD.