

THOMAS STEPHEN CULLEN  
1868-1953

WITH the death of Dr. Thomas Stephen Cullen on March 4, 1953, there passed from our midst the last of the great figures in medicine who came as interns to the Johns Hopkins Hospital in its infancy. He came as an intern in pathology under Dr. Welch in 1891 and retired as Professor of Gynecology in 1939.

Dr. Cullen was born in the bush country of Ontario north of Belleville in a town which died with the death of the logging industry of that part of Ontario. He was of English-North Irish descent, the first son of a Methodist minister of a country parish. His early education was interrupted by the moving of his father from parish to parish. Finally, during his later adolescent years, his father, the Reverend Stephen Cullen, was given a parish in Toronto. Thus, young Tom attended the Dufferin School and later Jarvis Collegiate Institute. Judged by today's softer standards his boyhood would be considered rugged and poor. Rugged it was, but in referring to it in later life Dr. Cullen considered it anything but poor. To him was offered the privilege of fishing, hunting, and tramping in the woods, more than which no red-blooded boy could ask. His love for the bush country remained with him throughout life and although he visited Europe several times for professional reasons, his vacations were all spent in the Ontario Lake District north of Toronto.

At the age of 14 he obtained financial independence by starting a paper route. It was required that he be at the Toronto Mail office at 4:00 A.M. every weekday morning. The habit of early rising remained with him throughout life, a fact all too well known by his residents whom he delighted in calling up at 6:00 or 6:30 in the morning.

In the fall of 1886, two months before his eighteenth birthday, Tom Cullen entered Toronto University Medical School. This undertaking he financed himself by doing odd jobs, as well as by his regular income from his paper route.

It was while interning at the Old Toronto General Hospital that Tom Cullen first heard of Hopkins through his friend Lewellys Barker, who had secured an internship under Osler. Cullen tried to obtain a similar position but Osler's staff was full. In the spring of 1891, Howard Kelly arranged a canoe trip down the Magnetawan River through Dr. Leslie Sweetman of Toronto. Dr. Sweetman, who was Cullen's preceptor, took the opportunity of arranging an operative clinic for Kelly in Toronto on the day preceding the canoe trip. Cullen was assigned to the surgical team. He had never before seen such surgical dexterity and decided then and there to attempt to get on Dr. Kelly's staff. Before Kelly

left Toronto, Dr. Cullen had been promised a gynecological internship at Hopkins. There was a lapse of six months between the end of his Toronto appointment and the beginning of his internship. Dr. Kelly arranged for him to spend this time with Dr. Welch in pathology. This short service with Welch gave him a feeling for pathology which he never lost and which in my opinion was responsible for Cullen's greatest contribution to gynecology, namely, the establishment of a laboratory in gynecological pathology which became the mother of many of the gynecological pathology laboratories in this country. The training of his residents in pathology and their influence in turn throughout the country put gynecology on a firm basis of pathology never before attained.

After finishing his residency training under his chief and idol, Howard Kelly, Cullen went into practice in Baltimore. Immediately he began working and publishing. His first book, *Cancer of the Uterus*, appeared in 1900. In 1908 his monograph on *Adenomyomata of the Uterus* was published. The next year *Myomata of the Uterus* came out with Dr. Kelly as co-author. In 1916 *The Embryology, Anatomy, and Diseases of the Umbilicus* made its appearance and, finally, a small volume in 1920 on *Henry Mills Hurd, the First Superintendent of the Johns Hopkins Hospital*. Two of his books ranked as classics—*Cancer of the Uterus* and *Adenomyomata of the Uterus*. In addition, he was the author of more than one hundred papers on gynecology but particularly on the pathology of the female reproductive tract.

He was made Professor of Clinical Gynecology of the Johns Hopkins University with the hospital appointment of Visiting Gynecologist in Charge in 1919, and in 1932 he became Professor of Gynecology, a position which he held until his retirement in 1939 at the age of 70. He taught every class that graduated from the Hopkins Medical School up to his retirement and after his retirement from active teaching he returned on invitation to hold one clinic for each group of students until his seventy-ninth year.

One of Dr. Cullen's greatest contributions to the medical world was his part in the establishment of a school of art as applied to medicine. In 1894 a curly-headed artistic boy came to Baltimore from Germany. Max Brödel was maintained at Dr. Kelly's expense and was privately instructing some young artists. The Mayo Clinic was quick to recognize his skill and made him a handsome offer which gave him financial security. Single-handed Dr. Cullen persuaded Henry Walters to guarantee \$5,000 a year for Mr. Brödel's salary for three years. At the end of that time Mr. Walters gave the University \$110,000 for the permanent endowment of the art department. Thus, it was made possible for Max Brödel to extend his influence as a great teacher of art as applied to medicine.

Dr. Cullen was made a fellow of the American Gynecological Society in 1904 and served on the Council in 1914. He served as a delegate to the American Medical Association from Maryland for a quarter of a century, beginning in 1903. In 1929 he became a member of the American Medical Association's nine-man Board of Trustees, from which he retired in 1941.

Dr. Cullen's influence was not confined to gynecology or to the environment of Hopkins. He was the first to wage a war for the education of the public regarding cancer and his first article for lay consumption appeared in *The Ladies'*

*Home Journal* in 1913. Because of this article he was made the target of many medical bigwigs of the time, but this only made him more determined.

In 1930 he succeeded Dr. Welch on the Maryland State Board of Health, a position which he held until his death. While on this board he waged an active campaign against pollution of the waters of the Chesapeake Bay.

He was a member of the board of the Enoch Pratt Library of Baltimore for many years and gave it devoted service. He was elected to the Presidency of that board in 1938 and re-elected every year to his death.

His public offices drew him into politics. On one occasion he said of himself, "I am not a politician but sometimes I think I might have made a good one." Those of us who knew him recognized in him not only a good politician but one who never hesitated to use political influence for a cause which he felt was good.

After suffering a partial paralysis from a stroke about two years before his death, his indomitable spirit lived on. He was determined to make one more trip to Canada and see the Magnetawan River and his beloved Lake Ahmie. This he accomplished last summer by means of a private railroad car and he relived on the shore of the lake the many happy summers which he had spent with Kelly, Brödel, and Flexner.

On February 26, there was held the first reunion of Hopkins Residents in Gynecology. Dr. Cullen enjoyed himself thoroughly and it was a treat for the younger men to visit with him. The next night he attended the biennial dinner of the Hopkins Medical and Surgical Society. He left before the speaking began and many of his old students shook his hand as he departed. Early the next morning he had another stroke which proved to be fatal four days later. Although a feeling of sadness is inevitable with the passing of a great character, one cannot help but believe that it would have been planned exactly that way had he been master of his own destiny.

*Richard W. Te Linde*