

IN MEMORIAM

EDMUND BROWN PIPER*

1881—1935

THE subject of this memoir, Edmund Brown Piper, was born in Williamsport, Pa., April 20, 1881. Receiving his preliminary education in the Cheltenham Military Academy, he entered Princeton University, graduating with the degree of B.S. in 1902. For the next five years he was in business with the Williamsport Water Company.

Deciding to adopt a profession, Edmund Piper entered the Medical School of the University of Pennsylvania, graduating in 1911. Following an internship in the Children's Seashore House, Atlantic City, the Mercy Hospital, Pittsburgh, and in the University Hospital, he served as Chief Resident in the latter for two years, entering the practice of medicine in 1914, with special attention to obstetrics and gynecology, in the same year receiving an appointment as Associate in Obstetrics in the Medical School. In 1915 Piper went to France with the University Unit of the Ambulance Service. On his return he devoted himself entirely to his specialty, but his medical career was again interrupted in 1917 by our entrance into the World War, when he went to France with the rank of Major, commanding Camp Hospital No. 41 and Field and Camp Hospitals Nos. 42, 48 and 50. In May, 1919, he was cited by General Pershing for "exceptional, meritorious and conspicuous services at Camp Hospital No. 41, A.E.F." He was discharged from active service April 10, 1919, and in March, 1920, was commissioned Lieut. Colonel, M.R.C., and was recommissioned with the same rank in 1925. At the conclusion of the war he resumed his special practice with an indefatigable energy and unmistakable ability that secured him, in an amazingly short time, an unusual recognition and opportunity to develop himself. There follows a chronological list of his appointments.

Assistant Obstetrician on the staffs of the University and the Philadelphia General Hospitals, Obstetrician to the Maternity Hospital of Philadelphia, Obstetrician in Chief to the Bryn Mawr Hospital, Obstetrician to the Philadelphia Lying-In Hospital, Obstetrician to the Chestnut Hill Hospital, Obstetrician and Gynecologist to the Philadelphia General Hospital, Chief of Service of the Obstetrical Department of the Pennsylvania Hospital, Obstetrician to the University Hospital, Professor of Obstetrics in the University Medical School and

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in the Graduate School of Medicine of the University, and Consultant in Obstetrics to the Bryn Mawr Hospital, Kensington Hospital for Women, Misericordia Hospital and the Preston Retreat, as well as staff positions in other hospitals.

Such rapid advancement to so many important positions was a rare achievement, all the more admirable that it was due to merit and to no extraneous influences.

In addition to his clinical and teaching positions he was a member of the following professional societies: The College of Physicians of Philadelphia; American Gynecological Society and Club; American College of Surgeons; Philadelphia College of Surgeons; The Pathological Society of Philadelphia; Philadelphia Obstetrical Society (President 1924); The Philadelphia County Medical Society; Pennsylvania State Medical Association; American Medical Association; and The Medical Club of Philadelphia.

In 1922 Edmund Piper published the results of experiments in animals, proving the possibility of sterilizing the blood current with mercurochrome in cases of septicaemia. After establishing the proper intravenous dose per kilo weight, the method was successfully applied in human beings.

He had an inventive genius. His axis traction forceps, an outlet forceps, a modified leg holder were distinct improvements on the older models, and his original aftercoming head forceps is generally admitted to be the most important contribution to the armamentarium of obstetrics in recent times. In his practical work he showed manual dexterity, good judgment, decision and imperturbability, confronted with serious emergencies. He developed a skill in version comparable with that of Dr. Potter, whose name is usually associated with the operation in the medical mind.

As a teacher his forceful personality, large experience and capacity to impart information gained him the respect and affection of his students. He took particular interest in an extramural course to sections of the class on premarital advice, given frankly but with propriety and delicacy.

This brief sketch of Edmund Piper, the physician and teacher, does him scant justice without a tribute to the man's character, difficult to render with becoming restraint by one of his closest friends, who keenly feels his loss. His good humor, wit, exuberant vitality and joy of living made him a delightful companion, but such qualities do not explain the devotion of his many friends, nor in my case a cordial, affectionate friendship without a break for twenty years, under circumstances that might easily have caused misunderstandings. In the German Medical Schools it was long a custom never to elect the successor to a Professor from one of his Staff. Edmund Piper made no

secret of his ambition to succeed his Chief. Nevertheless, there was no trace of disloyalty on the one side nor of jealousy on the other. One does not usually analyze a friendship. It exists unquestioned of its cause. Had it ever occurred to me to ask myself why I esteemed so highly my departed friend, the answer would have been, partly a natural response to his affection for me, but mainly an admiration of his distinctive traits of courage, loyalty, and truth.

Edmund Piper from his twelfth year might have led the life of an invalid on account of grave heart disease. Ignoring the ever-present possibility of sudden death, echoing Ovid, "Come when it will, The day that ends my life's uncertain term," unafraid, he ordered his life as he determined it should be, a strenuous existence, full of varied activities. In one of his exploits, driving his car at furious speed across the continent and back, he seemed to flaunt defiance in the face of fate for inflicting on him the one defect in an otherwise perfect physique.

He was the soul of loyalty to his friends, with his kindly and generous disposition exalting their good qualities and often deprecating what he mistakenly considered defects in himself. He was truth personified, incapable of guile, pretense, affectation or equivocation. His convictions were strong. He was easily angered by what seemed to him unjust or wrong, but he never harbored rancor. He said what he thought without reserve, sometimes unconsciously giving offense by his frank opinions.

During his later years there were distressing attacks of cardiac decompensation, with other extremely painful complications, one requiring a major operation, but never once was there loss of patience, equanimity or courage. He died suddenly January 14, 1935, while apparently improved in health.

In his death medicine lost a colorful, forceful, unusual figure; his friends, a beloved comrade whose memory they will always cherish.

Barton C. Hirst.



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