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ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS.

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OBITUARY—MORRIS J. ASCH.*

An honorable career was ended on October 5, 1902, when Morris Joseph Asch, A.B., A.M., M.D., died at the age of 70, at Irvington-on-Hudson. Although a sufferer for nearly three years the end came suddenly from an attack of cerebral embolism. Dr. Asch was born on July 4, 1833, and was the second son of Joseph M. and Clara Ulman Asch. His early education was mainly under private tutors and in the autumn of 1848 he entered the University of Pennsylvania, where he was graduated on July 2, 1852, with the baccalaureate degree. His Master's degree was received in course July 3, 1855. He as a member of the Alpha Chapter (University of Pennsylvania), of the P. K. E. fraternity. Among his classmates at the University of Pennsylvania were: Brunton Coxe, of Philadelphia, late President of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Dr. Richard J. Duglison, of Philadelphia; Charles Hare Hutchison, President Athenæum of Philadelphia, who died in Paris, France, the day before Dr. Asch died; Dr. Benjamin Lee, of Philadelphia, Secretary to the Pennsylvania Board of Health; Dr. S. B. Wylie Mitchell, Dr. Isaac Norris, William Lehman Wells and Mr. Joseph G. Rosengarten, of Philadelphia. Only Drs. Lee and Norris and Mr. Rosengarten are alive. In the fall of 1852 he entered the Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia, from which he received the doctorate in 1855. Soon after graduation Dr. Asch was ap-

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pointed clinical assistant to Dr. Samuel Gross, then one of America's renowned surgeons, with whom he remained for several years. When war was declared and his country called, it was but natural that he should enter the army, where three brothers had already volunteered. He passed the examination for assistant surgeon of the United States army, which he entered on August 5, 1861. He was on duty at the surgeon general's office from August, 1861, to August, 1862. He subsequently became surgeon in chief to the Artillery Reserve of the Army of the Potomac, medical inspector Army of the Potomac, medical director of the 24th Army Corps, medical inspector of the Army of the James, staff surgeon of General P. H. Sheridan from 1865 to 1873. Of some of the battles of the Civil War in which Dr. Asch participated were Chancellorsville, Mine Run, Gettysburg, The Wilderness and Appomattox Court House. On March 13, 1865, he was brevetted major for faithful and meritorious services during the war. He resigned from the Army of the Potomac on March 3, 1873, and entered into the practice of medicine in New York City. He devoted himself largely though not exclusively to the study and treatment of diseases of the nose and throat and held the position of surgeon to the Throat Departments of the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary and the Manhattan Eye and Ear Hospital. When the American Laryngological Association was formed he was one of its founders, and he was president in 1893. He was especially proud of this association and was always zealous in its behalf. He was also a member of the New York Academy of Medicine and actively interested in the work of the Section of Laryngology. He held for a time the position of professor of Laryngology to the New York Polyclinic. He was a member of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion, of the Union, University, Century and New York Yacht Clubs. His contributions to the literature of his chosen specialty were many. He wrote the article on "Stenosis of the Larynx" in the *Reference Hand Book of Medical Sciences*, Vol IV, Dr. A. H. Buck, editor, the one on "Chronic Affections of the Nose," and a description of an operation for the cure of deviations of the cartilaginous septum, in the *American Text Book of Diseases of the Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat*, De Schwenitz and Randall. Among his detached articles are the following:

"Lupus of the Pharynx and Larynx," Transactions of the American Laryngological Association, *Archives of Laryngology*, Vol II, page 243.

"Sudden Death Occurring after Tracheotomy," Transactions of the American Laryngological Association, 1883, page 180.

"A Case of Ecchondrosis of the Larynx," Transactions of the American Laryngological Association, *N. Y. Medical Journal*, Vol. XL, page 235, 1884.

"Instrument, an Osteome," Transactions of the American Laryngological Association, 1885, page 80.

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"Instrument, a Snare," Transactions of the American Laryngological Association, 1891, page 142.

"Instrument, Nasal Tampon Made of Vulcanite," Transactions of the American Laryngological Association, 1892, page 112.

"President's Address," *N. Y. Medical Journal*, Vol. LVIII.

"Instrument, Bor's Laryngeal Dilator," Transactions of the American Laryngological Association, 1895, page 221.

"Laryngeal Stenosis Treated by Divulsion and Systematic Dilation, *N. Y. Medical Journal*, Vol. XLVI, 1887.

"A New Operation for Deviation of the Nasal Septum, with a Report of Cases," *N. Y. Medical Journal*, Vol. LII, 1890.

"A Case of Intrinsic Epithelioma of the Larynx," *N. Y. Medical Journal*, Vol. LV, page 132, 1892.

"Instrument, a Modification of the Gradle Forceps," Transactions of the American Laryngological Association, 1895, page 221.

Of all his writings his name will ever be connected with the one descriptive of the operation for the cure of septal deviations and which for some time past has been known as the Asch operation. He gave years of study of the most patient kind to it, perfecting it in its minutest detail, waiting until the results could be fully demonstrated before he presented his report, and this is well attested by the fact that his first published description of his manner of operating was never changed. He realized that no one method could ever be presented that would answer for every kind of deformity, but he demonstrated fully that his operation answered for the vast majority of cases, and he lived to see it become the most popular method in the country, and to know that it was performed in every part of the world. It is but a few short months ago that an enthusiastic report of the Asch operation appeared in the *British Medical Journal* written by a noted Laryngologist in Manchester, England.

An interesting chapter of Dr. Asch's life was that part of it after the Civil War, while on the staff of the late General Philip H. Sheridan. Here he was known as assistant to the medical director, Department of the Gulf, and medical director at Department Headquarters. General Sheridan had then been ordered to New Orleans to make a campaign against the Confederate Army of S. Kirby Smith, which it was supposed would lead our troops into Mexico and give our government an excuse for driving the Emperor Maximilian out of that country. In view of the expected arduous service that would take place, Sheridan was especially anxious about having a competent and efficient medical staff. Being permitted to have his choice he headed the list of surgeons with the name of Dr. Asch, but it was fated that the campaign should not take place, as Kirby Smith suddenly surrendered, which left no excuse for the invasion of Mexico. In consequence Sheridan remained at New Orleans, Dr. Asch remaining with him. During this period Asch performed much and varied service, going with Sheridan on all of his inspections in Louisiana and Texas in the dual capacity of his personal medical

attendant and as his medical adviser in regard to the sanitary condition of the troops in a large number of camps and stations. This task may be appreciated when it is stated that the number of troops was nearly one hundred thousand.

Dr. Asch while in New Orleans was most prominent and active in two great epidemics. One of cholera in 1866 and the other of yellow fever in 1867. The latter was the most serious and disastrous that ever visited New Orleans. Nearly half of the staff were taken with it and several died. By the time the epidemic was under control and was diminishing, Sheridan was relieved and ordered to Fort Leavenworth, Dr. Asch accompanying him, but at St. Louis he also fell ill with yellow fever. On his recovery he joined Sheridan at the new station. Asch's next notable service was in the field with Sheridan against the Indians of the Southern Plains, especially in the winter campaign of 1868-1869, which forever broke the power of the Cheyennes, Kiowas and Comanches. On this expedition Asch was acting medical director and had complete charge of all the sanitary arrangements. That he was successful in caring for the wounded and sick in an unprecedentedly cold winter was often the remark of every officer of the command, that he received the highest commendation of General Sheridan goes without saying when it is known that that officer on his promotion to the grade of lieutenant general took Asch to his new headquarters in Chicago, where he continued rendering invaluable services until he resigned.

He carried with him into private life the sincere love of his old comrades, he never forgot them and he showed his affection for them in many ways. He was proud of his membership in the Military Order of the Loyal Legion, a body composed of those whose fealty had been tested. He was ever considerate and thoughtful of his fellow officers and they and their families could always command his services, and many were the acts of kindness shown them by him; nor did the soldier in the ranks ever appeal to him without receiving comfort and cheery encouragement. He accepted the position of medical examiner of the Soldiers' Home in order that he might aid the unfortunates who sought admission there. Often when he was compelled to leave the city Dr. Asch would direct that these applicants should be sent to the writer, and it was so characteristic of him to always enjoin that the poor old soldier should be given every possible aid. "That soldier," said he, "gave all he had, his best years, to his country and now if in his old days he wants to go to the Home, help him all you can, for the country wants to and should care for him."

Whatever Dr. Asch undertook was always conscientiously and well done, and faithful attention to duty was the surest way to win his esteem and friendship. During his active career he never neglected his official duties and always saw that the work was done if he was in anyway detained. He appreciated to the full when his assistants were faithful and he rewarded them with his staunch support in return. It became impossible for those who met him not to know him, and knowing him they loved him.

Of courteous bearing, with a commanding presence, with a wide knowledge of human nature, he was withal gentle, retiring and far too modest. He was always young in heart and loved to have his juniors with him, he liked to take counsel with them believing that he could correct his perspective through their fresher vision and he was their friend. He gladly advised those who sought his opinion, he was always true to his convictions and his word was his bond. He had his honest opinions and he had no patience with vacillating men; he detested fraud and trickery. His career was a noble one, success attended his every effort and he was enabled to live in comfort, beloved by all whose love was worth having, and when he died he was ministered to and surrounded by those whom he loved best.

This was Dr. Asch; a conscientious, skillful and scientific physician, a patient, wise and kindly counsellor, a true and devoted friend. His many virtues may be summed up in saying that he was loyal.

Loyal to his God, to his country and to her flag, loyal to his family, to his profession and to his friends. We may never see his like again, but we will have with us for all time the recollection of his cheery smile and the knowledge that the world has been the better for his having lived in it.

This humble tribute is placed on his bier in grateful recognition of his many virtues and as a slight token of deep admiration and fond remembrance.

EMIL MAYER.