



AUGUST HOCH, M.D.

1868-1919

## Obituary

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Through the death of August Hoch, THE ARCHIVES OF NEUROLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY has lost an important member of its editorial board. A wide circle of psychiatric workers and friends feel keenly the passing away of this much beloved man. The loss is most keenly felt by the many who were closely acquainted with Hoch's work and what he might have given to us from the treasures of over twenty years of rare clinical observation and study.

A few years ago signs of a familial arteriosclerosis asserted themselves; a severe attack of sciatica in 1916 yielded but slowly. A change to a well adapted existence in California seemed to reestablish a safe balance; even a somewhat tedious infection of the foot during the last winter had cleared up; but shortly after a happy twenty-fifth anniversary of his wedding, the second day of a visit to San Francisco, where he had gone in part with the hope of working in the Medical Library, he was overtaken by a peculiar collapse, with profound renal insufficiency and a rapid development of uremia.

Hoch came to this country in 1887, when 19 years old, to take up the study of medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. He came from a happy family and a genial circle of friends at the gymnasium of Basel. His father, a minister, had for years been superintendent of the City and University Hospital of Basel, Switzerland. Hopes of an academic career must have been deeply implanted in him and may have determined him, together with his friend, Charles E. Simon, to follow Osler to the Johns Hopkins Hospital. He graduated from the University of Maryland. He worked largely with Henry M. Thomas, and translated Hirt's "Textbook of Nervous Diseases." His first paper dealt with hematomyelia. In 1893 he was chosen to become psychologist and pathologist in the extensive scheme of research laboratories planned by Dr. E. Cowles at the McLean Hospital, and he was sent abroad for further preparation. He went first to Strassburg, with Simon Flexner, to work on brain anatomy with Schwalbe, then to Leipsic, where he endeared himself to Külpe and Marbe and Kiesow in Wundt's laboratory, and finally to Heidelberg where he became one of the contributors to Kraepelin's drive into the domain of a medically useful experimental psychology. Hoch's study of the effects of tea and its oils was made on the basis of some far-reaching generalizations by Kraepelin, especially concerning the facilitation of motor reactions. Hoch married Emmy Muench, of Basel, and then returned to start the

twelve years of work at the McLean Hospital, first at Somerville and later in an excellent laboratory at the new hospital at Waverley, Mass. When I met him for the first time, September, 1895, he was living in the village with his wife and his only child, Susie—in a genial home—and gave his whole enthusiasm and interest to a continuation of his psychologic and anatomic studies.

Edward Cowles had taken the superintendency of the McLean Hospital in 1879, after a brief training at the Hartford Retreat and a period of several years as superintendent of the Boston City Hospital. A man fond of speculation, with a decided yearning for progress, stimulated by Stanley Hall, at that time professor of psychology at Johns Hopkins University, he had an ambition to promote research in his well-endowed institution. His Shattuck lecture of 1885 foreshadowed his program of clinical speculation. He hoped to develop his psychiatric conceptions, leaving the clinical work very much on the old plan of having a few mainly administrative assistants, with the emphasis of innovation resting on the introduction of laboratory investigation. Dr. Hoch became the successor of Dr. Noyes, who had not been especially happy in this semi-academic and nevertheless isolated position. The chemical laboratory, destined to be the birthplace of Folin's reputation, soon was added; staff conferences aimed to harmonize the trends of work. The essentially different Worcester plan of organization laid the emphasis on putting the entire clinical staff on something like a research basis, developing the laboratories in the service of this foundation as means in talents and funds became available, but always with a clear appreciation of the importance of a sound and critical setting. Kraepelin's revolution of psychiatry in 1896 and Nissl's joining the Heidelberg Clinic led to Hoch's second period of work with Kraepelin in 1897. He returned in spirit and fact the full-fledged psychiatric leader of the staff, as well as an especially well trained histopathologist, and one deeply interested in putting the ergograph work into the service of clinical problems. Dr. Cowles never made a complete readjustment to the natural result of these developments, so that the clinical publications were retarded; but Hoch's work became more and more the clinical research with a wise perspective regarding the laboratory investigations for which we all admire him. His interest in the ergograph studies did not cease; but a special report on a patient with alternating days of elation and depression may have served as a damper with regard to the pertinence of the reactions to the specific kraepelinian disease-processes when the dominant process proved to be general paresis. In the first volume of the *Psychological Bulletin*, Hoch summed up the net result of that type of psychologic experimentation in its application to psychiatry.

The period of work with Nissl and Kraepelin in 1897 had a double effect on Hoch. He produced his studies on nerve-cell changes of the cortex in a case of acute delirium and a case of delirium tremens (1897) and on the nerve-cell changes in somatic diseases (1898), full of interesting details, in marked contrast to the numerous writings of that day which saw little more than "chromatolysis" in the cortex pathology. At the same time, from here on, the clinical studies began to predominate: the articles on mania and melancholia and manic-depressive insanity in the *Reference Handbook for Medical Sciences*, the unreality-feelings (1905), the studies on drug deliria (1906), the manageable causes of insanity (1909), the problem of toxic-infectious psychoses (1912) and a most important group of contributions to the study of personalities, the constitutional factors in the dementia praecox group, the mental mechanisms in dementia praecox, the relations of personality and psychosis, and the relation of insanity to the psychoneuroses. All these studies contain little gems of keen and yet direct and simple formulations of well observed clinical cases, in wholesome contrast to Kraepelin's method of presentation, which overwhelms the reader with collections of fragments devoid of personal settings. It was this departure in the work of Hoch that made it possible and perhaps imperative for him to pay more and more attention to the rôle of the personality so strongly emphasized by American workers.

In 1905, Hoch was induced to take the position of first assistant physician of the Bloomingdale Hospital at White Plains, N. Y. He had done some teaching at Tufts Medical School, and he became professor of psychiatry at Cornell Medical College at the same time as he was called to the directorship of the Psychiatric Institute of the New York State Hospitals on Ward's Island, in 1909. As a teacher of the Cornell medical students and of the assistant physicians in the State Hospital system Hoch found opportunities for the fullest expression of his spirit of investigation and formulation. A period of study with Bleuler and Jung and von Monakow, in 1908, gave him an intimate familiarity with the structural and psychoanalytical problems, balanced by an unusually keen sense for intensive clinical study of his patients. It was with the greatest regret that his numerous pupils and colleagues saw him depart for California—a loss compensated only by the hope that in his new environment he would be able to bring out more rapidly monographs based on material from the McLean and Bloomingdale hospitals and the Psychiatric Institute.

From his advent at the Psychiatric Institute he took the greatest interest in the further development of the *Bulletin of the New York State Hospitals* into a psychiatric journal of the first order, the *Psy-*

*chiatric Bulletin*. In California he hoped to found a special journal, but was finally induced to combine his effort with the newly planned ARCHIVES OF NEUROLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY in order not to divide the efforts where union appeared most urgently needed. During the later years in New York he also proved a most helpful contributor to the interests of the social side of psychiatry, partly in connection with the National Committee of Mental Hygiene. The New York Psychiatric Society and the American Psychopathological Association count him among their most active and influential former presidents.

Hoch was not a generalizer. His strong point and first love was that of appreciation of the finer niceties of description and interpretation. He was not a philosopher, but a man with a keen sense for specific features and aspects of cases or problems. A definite cell alteration, a definite rhythm in the plotted results of his ergograph and kindred experiments, a fact such as passivity or specific traits revealed in the personality-study, which he brought out in collaboration with his friend Amsden, reactions like distressed perplexity, or the death and rebirth concept in some of his patients, would absorb his whole-hearted attention, and would tend toward monographic studies. It is to be hoped that the rich material practically ready for publication will be added to the noteworthy array of publications from his pen.

Hoch's personality was somewhat retiring and at the same time most genial. He was capable of the keenest and heartiest enjoyment of friendship and social happiness with his chosen friends and his family. He gained the warmest affection of his patients. He always remained closely attached to his native country, but was a loyal and warm-hearted citizen of the United States, and deeply appreciative of the beauty of the East and the South, and especially of California.

Hoch's work, his friendship and warm-heartedness will leave an enduring impression on all those who were fortunate enough to know him. His contribution to American psychiatry would fully deserve a memorial edition of his publications, together with the works which we hope his friends and co-workers will bring to speedy completion. What a pity that he should not have seen the day when his many friends and admirers might have celebrated with him the publication of his many-sided and well-poised collected works, somewhat as has recently been done to honor Cornelis Winkler on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his professorship of neurology in the Universities of Amsterdam and Utrecht.

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