References


WILLIAM ALEXANDER HAMMOND (1828-1900)

Hammond, a native of Maryland and the son of a physician, entered the U.S. Medical Department as assistant surgeon early in his career (1849). His first tour of duty was in the Southwest, where he took part in campaigns against the Sioux Indians. After a few years an illness brought him extended sick leave which he spent in Europe making an intensive study of military hospitals. On his return, a friendship with Weir Mitchell was kindled by their mutual interest in arrow and ordnance poisons and snake venoms, on the latter of which they published their first account in 1859 in the American Journal of Medicine. Being of the same age, they were on equal terms. Both were looking for antidotes for snakebite. One day Hammond mentioned to Weir Mitchell that while in Texas he had successfully used a certain antidote for rattlesnake poison. Mitchell then purchased a half dozen of these snakes, only to prove to his satisfaction that the antidote was of no value.

Hammond's academic interests were the cause of his resignation from the army in 1860 to accept the chair of anatomy and physiology at the University of Maryland. However, at the outbreak of the War between the States he re-entered the army as assistant surgeon. Regarding promotion, he was at the bottom of the list, but his accomplishments as inspector of hospitals, where he introduced humane management, were such that despite his youth—he was thirty-four—President Lincoln appointed him Surgeon General (1862). His tenure was distinguished by many achievements,
among them the founding in 1862 of the Army Medical Museum, more recently (1949) the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. In the same year he began with J. H. Brinton, J. J. Woodward and G. A. Otis the work of compiling the Medical and surgical history of the War of the Rebellion, those weighty tomes of which Ru-

Portrait, courtesy of the National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Maryland.
dolf Virchow stated (1874): "Whoever takes in hand and examines these comprehensive publications will continually have his astonishment excited anew by the riches of the experience, purchased at so dear a price, which is there recorded..."

Constant friction between General Hammond and Secretary of War Stanton—the former keen of intellect, indomitable in spirit, and, to some, pompous and arrogant; the latter autocratic, intractable and unrelenting in his prejudices—came to a climax in 1863 when General Hammond was ordered on an extended, obviously permanent, inspection tour. This caused Hammond to demand restoration of the prerogatives of his office or trial by court-martial. Tried in 1864 by a "packed court" on the charge of irregularities incident to the purchase of medical supplies, General Hammond received a verdict of guilty and was dismissed from the Army. After more than a decade (1878) he was vindicated by Act of Congress. It was some years later that he donned the resplendent dress uniform (of a Brigadier General) to sit for the portrait shown herewith.

Shortly after the trial, penniless and in debt, Hammond moved to New York and succeeded in establishing a practice of neurology. This not only brought him prominence but also made him exceedingly wealthy. He became professor at the University of the City of New York in 1874, and at Bellevue Hospital Medical College in 1876, the year his *Spiritualism...* (New York, Putnam) appeared: a book of fantastic tales, such as that of a girl abstaining from food and drink for years, raising in her doctor's mind the question: "Why does the body grow when nothing goes into it?" Hammond was among the seven who founded the American Neurological Association. In 1888 he returned to Washington, where some years later he died of a cardiac ailment.

Hammond shares with Weir Mitchell the distinction of having secured for neurology its place in American medicine. What raised Hammond most above the rank and file was his observation, reported in 1871 (in his textbook, *A treatise on diseases of the nervous system*; Appleton, New York), of a bizarre muscular condition involving the hand and foot of one side, for which he coined the term "athetosis" ("without fixed position"). In his assessment of the two cases, this perceptive observer found reason to
remark: "the analogies of the affection are with chorea and cerebro-spinal sclerosis, but it is neither of these diseases. One probable seat of the morbid process is in the corpus striatum."

Abduction of the fingers, extension and pronation or supination of the hand, and "agitation" of the limbs by irregular movements, all occurring in association with spastic hemiplegia, had been described by Cazauvielh6 as early as 1827 in a study of varied cortical hemiatrophic states, but he brought no substance into his evaluation. In a case of hemiathetosis Gowers (1876)3 found a puckered scar in the contralateral thalamus. Hammond's term was adopted neither by Weir Mitchell (1874),4 who referred to the disorder (posthemiplegic) as "hemichorea," nor by Gowers,5 who spoke of "mobile spasm." Charcot (1879),6 too, was critical, and remarked that athetosis is nothing else but a variety of chorea. Congenital "double athetosis" was so designated in 1873 by Shaw,8 as a disease "most closely resembling chorea, but the distinction is, on careful examination, well marked." Greidenberg (1886),7 asserting that he was the first in Russia to publish on this subject (in 1881), suggested that the disorder be called "the disease of Hammond." Credit for the finding of lesions in the putamen of the two sides in congenital cases of double athetosis goes to Anton (1896),8 though he acknowledged earlier descriptions to this effect. Anton found patches of "hypermyelinated" nerve fibers in the putamen, but it was Freund and Cécile Vogt8 who, in 1911, emphasized this feature, referring to the abnormality as état marbré ("status marmoratus").

Hammond was an uncommonly tall and large man with a voice so powerful that it could be heard upwind in a hurricane. He had a penchant for theatrical action, which he exercised as playwright, lecturer and novelist. Moreover, there was a substantial dash of Paracelsus in him. He was not only an outstanding leader and talented organizer but also an aristocrat among the laborers in the neurological field. Tough-fibered to begin with, and toughened further by exposure in Kansas while on duty in the Indian country, he was, above all, a "brave figure out of the past, a reminder of the days when words were plain and men were men" (Duncan).
WILLIAM ALEXANDER HAMMOND

References


HENRY HEAD (1861–1940)

H ENRY HEAD came of an old Quaker family of Stamford Hill in England. In 1880 he was elected to a scholarship at Trinity College, Cambridge, where, with Langley and Sherrington, he was strongly influenced by the physiologists Gaskell and Michael Foster. After graduating B.A. with honors in natural science he spent two years in the German University of Prague and the University of Halle. He is reputed to have introduced association football to Prague where it has ever since been a popular national pastime.

Head’s first paper was on the action potential of nerve. Next, from Hering’s laboratory in Halle in 1889, he published a masterly treatise on the respiratory effects of the vagus nerve. Following study in University College Hospital, London, he graduated in