

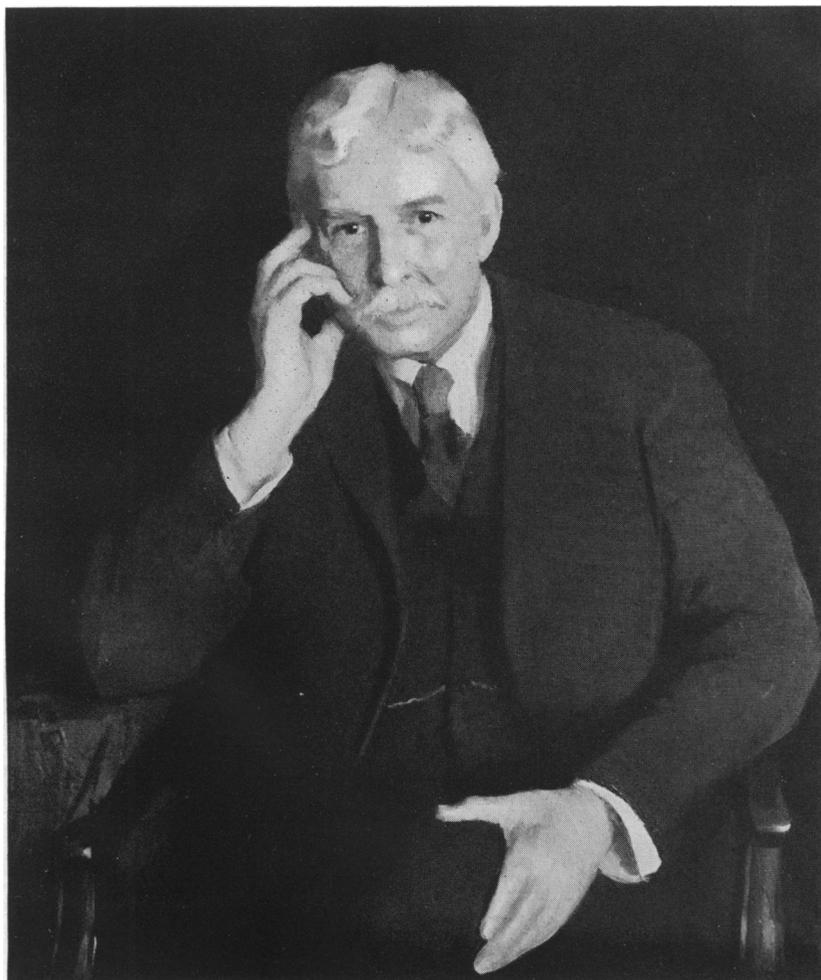
# MEMOIR

GEORGE HOWARD MONKS, M.D.

1853-1933

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IN THE death of Dr. George Howard Monks January 6, 1933, the surgical profession of our country and his native New England lost a man whose place, both as a man and a surgeon, it will be hard to fill. Primarily he was



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an artist, and everything he did in his profession was marked by an artistic skill peculiarly his own. He had spent many laborious years in teaching in the Harvard Medical School, especially in the Department of Surgical Anatomy in which he always showed a special interest. He had done much

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work in plastic surgery and contributed a great deal to that subject. He wrote on operations for correcting deformity due to prominent ears, unilateral laryngectomy for carcinoma, spiral fractures of the humerus, flushing of the intestinal canal through multiple enterostomy openings, plastic operations on the nose by Tagliacozzi's method, and many other subjects. His work on intestinal localization, which he perfected by long study on the cadaver, was one of his most important contributions. In this he demonstrated that a coil of the small intestine presenting through any small incision in the abdomen could be closely localized by its physical characteristics so that its availability for low or high enterostomy could be determined without the formidable process of exenteration and going over the whole length of the bowel to see what part of the bowel presented. He also demonstrated that the entire small intestine could be strung on a straight rod or tube, a discovery which Lord Moynihan afterwards employed in devising his long straight tube for emptying distended coils of intestine in obstruction. This was the subject of the Mütter Lecture before the College of Physicians of Philadelphia in 1905. He published in all fifty-six papers, including biographical sketches of contemporary surgeons. One of the best was entitled *Selections from the Medical Writings and Sayings of Doctor Oliver Wendell Holmes*.

Doctor Monks was born in Boston, March 28, 1853, son of John P. and Delia S. (Hatton) Monks. He prepared for college at Boston Latin School. He was graduated from Harvard College in 1875 and entered the architectural department of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he studied during the following year. He then decided to study medicine and entered the Harvard Medical School, from which he was graduated in 1880. After a year of surgical internship at the Massachusetts General Hospital, Doctor Monks studied further for four years at Vienna, Leipzig, Heidelberg, Dresden, Paris and other continental medical centres. At the end of this period he passed examinations admitting him as a member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

He began the practice of surgery in Boston in 1884, and was appointed district physician of the Boston Dispensary and, later, visiting surgeon to the Carney Hospital. In 1890, he entered the Boston City Hospital and was promoted through various grades to surgeon-in-chief in 1910. He resigned in 1914 and was appointed consulting surgeon.

From 1886 to 1914 Doctor Monks was connected with the Harvard Medical School, resigning after lecturing on surgery at the school for eleven years. From 1886 to 1926 he was connected with the Harvard Dental School, and in those forty years he provided a valuable link between the Medical and Dental Schools. When he resigned he was Professor of Oral Surgery. He was appointed a professor emeritus.

He was at various times chairman and secretary of the surgical section of the Suffolk District Medical Society, president of the Suffolk District Medical Society, president of the Boylston Medical Society, vice-president

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of the American Surgical Association, fellow of the American Medical Association, fellow of the American College of Surgeons, first president and co-founder of the Boston Surgical Society, senior member of the New England Surgical Society, president of the Boston Medical Library, Boston Society of Medical Sciences, American Medical Association, Massachusetts Medical Society, and the Boston Society for Medical Improvement.

During the recent war, being over age for active service, he was a member of the volunteer medical service corps and division medical adviser for the Red Cross.

It will be noted in the above account that he spent four years studying in European medical centres. In the autumn of 1883, while visiting his brother Robert in France, and preparing for the examination of the Royal College of Surgeons, he invented the game called "Halma," which was successfully introduced in this country by Dr. Thomas Hill of Portland, Maine, and later was manufactured and sold extensively in this and many foreign countries.

I cannot forbear introducing at this time a brief account of his avocations, taken from a sketch of his life which he himself wrote:

"I have had a number of 'hobbies,' to which I have given a good deal of attention, especially after retiring from active professional work. Perhaps the principal of these was sculpture, in connection with which I have modeled a number of subjects. It is pleasant to remember that my contribution to the Art Exhibition, held at the Tavern Club in 1886 for non-professional members (a small female head which I had modeled in red wax), received the first prize—'Le Grand Prix,' as it was called. Other pieces of amateur work were a bust of Mr. George Augustus Peabody (which was subsequently enlarged by Mr. John Wilson, and then put into marble, for the Peabody Museum at Salem, and another marble bust—a replica—for the Peabody Institute at Danvers); and also a small bust of Mr. George A. Gardner. My largest and perhaps most important work in the line of sculpture was a dancing figure, in bronze, for our little fountain at 'Briarwood.' I have also made a number of book-ends: among them a pair (in bronze) for Holmes Hall at the Boston Medical Library, after designs selected by the Librarian, Mr. James Ballard, from medical incunabula; another pair (in plaster) representing a man and a woman—for my friend—the late Dr. Morton Prince, and a replica of these for my wife; still another pair (in green bronze), being an attempt to make portraits of our two dogs, 'Zip' and 'Carina.'"

On hospital and teaching staffs Doctor Monks was an ideal colleague—modest, kindly, and ever appreciative of the work of his younger associates, to many of whom he gave unstinted help. He was one of the most unselfish men that have ever lived. Every instinct was that of a gentleman, and, I may add, of an artist, and his own profit or advantage was the last thing of which he thought. In personal appearance he was strikingly handsome, nor did his appearance belie his character. As he grew older and gradually

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retired from professional work he continued his artistic activities, and found in them joy and satisfaction, until nearly the end of his peaceful and fruitful life.

He was the founder of the Boston Surgical Society, and his influence induced the late Dr. Sturgis Bigelow to endow the Bigelow Medal, which has been presented to many distinguished surgeons in this country and abroad, for contributions to the art and science of surgery. He was greatly interested in and made many contributions to the Boston Medical Library.

He was married to Miss Olga E. Gardner in 1897. He leaves his wife, and three children: the Rev. George Gardner Monks, headmaster at the Lenox School; Dr. John Peabody Monks, a physician in Boston, and Miss Olga Monks. He also leaves a sister, Mrs. Walther Hempel of Dresden, Germany.

Such is a brief outline of the career of an eminent surgeon, and consummate artist. Rare indeed was the spirit of the man, and altogether lovely. To those who knew him intimately his memory will ever be a bright spot among the chequered experiences of their lives. Words fail in any attempt to depict his character. The writer can only regret that the only way to really appreciate him was to know him, and be thankful for his own delightful association with him for so many years.

FRED B. LUND

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