

## EDWIN BRADFORD CRAGIN

BY ROBERT L. DICKINSON, M.D.  
*Brooklyn, N. Y.*

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**EDWIN BRADFORD CRAGIN, A.B., A.M. (Hon.), M.D., F.A.C.S.,** was born in Colchester, Conn., October 23, 1859, a direct descendant of Governor Bradford. He studied at Bacon Academy in Colchester and graduated from Yale College in 1882 and from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1886, serving eighteen months on the staff of Roosevelt Hospital. He was an assistant gynecologist to the hospital from 1889 to 1899, received the appointment of professor of obstetrics at the college in 1899 and professor of gynecology in 1904, and held both of the chairs until his death. He had entire charge of Sloane Maternity Hospital since 1898, and was instrumental in founding the gynecological department in that institution. He was consulting obstetrician or gynecologist to the New York Infant Asylum, the Italian, Lincoln, Presbyterian and Roosevelt Hospitals and a Fellow of the American Gynecological Society, a member of the American Medical Association, the New York State and County Societies and the New York Academy of Medicine, being Vice-President of the last at the time of his death. He died October 21, 1918, at the age of fifty-nine.

Notwithstanding its wealth and the high place given to women, America can boast very few institutions equipped and set aside for obstetrics and gynecology. Still more rare is the close association of such a foundation with a prominent medical school. He who combines the control of such a service and the professorship is a conspicuous figure among his fellows, and this is particularly true when the first position has been re-

tained for twenty years and the second for fifteen. Such was the place held by Dr. Cragin at the Sloane Hospital for Women and the College of Physicians and Surgeons. If one takes into account the responsibility for the departments of obstetrics and gynecology; for the training of interns, nurses and students in the most modern methods; for the discovery and development of future leaders in these branches; for tests and contributions of new ideas and for the maturing of research facilities, and adds to these the duty of consultation with the profession, it is evident that the greatness and incessantness of the task makes demands of a severity that might well have broken a more vigorous man. If, moreover, the favored specialist of the wealthy in a huge city is an exponent of that conscientious midwifery which is above all others the time-absorbing element of the doctor's life, then it would appear that only by delegating detail and training a team of strong associates can such a work be carried out without undue strain. But Cragin gave himself little respite. He carried all responsibility and spared himself few particulars. His unabating enthusiasm for the onerous side of his work was beyond praise. So was his operative simplicity and quickness, his tenderness with tissue. As cobweb he gentled peritoneum. "He was the least traumatic of surgeons. To pathology he did not add pathology."

His teaching was distinguished by directness, and was eminently well balanced. Diagrams and charts pictured his procedures, such as the steps of operation. His writings were not numerous, but his book, addresses and scientific articles were characterized by a proportion and poise that never confused the issue and kept the insistence on essentials.

Ranking with his ability as a teacher may be placed Cragin's human and humane point of view as a doctor. With peculiar diagnostic sanity, more than ready to give full consideration to measures other than surgical, his courtesy to patients and the frank honesty of his advice to them had much to do with the importance of a practice that took a large portion of his time. He was the wise consultant, much consulted.

The benefactions of Cragin extended outside his professional

work, yet were not more alluded to by him than that hourly free service for which no doctor pauses to take credit. Few in the profession knew of the library he built and endowed in his native town of Colchester or of the hospital for women in China. He contributed most of the cost of this fine and permanent building for thirty-five beds at Hwai Yuen, and to carry on this work made a large part of the provision for equipment and endowment.

If gynecology is not swallowed up by surgery, and if obstetrics as a science does not grow discouraged, it may be chiefly because from centers such as this Sloane Hospital that Cragin cherished there will be sent out new methods and strong men, and for the reason that in such centers groups can be gathered, freed from some of the worries of private practice, to devote themselves to organized, endowed and fostered progress.



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**E**DWIN Bradford Cragin was born in Colchester, Connecticut, October 23, 1859. After a notable career, he died in New York City, October 21, 1918.

He represented the early New England lineage and the early New England ideals to a remarkable degree. His father, Edwin Timothy Cragin, who had been a captain in the Seventh Regiment during the portion of his life which was spent in New York City, died at a comparatively early age in Colchester. His mother, Ardelia Elizabeth Cragin lived to an advanced age. She expressed in her character and activities the fine traditions of New England life. She was a direct descendant of William Bradford, one of the original settlers of the Plymouth Colony, who came to this country in the Mayflower and became the first governor of that colony.

Dr. Cragin's boyhood was passed in Colchester. He entered Yale College in the class of 1882 and there received the degree of A.B. He then spent a year in study and travel in the west. In 1883 he entered the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City, and was graduated in 1886, receiving the first Harrison purse of five hundred dollars for proficiency in examination. He served his internship in the Roosevelt Hospital. In June, 1889, he was appointed assistant gynecologist to that institution. In the same year, he was also appointed assistant surgeon to the New York Cancer Hospital. He served regularly in the Roosevelt Hospital on the gynecological division for 10 years, doing a large amount of very successful work there. At the New York Cancer Hospital, he served for 4 years and then resigned.

His services to the College of Physicians and Surgeons were very important. From 1893 to 1895, he was assistant secretary and from 1895 to 1899 he was secretary of the faculty of that institution. In 1898 after the resignation of James W. McLane, he was made lecturer in obstetrics, and in 1899 he was appointed professor of obstetrics in the College and attending obstetrician in the Sloane Maternity Hospital.

For 20 years he carried on the duties of these offices with marked success and ability. During 14 years of this time, the professorship of gynecology was also joined to that of obstetrics. He believed that these departments should not be

separated. His conduct of the joint work of these departments was so successful that in 1909 Mr. and Mrs. William D. Sloane erected at their own expense and provided for the maintenance of a gynecological pavilion for the hospital which bore their name. This institution was then named the Sloane Hospital for Women, instead of the Sloane Maternity Hospital. He thus directed for many years a wonderfully equipped unit of college and hospital work, consisting of the professorship of obstetrics and gynecology and an obstetrical service of 128 beds and a well equipped though smaller gynecological hospital service.

His unusual executive ability enabled him to do this as few men could have done. He was particularly rapid and accurate in his thought and in his action. His decisions and his movements were so rapid and definite that it was difficult really to appreciate how much he was accomplishing or to keep abreast of his work. He was very far sighted in his plans. He had a remarkable capacity for eliminating unessential details and focusing his efforts with wonderful power and rapidity on what was really important. In all things, his procedure was determined by a strong adherence to principle and to the right as he saw it. Nothing could swerve him from his adherence to principle and to duty.

There was a very strong religious element in his character. He was connected with the Central Presbyterian Church for at least 30 years and occupied important offices there. His beneficence was great. He was one of the few men who believed that a tenth of his income should be given to charity in some form or other. His benefactions in the church were large and particularly unostentatious. Those who knew him would occasionally hear in some unexpected way of some of his generous actions. He built a hospital in China and supported a physician in attendance there. This hospital is still carrying on the work which he was so influential in starting. He founded a library in his native town of Colchester. When the war came on, it was his great regret that his health prevented him from going into active service, but he at once gave so large a sum of money for the support of the families of men who were in the service that it was more than sufficient and was in part returned to his estate after the war had closed and thence was used for other benefactions.

As an author, he made many contributions to his specialty. At first in the nature of primary books on gynecology and articles in the periodicals; and then finally by the publication of his treatise on *The Practice of Obstetrics*, a masterful volume of 839 pages which was published in 1916 and is accepted as an authoritative exposition of the subject. His contribution concerning the toxic effects of chloroform during parturition was one of the most valuable contributions of the time.

As a teacher, he was always particularly popular. His statements were clear, the arrangement of his subject was methodical, and he had in marked degree the ability to hold the attention and interest of his audience, with a diction so

clear that there was no question about its meaning, and an enthusiasm which was captivating and inspiring.

Yale University appreciated the notable work which he was doing and in 1907, in response to a request from his classmates, conferred upon him the honorary degree of master of arts. Many important hospitals also appreciated the benefit of his counsel and friendship and elected him to their consulting boards. Among them we may mention the Roosevelt Hospital, the Presbyterian Hospital, the Lincoln Hospital, the Infirmary for Women and Children, the City Hospital, the Nursery and Child's Hospital, and the Italian Hospital, all of them in New York City, and St. Luke's Hospital, Newburgh, New York.

His family life was particularly happy. His marriage to Mary Randall Willard of Colchester occurred in 1889, and they and their children Miriam, Alice, and Edwin Bradford were most congenial. They formed a family circle of the real New England type.

In thus studying the character and actions of this notable man, we find a character of the Puritan type with its strong adherence to duty and right, a very unusual executive ability, ability which would have placed him in the first rank in any occupation which he had sought. We find a great kindliness and generosity, a love for people and an appreciation of their needs, a broad-minded sympathy, a wonderful courage and conviction. He was truly one of nature's noblemen.

After Dr. Cragin's health began to fail in 1916 and 1917, he still kept at his work with great energy, but even his constitution could not withstand the strain and he passed away in the autumn of 1918.

Anyone who witnessed the great honor paid to his memory, at that time, could appreciate that he was one of the great masters among men and among surgeons.

CHARLES N. DOWD.





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