

American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology

VOL. 30

ST. LOUIS, NOVEMBER, 1935

No. 5

IN MEMORIAM

Barton Cooke Hirst

BARTON COOKE HIRST died September 2, 1935, at his home in Philadelphia, of acute dilatation of the heart. He was born in Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, on July 20, 1861, the son of William Lucas Hirst, a prominent attorney, and Lydia Barton Cooke. The Hirst family tree is traced in England as far back as the twelfth century, and the American branch of the family springs from John Hirst, who emigrated and settled in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in 1749. The tradition of the family was the law, there having been generations of Dr. Hirst's forebears in Temple Bar, London, and his decision to study medicine was an early evidence of the independence of thought which was always a salient characteristic.

Dr. Hirst married Elizabeth Haskins Dupuy Graham of Philadelphia in 1890, who survives him, as do also a daughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Dupuy Graham Lippincott, and two sons, Barton, Junior, an aviator in the late War, and Dr. John Cooke Hirst 2nd, an obstetrician of Philadelphia. The third son, Thomas, a First Lieutenant in the 151st Field Artillery, died in action in the late War.

Dr. Hirst entered the College Department of the University of Pennsylvania from the Faires Academy with the class of 1882, but at the end of his freshman year, having made up his mind as to his life work, another example of his independence and early maturity, he entered the Medical School, graduating with the class of 1883. Subsequent to his graduation in medicine he served as an interne in the University Hospital and then studied in Heidelberg, Vienna, Berlin, and Munich, where he became an interne with *teaching* duties. This Munich appointment probably had a great deal to do with his lifelong fight for better teaching in obstetrics. At the time of this appointment, eighteen months after his graduation, from the highest type medical school in the United States, he personally had never confined a woman, while on the other hand many of the students whom he had to teach and direct had made deliveries in more than one case. It goes without saying that a man of his mental attributes could not but make an odious comparison between the teaching abroad and that in

the United States. In any event, we know that the practical training in obstetrics for students became one of the ruling passions of his life. When he returned to Philadelphia and was made an assistant to Dr. R. A. F. Penrose, then Professor of Obstetrics at the University of Pennsylvania, there was not a bed devoted to this branch of medicine in the hospital and no arrangements for extramural student obstetrics. As soon, however, as he was elected to succeed Dr. Penrose in the professorship, he filled both of these needs by establishing a maternity department in the hospital and by creating an extramural service for home deliveries by senior students under close supervision. This latter service was and is known as the Southeastern Dispensary. Until Dr. Hirst's retirement from the Undergraduate School he remained largely responsible for its financial support.

At the time of his election to the chair of obstetrics at the University in 1889 the medical faculty was probably the most famous in the history of the school. Agnew, Wood, Pepper, Piersol, Reichert, Norris, Leidy, Wormley, Goodell, Tyson, and White, form a company which might well have given pause to a new member whose life span at that time was twenty-nine years. That he was impressed, goes without saying, but by his sheer professional ability and his ever present tact he was able to make himself acceptable to all of them—no mean feat. It is noteworthy that Dr. Hirst was only the fifth man to hold this chair since the first incumbent, Dr. James, was elected in 1810, the others having been Dr. Dewees, who held it for only one year, and Drs. Hodge and Penrose. It may be said that four men—James, Hodge, Penrose, and Hirst—have divided the occupancy of this chair for one hundred and seventeen years. Dr. Hirst occupied the chair of obstetrics in the University for thirty-eight years, delivering three lectures, or their equivalent, each week to crowded benches, and also personally conducting the large clinical service which he attracted to his ever growing department. The funds needed for new buildings were obtained to a large extent by his personal solicitation.

Dr. Hirst did a vast amount of gynecology as well as obstetrics in his service. He believed, taught, and fought for the interdependence of obstetrics and gynecology, at that time not generally conceded. In this movement he was a pioneer. He felt most strongly that no man unless a skilled pelvic surgeon could be considered a safe obstetrician, and that the reverse was also true, an opinion now almost axiomatic in the minds of those competent to judge, but at that time a very heterodox opinion in most quarters.

When he retired on age in 1927 from the chair of obstetrics in the Undergraduate School he was by far the oldest member of the faculty in point of service. The trustees of the University who in 1907 had conferred upon him the B.A. degree as of the class of 1882, and who subsequently gave him the honorary Doctor of Science degree, elected him, on his retirement from the chair of obstetrics, emeritus professor of obstetrics in the Undergraduate School, and on the amalgamation

of the Howard Hospital with the Graduate School of Medicine of the University, they elected him as professor of obstetrics in that institution with a service in the Graduate Hospital. He held this position until his death, conducting a very active teaching and operative service with the enthusiasm that was his in 1889, and with the ability and knowledge that his ripe experience had brought to full fruition.

Dr. Hirst held many and various positions in the medical world. He was proud to have been the Chairman of the Section on Obstetrics, Gynecology and Abdominal Surgery of the American Medical Association, and also to have been one of the founders of the American College of Surgeons. He was an enthusiastic member of the American Gynecological Society and one of its former presidents. He was a Fellow of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia since 1888. He was the only member of the Philadelphia Obstetrical Society ever to be elected three times as its president. He was a corresponding member of the Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology of Paris; Consulting Surgeon of the Paris Society of Foreign Surgeons; an honorary member of the Obstetrical Society of Edinburgh and also of the Belgian Gynecological and Obstetrical Society. The University of Pittsburgh gave him the honorary LL.D. degree.

His hospital activities in Philadelphia, aside from the University Hospital and the Hospital of the Graduate School of Medicine comprised staff membership, formerly at the Philadelphia General and the Howard Hospital, and latterly until his death he was active on the staff of the Orthopedic and the Lying-In Hospitals. The writer always felt that his first and greatest love was to the Howard Hospital in which for many years he was the mainspring. In fact from the time of his election to the Howard Hospital until its amalgamation with the Graduate School of Medicine of the University it is no exaggeration to say that he was the most active member of its staff. It is a pleasure to bear witness to the fact that after the Howard Hospital had become an integral part of the Graduate Hospital Dr. Hirst transferred his allegiance to that institution.

In his earlier years he was a prolific writer. The *American System of Obstetrics*, edited by him, his *Atlas of Gynecology, Human Monstrosities*, as co-editor with Piersol, and his own two textbooks, the one on *Obstetrics* and the other on *Diseases of Women*, bear ample witness to this fact, not to mention his many scattered articles and papers.

Such is the imperfect record of his achievement, and truly it is an enviable one, but to the many who knew and revered him, it portrays but the shadow of the man himself. The writer had peculiar opportunities to appraise Dr. Hirst at his true value—first as his student, some years later as an assistant on his staff, and a quiz master under him, and for the past eight years as his colleague in the Graduate School of Medicine, and the attributes which have indelibly impressed

themselves were his modesty, his courtesy, his kindness, which was unflinching, his interest in young men, his enthusiasm for the newer developments in medicine, his keen sense of humor, which made him enjoy a joke on himself at least as much as when another was the subject, an unusual trait, and his marvelous vitality, both physical and mental. Even during the past summer he followed his usual custom with regard to swimming, golf, and sailing; he continued to operate to the end of his life, and within two weeks of his death devised a new technic for sterilization.

As a consultant he was without a peer, not only in his knowledge but in his manifest sympathy with the patient and his meticulous courtesy to the physician. He was an omnivorous reader and a great sufferer from insomnia; this combination resulted in his being thoroughly conversant with general literature, and his interest in art and music must be emphasized. He was the life of the five o'clock social gatherings of medical men in the old days at the University Club before his particular *habeas corpus*, prohibition, put an end to them. In medical societies he was a most delightful essayist and his discussions of the papers of other men were always courteous, but he never hesitated to be critical when criticism was indicated.

He was a great teacher in the fullest meaning of that term, and in the opinion of thousands of undergraduate students of his day he was by far the best lecturer in the faculty. When it is remembered that actually several thousand men sat under him during his thirty-eight years of teaching, and that what he taught them has been utilized in their daily work among countless women patients, it must be felt that this alone would have been an enduring monument to his memory, even had he done no other meritorious work as a medical pioneer in obstetrical teaching and as a writer.

In his death, premature for him even at his age, medicine has lost an outstanding figure; obstetrics has lost one of the last of the pioneers, and his many friends and colleagues have an abiding sense of a loss which can only increase as time passes.

William R. Nicholson.

The Editors of the JOURNAL desire to add to the foregoing memorial an expression of their own sense of personal loss in the death of Dr. Hirst. He was a member of the Advisory Editorial Board from the time of its organization and during the earlier years in particular proved a good friend by his advice and counsel. Dr. Hirst occupied a unique position in the profession, he combined with his extensive knowledge of the science of medicine, a cultural and personal quality which is essential and most desirable in the equipment of a physician. He was a physician in whom the human side was of equal rank with scientific attainment. We pay honor to his memory.

*George W. Kosmak.
Hugo Ehrenfest.*



BARTON COOKE HIRST 1861—1935

history-of-obgyn.com

In Memoriam.

BARTON COOKE HIRST, A.B., M.D., LL.D., Sc.D., F.A.C.S.

BARTON COOKE HIRST, A.B., M.D., LL.D., Sc.D., F.A.C.S., was born at Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on July 20th, 1861, the son of William Lucas and Lydia Barton (Cooke) Hirst. He was educated at Fairie Academy and received his Bachelor's degree at the University of Pennsylvania, where he also became Doctor of Medicine in 1883.

After graduation Dr. Hirst spent two years in Europe, studying obstetrics and gynaecology in Munich, Heidelberg, Vienna and Berlin. He returned to the United States in 1885 where he immediately began collecting material for his *Textbook of Obstetrics* which ran through eight editions.

In 1889 Dr. Hirst was elected Professor of Obstetrics in the University of Pennsylvania, which Chair he held until retired by the age limit. His incumbency lasted for 38 years, and it is a coincidence that the only head of a department in the school of medicine who served it longer was William Shippen, Jr., the first occupant of the same Chair.

Dr. Hirst was a voluminous and excellent writer, his style terse and clear, his subject matter always carefully chosen. His principal works are the *Textbook of Obstetrics*, *Textbook of Diseases of Women*, *Atlas of Gynaecology*, and innumerable essays upon a diversity of subjects.

Medical recognition and honour came rapidly to Barton Hirst. In addition to his professorship and service at the University Hospital, he was Gynaecologist and Obstetrician to the Philadelphia General Hospital for many years, Gynaecologist to the Howard Hospital, Consulting Obstetrician to the Pennsylvania Hospital, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in the Graduate School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania and Consulting Gynaecologist to many hospitals in eastern Pennsylvania.

He was a corresponding member of the French Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Member Honoraire Etranger of the Belgian Society of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Honorary Member of the Edinburgh Society.

In America Dr. Hirst was so highly regarded that three universities conferred honorary degrees upon him. He was a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons, and the American Gynaecological Society, of which he was a past president, an honour which he also held in the Obstetrical Society of Philadelphia. He enjoyed membership in many other medical societies, both local and national in scope. Dr. Hirst was married in 1885 to Elsie Dupuy Graham, who, with two sons and one daughter, survive him. One son, Lieut. Thomas Graham Hirst, was killed in France in 1918, a loss which left a deep impression upon his father.

Dr. Hirst had been in excellent health, working and operating until September, when, after a day spent at the seashore, he complained of feeling ill, retired to his home and died suddenly on September 2nd, 1935, aged 74 years.

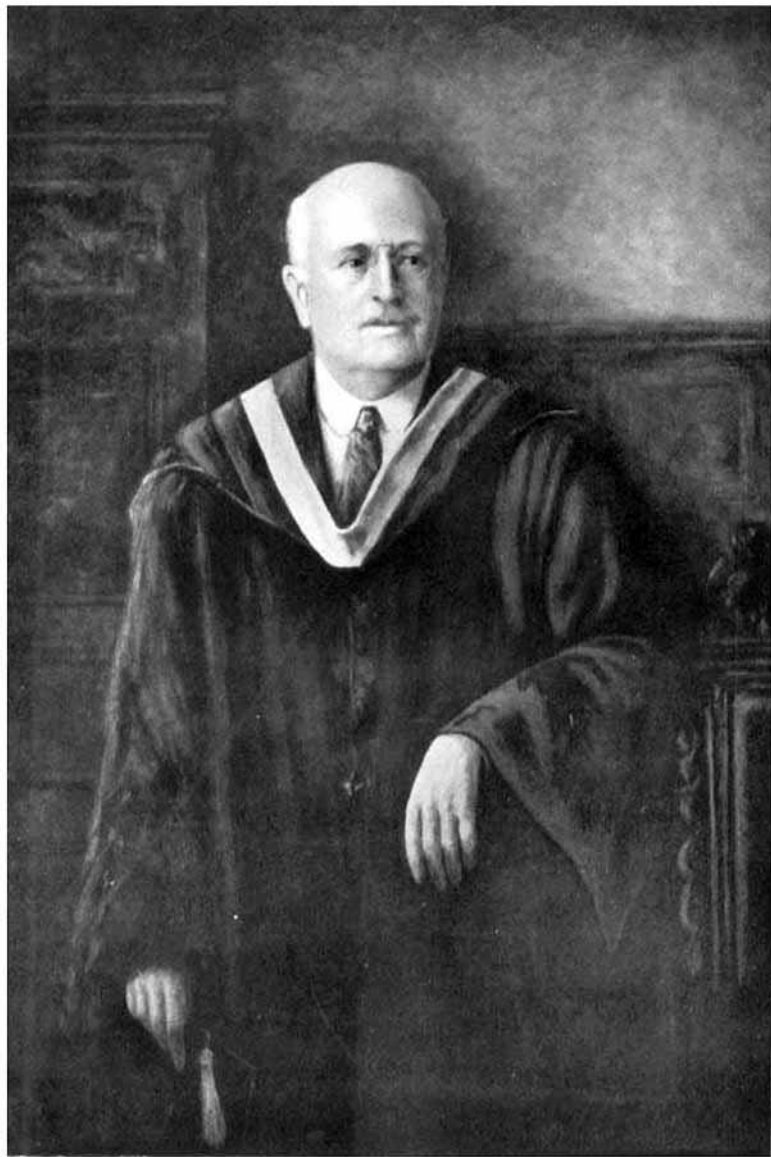
It was as a teacher that Dr. Hirst achieved his greatest renown. His incisive and forceful lectures, logical and orderly, in form, were enriched by many references to the history of obstetrics, in which he was profoundly learned. Illustrations, case reports, and anecdotes delivered with a sly humour which was all his own, created an atmosphere not only of scholarly teaching, but of such dramatic entertainment that his amphitheatre was always crowded to capacity and beyond.

As a clinician he was a careful diagnostician and a brilliant operator, who had made the best use of his abundant clinical material.

Dr. Hirst was a bon-vivant, a lover of men, and was never happier than when he sat in club or café, surrounded by his friends and younger colleagues, delighting them with his discursive chat upon literature and art, biographical bits from the lines of great physicians and the way of life in general. He was loyal and devoted to his friends, ever guarding the welfare of those who worked with him.

Brilliant scholar, devoted teacher, wise physician, true friend, Philadelphia will not possess his like again.

EDWARD A. SCHUMANN



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