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DR. AUGUST MARTIN  
(1847-1934)

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THE last quarter of the nineteenth century will be designated as the rise of a great era in the history of gynecology. The scientific labors of Lister, Pasteur and Robert Koch opened a new and wider era in the practice of surgery. Whoever witnessed the dawn of this new age remembers the increasing benefits accruing to numberless ailing women and mothers seeking health and recovery.

August Martin participated in this progress and his fame has endured until the present, when he left us in the eighty-seventh year of his life.

It is frequently seen that noted men attain a long life. A powerful and healthy man produces important and useful services. The nature and stature of August Martin support such a hypothesis. His students called him at the height of his success "August the Strong," even though he was not the biggest delegate of Europe weighing 300 pounds, as stated by an American reporter. He was still full of power and brawn in his eightieth year.

Martin was born in 1847 in Jena, the celebrated seat of the University of Thüringen. His father, Edward Martin the older, who may be called the founder of this medical dynasty, was Professor and Director of the University Women's Clinic, from where he was called to Berlin. He belonged entirely to the old obstetrical school. His life was described by August Martin in his book, *Werden und Wirken eines deutschen Frauenarztes*. August Martin's diary of the war of 1870-1871 is also contained in this book, as well as an account of his ascent as assistant at the royal clinic and the difficulties of promotion which he met as son of the director of the clinic. These difficulties, however, were removed by the secretary of education.

The successor of Edward Martin, Dr. Karl Schroeder, appointed August Martin as his assistant. Schroeder was a famed obstetrician and surgeon whose books became outstanding.

Martin began his career as privatdozent at the University of Berlin in 1876. When he had attained the height of his fame he was appointed titular professor though this occurred late in life, in 1893. When fifty-two years old he was called to the University of Greifswald, a small town in the northwest of Germany, as director of the

University Women's Clinic but was compelled to retire after eight years due to a disease of the ears. Yet, fate favored him with an added human life span during which he participated actively in the progress of science in coöperation with his fellow gynecologists. In 1894 he founded with Sanger *Die Monatschrift fur Geburtshilfe und Gynakologie*, which he edited until the end of his life.

Martin, as a young independent gynecologist, was forced to carry on without any support from the state or city, but, convinced of his calling as a teacher and surgeon, he opened a private clinic. He performed with enthusiasm the newer operations of gynecology and devised many improvements. However, not all of his innovations found universal recognition, for instance, the amputation of the portio in nutritic diseases found much opposition. An obstetrical polyclinic was developed to enable him to teach obstetrics, but the sending of medical students into the city dwellings led to conflicts with the medical profession.

His surgical ability and dexterity carried his reputation to foreign countries and innumerable numbers of students and physicians travelled from all over the world to attend his clinics. Women who came from distant lands, in spite of slow and difficult transportation, consulted and were treated by him. His enthusiasm in his chosen work excited the unstinted confidences of students and patients alike. I recall a missive sent in 1889 to his friend Professor Lohlein in Giessen who was then my chief, in which he reported six laparotomies in one forenoon.

At this time the surgical technic was developed to which August Martin contributed substantially. Technic, without doubt, is of at least the same importance to the patient as antisepsis, though less importance was placed on dexterity and gentle handling of the tissues.

The female adnexa, especially the inflammatory, were removed without much hesitancy. The physiology of the ovaries was still terra incognata. Myomas were attacked surgically; then followed operations for displacements, flexions, vaginal total extirpations and many more. It appeared as if the first settlers had emigrated to a fallow, fertile land in which the treasures, lying all about, were just to be mined.

It is evident that the school of Martin yielded a large amount of scientific work. Books on obstetrics and gynecology were edited and translated in many languages. A hand-book on diseases of the adnexa in three volumes demonstrated the enormous changes taking place in our specialty. The uterine tubes were described in only a few lines about fifty years previously and now an entire volume was written!

A journey, during his early professional career, led Martin to

England and France. He mastered these languages and became well adapted to conduct the meetings in international congresses. The towering stature of Martin at the presiding table of these congresses became familiar and his numerous papers always gave something novel, testifying to his boundless courage and daring.

International relations led to recognition in foreign countries. He became honorary doctor of Edinburgh, honorary member of many European and American societies, gynecological as well as national medical and surgical. He not only endeavored to organize international general medical congresses but also founded the international gynecological congresses. He was honorary secretary for many years.

I met Martin at the international congress in Petersburg. He related to me his medical sojourn in Russia which brought him to Baku and Tiflis. He lectured in all European capital cities and was honored as teacher everywhere.

When later on his wish to direct a state institute was fulfilled he vacated, full of idealism, the private clinic in the Elsasserstrasse, his beautiful home in the house of the surgeon von Bergmann, and the superb villa in Neubabelsberg, near Potsdam, and followed his call to a much smaller university.

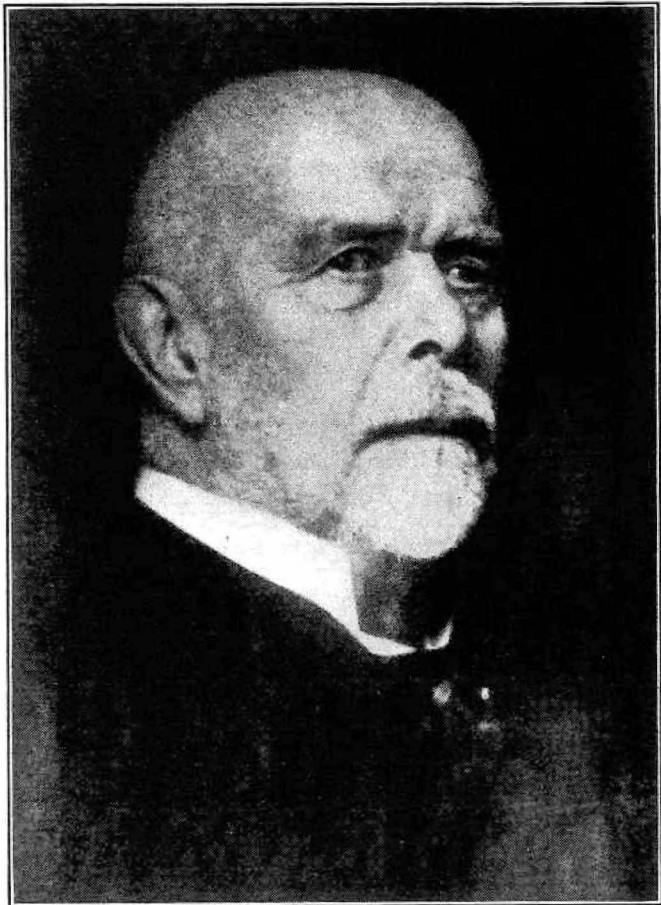
The increasing importance of the United States in the medical sciences induced him to cross the ocean twice. References to and inquiries about Martin were frequent while I was in the United States. He was the best known visitor of our specialty. He was honorary member of the American Society of Obstetricians, Gynecologists and Abdominal Surgeons. He knew Marion Sims and had been introduced to Presidents Cleveland and Roosevelt. In his biography, Martin remembers particularly his close relations to Howard Kelly, then in Philadelphia, Theophilus Parvin, Charles Bacon, Ernst Cushing (Boston), Herman Boldt and Arthur Stein (New York). In 1908, he travelled with his son across the United States to California and recalls the gynecologists Schwarz (St. Louis) William Mayo, Campbell (St. Joseph) and Gil Wilye (New York) amongst others.

It was astounding with what energy he maintained his interest and active participation in gynecology after his emeritization, in spite of gout and deafness. I shall never forget how, when seventy years old, he appeared in my operating room to witness a new vaginal operation and how he remained interested in all new thoughts of our specialty. He enhanced the celebration of my sixtieth birthday in 1926 by the dedication of a Festschrift edited by the sage of seventy-eight years.

One daughter and four sons were born of his first marriage with Marie Nusen from Cleves, two of whom studied medicine. This happy



wedlock lasted forty-six years. When eighty-one years old he entered into a second matrimony with the daughter of the well known Professor Boeckh. Her tender care prolonged his life to the eighty-seventh year. He remained a familiar figure in medical society meetings and at special festivities until recent years. A list of his writings, books and addresses would not serve any purpose. August Martin has achieved a place in the history of gynecology. His fame carries the fruits of his labors from his homeland to many foreign countries.



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[history-of-obgyn.com](http://history-of-obgyn.com)

**IN MEMORIAM**

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**A**UGUST MARTIN, of Berlin, Germany, died on November 26, 1934, in his eighty-seventh year. He was elected to Honorary Fellowship in the American Gynecological Society in 1888. In spite of his advanced years the end was unexpected by both relatives and friends, as only a month before his death, he seemed still to be enjoying good health.

Martin was born in Jena, July 14, 1847, the son of Ed. Martin, Obstetrician and Gynecologist at the University of Berlin. He contributed much of great value to gynecology. When he began his life's work, operative gynecology was still in its infancy; he helped to carry it through all the hazards and difficulties and raise it to the level where it has stood in the last few decades. When Martin was at the zenith of his life and power, hundreds upon hundreds eager for instruction came from all countries and marveled at the work of his skillful hands and his train of ideas. His name spread far out beyond the boundaries of Germany and was soon received in good favor in foreign countries.

Together with Saenger, Martin founded the *Monatsschrift für Geburtshilfe und Gynäkologie* in 1885, and he was editor of this journal for the past thirty-eight years.

Beiträge  
zur  
Geburtshülfe und Gynaekologie.

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Festschrift

gewidmet

**August Martin**

zur Feier

seines 25jährigen Doctorjubiläum

am 15. Juli 1895.

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