

**IN MEMORIAM**

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JOHN ALBERTSON SAMPSON  
1873-1946

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THOSE who were associated with Sampson during his years as intern, Assistant Resident, and Resident Gynecologist at the Johns Hopkins Hospital will never forget that quiet, earnest, and reliable man who by his intimates was known as "Sammy." He had already made a name for himself in the literature of gynecologic pathology before leaving for Albany, New York. As a member of the American Gynecological Society he was well known to the leaders in his branch throughout the United States, and in 1923 he was elected President of the American Gynecological Society.

The intimate life of a man is best portrayed by one of his colleagues—a man with whom he comes in constant contact. Dr. Emerson Kelly of Albany has written a short sketch of Dr. Sampson. It is so fine that it cannot be improved upon. It was published in the *Catalog* of the Albany Medical College, accompanied by a striking likeness of Dr. Sampson. We have taken the liberty of quoting Emerson Kelly's tribute *in extenso*:

"This number of the *Catalog* is dedicated to the memory of Dr. John Albertson Sampson, who was, for forty years, 1905 to 1945, Professor of Gynecology of the Albany Medical College and Gynecologist of the Albany Hospital.

"He was born on Aug. 17, 1873, in Troy, New York. After attending Troy Academy, he matriculated at Williams College from which he received the degree of A.B. in 1895. His early interests were in the natural sciences as is shown by his notebooks of solitary field trips to study the signs of the seasons and the re-activation and appearance of wild life. As early as 1890 he wrote a report on the evening grosbeak for *Forest and Stream*.

"But the field of medicine lured him away from the fields and streams and he entered the Johns Hopkins Medical School in the fall of 1895. There he came under the influence of the 'Big Four,' Halsted, Kelly, Osler, and Welch. Especially to Dr. Howard Kelly was Dr. Sampson indebted for the stimulating example of a great surgeon and God-loving man. Dr. Sampson did not have a prenatal influence to become a gynecologist. His first medical paper, published in January of 1902, was on flat feet. But in November of the same year, he published a paper on injuries to the ureter as a complication of surgical operations, a paper which was the first of sixty-two works in the field of gynecology. In the four years, 1902 through 1905, he published seventeen papers on gynecologic subjects; all this was accomplished while he served as an assistant resident and resident at the Johns Hopkins Hospital.

"This propitious beginning for an alert and ambitious young man led in the next year, 1906, to his election by a unanimous vote to the exclusive and

conservative American Gynecological Society. A letter has been preserved from Dr. Howard A. Kelly saying this is 'the only case where anyone ever received all the votes.'

"In 1905 Dr. Sampson opened an office in Albany and was appointed 'Attending Specialist in Gynecology' at the Albany Hospital and 'Clinical Professor of Gynecology' at the Albany Medical College. These positions he filled with credit to himself and honor to the institutions. In 1945, having reached the age of retirement as Professor, he was elected Emeritus Professor.

"In 1921 Dr. Sampson published the first of a series of twenty-one papers on a condition for whose recognition and explanation he became internationally famous; namely, endometriosis and 'chocolate' cysts of the ovary.

"One of Dr. Sampson's greatest satisfactions was the teaching and training of young doctors in his speciality, and he left several capable young men to carry on his work. He never married, but was a devoted son and brother until fate left him as the end of his family line. In spite of a large practice, he probably made very little money from his surgical work because he had little interest in, and less use for monetary reward. Many deserving patients found not only that they had no surgeon's fee, but that their hospital bills had been paid. Dr. Sampson's large estate, inherited from both sides of his family, was left behind to the benefit of education at Williams, Union, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Albany Hospital, and Albany Medical College.

"For several years Dr. Sampson was Chairman of the Committee on Admissions at the Albany Medical College and he was always ready to work at this arduous task.

"The honorary degree of M.A. was conferred on Dr. Sampson by Williams College in 1915; that of Sc.D. by Union College in 1940, and by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1942.

"Many years will pass before students, fellow workers, patients, the Albany Medical College, and the Albany Hospital will find as loving a friend as we have lost in the passing of Dr. John Albertson Sampson."

Dr. Sampson died on Dec. 23, 1946.

Sampson was an excellent photographer and really felt nature. Christmas after Christmas for years brought a choice photograph to 20 E. Eager Street. The last one received was at Christmas time in 1944. I have it before me. In the foreground are some small evergreens whose branches are laden down with snow. Then comes an open space covered with snow; then miles of trees and in the distance hills covered with snow. These are apparently four or five miles distant. Above the hills are beautiful clouds.

#### *A benediction:*

Eldridge H. Campbell, Professor of Surgery in the Albany Medical College and an intimate colleague of Sampson's, in closing a letter to me wrote:

"His contributions to charities were many and generous, but he kept no record of them, and, in fact, many were anonymous. He put an unknown number of medical students through school, many of whom do not know to this day the source of their help. Surely his philanthropy was in keeping with the finest Christian traditions."

*Thos. F. Cullen, M.D.*