

Obituary Notice.

MAX SÄNGER.

[This notice is summarised from the biography contained in the *Monatsschrift für Geburtshülfe und Gynäkologie*, by kind permission of the authors, Professors A. Martin and A. von Rosthorn, and of the Publisher, S. Karger, Berlin.]

Our last obituary notice recorded the death of Porro, whose name must be always associated, in the history of Cæsarean Section, with the operation which roused to fresh efforts the obstetric surgeons of a quarter of a century ago. We now announce with deep regret the death of Professor Max Sängér, of Prag, who initiated, and contributed to the perfecting of, the conservative Cæsarean operation. Unlike Porro, who had for years ceased to take an active part in obstetric work, Sängér was struck down in the fulness of his energies and brimming over with professional interests and aspirations for further contributions to the advancement of Gynæcology.

Max Sängér was born at Bayreuth on the 14th of March, 1853. He studied at Würzburg from 1871 to 1873, and at Leipzig until 1875, and passed the "Staatsexamen" in 1876. He obtained the degree of doctor in June, 1876. The theme of his dissertation was certain phases of pulmonary consumption. For two years more Sängér was Assistant at the Institute of Pathological Anatomy, in Leipzig, and he obtained an amount of knowledge and experience which had much influence upon his future studies and pursuits. He also obtained great experience in the practice of medicine at the Poliklinik.

In 1878 Sängér became assistant to Credé, and held the appointment for three years. The chief of the Clinic was by this time gradually retiring from practice, and Sängér was appointed "official operator," and found, consequently, remarkable favourable conditions for the practice of gynæcological surgery.

In May, 1881, he became "Docent" in Obstetrics and Gynæcology, his "Habilitation" essay having its subject Cæsarean Section. This contribution attracted much attention, and marked the beginning of the change in opinion towards the conservative operation.

From this time onwards Sängér had a very extensive practice, and was always in the front rank of gynæcological surgeons. Among the newer methods and operations which he advocated and practised were vaginal extirpation of the uterus, the vaginal operation for diseased appendages and intra-peritoneal abscess. Some measure of Sängér's extraordinary activity and success in gynæcological practice may be obtained from the fact that by 1890 he had built a private hospital of 25 beds on the newest plans and with all the modern appliances and fittings, including laboratories for histology and bacteriology.

In the end of 1890 he was appointed extraordinary professor in the University; in 1897 "Medicinalrath" to the King of Saxony; and in 1899 Ordinary Professor and Chief of the Clinic of Obstetrics and Gynæcology in the German University of Prag.



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Sänger had now reached probably the height of his ambition. Honours were conferred upon him at home, and he was made Honorary Fellow or member of most of the Gynæcological Societies of Europe, and, above all, he was placed at the head of a large celebrated, well-constructed and endowed University Clinic with every opportunity of stamping with his own personality the teaching of obstetrics and gynæcology from the position of vantage of the ordinary professorship.

But he had hardly entered upon his duties in Prag when his health gave way. He had worked too hard. "An inexorable fate has called Sänger away from his labours at the moment when he had reached the goal of well-founded hopes and wishes, when there was presented to him the wide field of academic activity which he had long striven to reach." When his intellectual and physical powers were obviously impaired Sänger considered it an intolerable sacrifice to devote sufficient time to recuperation. After far too short a rest he returned to work, only to find in a few months that his active career was at an end. About the New Year there seemed to be some slight improvement, but he died suddenly of apoplexy on the 12th of January, just near the end of his fiftieth year.

Sänger was perhaps of all German gynæcologists the best-known personally in this country. His reputation as an indefatigable and successful worker at obstetrics and gynæcology, his vivacity, geniality, and kindliness of manner, and his gift of tongues which gave him access and made him accessible to the thoughts and interests of most foreigners whom he met, made him a man of mark wherever he went. He was a remarkably regular attender of international and national congresses, to whose transactions he invariably contributed something theoretical or practical which arrested attention. German gynæcology has suffered a very great, perhaps an irreparable, injury in the death of Sänger, and innumerable *Fachgenossen* throughout Europe and America will sympathise with Germany and feel themselves something in the nature of a personal loss.

Two of Sänger's personal friends, Professor A. Martin, of Greifswald, and Professor A. von Rosthorn, of Heidelberg, the former of whom has been perhaps not second to Sänger in his knowledge of British gynæcology and gynæcologists, have performed the pious task of compiling a bibliography of the scientific work of their friend. It presents a wonderful picture of genius and industry applied to the advancement of knowledge in the field of his labours. v. Rosthorn mentions 132 monographs and contributions to medical literature as the expression of his work at Leipzig alone. No obstetric subject which came up for discussion during these twenty years failed to attract his attention or elicit some contribution, and this apart from his epoch-making contributions on Cæsarean Section. His most important work appeared as a monograph in 1882, *Der Kaiserschnitt bei Uterus-fibromen, nebst der gleichender Methodik der Sectio Cæsarea und der Porro-operation.—Kritiken, Studien, und Vorschläge zur Verbesserung des Kaiserschnitts*, and for 16 or 17 years he continued to pour out suggestions and experiences on the same subject. He rehabilitated, almost invented, the Cæsarean operation.

In gynæcology he did some excellent work, chiefly clinical, on gonorrhœal infection in women. Here he came somewhat late into

the field, but his prominence and influence obtained for him a hearing hardly granted to some of his own countrymen who were doing probably more original and difficult work. Säger's early opportunities and experiences made him a pathologist, and the application of his knowledge to gynæcology marked him early as a gynæcologist of the first rank. Hence it arose that a case which would have been passed over by most men as merely curious gave Säger the opportunity which produced his famous contribution to the forty-fourth volume of the *Archiv für Gynäkologie* on "Sarcoma Uteri Deciduo-cellulare and other Decidual Tumours," of which so much has been said and written since.

He wrote a vast amount of interesting matter on plastic operations in gynæcology, on displacements of the uterus, operations on the appendages, tubal pregnancy, hysterectomy, and, in fact, on most, or nearly all, the subjects which exercised gynæcological surgeons during the whole period of his professional career. It cannot be claimed for him that he was always original; but he tried all things, and showed a wonderful surgical instinct in holding fast that which was good. But he was not merely an industrious and gifted gynæcologist and pathologist. He was full of interest in men and events; he had the observing eye as a traveller, and he wrote biographies, historical reviews, criticisms, and description of travel in a vivacious, picturesque and attractive style, not always a distinctive feature in the medical literary productions of his countrymen.

To Säger and Martin Germany and the world owe a debt of gratitude for the *Monatsschrift für Geburtshülfe und Gynäkologie*, founded by them in 1894, and edited and conducted by them jointly until Säger's health failed.

It would be a difficult and useless task to endeavour to estimate Säger's influence upon the course of modern gynæcology in Europe. Time alone will tell what contributions of his to theory and practice will survive. We may feel assured that much that caused a good deal of stir in Germany was fugitive, and with change of fashion in surgery and of nomenclature in pathology, it will be, or seem to be, overworn or even forgotten. But with regard to Cæsarean Section, there can be little room for doubt. It may be objected, in detraction from Säger's merits, that every improvement in abdominal surgery was leading up to and suggesting the conservative operation, and that to a well-equipped gynæcologist it was a small step from Porro's operation to its modifications. Still Säger was the man of the time who had acquired the thorough grounding in pathology and in general medical practice, and who had obtained the advantage of a singularly concentrated experience in obstetrical and gynæcological surgery; he had also the creative scientific imagination without which all the rest would have been barren. He knew the season when to take occasion by the hand; and he succeeded in robbing of its terrors the most terrible experience to which women may have to submit, and removing from the obstetric art probably the final reproach of the cruelty of ignorance. And friends and contemporaries can rest assured that whatever minor services to science and to humanity may shrink into insignificance, or perhaps be forgotten, one great achievement will stand out in all future histories of obstetrics and gynæcology by the association of the name of Max Säger with the Conservative Cæsarean Section.