

SCIENCE

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WILLIAM STEWART HALSTED, 1852-1922

PROFESSOR HALSTED, certainly one of the most cultivated, and regarded by many as the most eminent surgeon of his time, in view of the character of his contributions, died at noon on Thursday, the seventh of September, in the Johns Hopkins Hospital, of which he had been surgeon-in-chief since soon after its opening. At that time, in 1889, neither he nor his clinical colleagues, Osler and Kelly, had as yet turned forty.

A man of unique personality, shy, something of a recluse, fastidious in his tastes and in his friendships, an aristocrat in his breeding, scholarly in his habits, the victim for many years of indifferent health, he nevertheless was one of the few American surgeons who may be considered to have established a school of surgery, comparable, in a sense, to the school of Billroth in Vienna. He had few of the qualities supposed to accompany what the world regards as a successful surgeon. Over-modest about his work, indifferent to matters of priority, caring little for the gregarious gatherings of medical men, unassuming, having little interest in private practice, he spent his medical life avoiding patients—even students, when this was possible—and, when health permitted, working in clinic and laboratory at the solution of a succession of problems which aroused his interest. He had that rare form of imagination which sees problems, and the technical ability combined with persistence which enabled him to attack them with promise of a successful issue. Many of his contributions, not only to his craft but to the science of medicine in general, were fundamental in character and of enduring importance.

As a schoolboy at Phillips-Andover and as an undergraduate at Yale, he was prominent in sports rather than in the class-room, and in