OBITUARY

ROBERT ANTHONY HATCHER
(1868–1944)

AMERICAN pharmacologists mourn with family and friends, and realize the great loss their science suffered when, on April 1 of this year, Robert Anthony Hatcher died in his Flushing, Long Island, home.

Dr. Hatcher retired from his Cornell professorship nine years ago, but this formal retirement did not signify either his abandonment of research or his tremendously useful and constructive work on the Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry of the American Medical Association. A tireless enthusiasm for research and a keen awareness of the problems confronting our age remained with Dr. Hatcher almost to his last day. He lived the simple, and outwardly not very spectacular, life of a typical American scientist. He was born in Missouri but spent his childhood in New Orleans. Early in youth he decided to study at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy. Upon graduation, in 1889, he applied for his first job in a drug store and was told by the proprietor that there were already too many applicants. "Good ones?" inquired Hatcher. He got the job.

He practiced this profession for a time and was a very competent retail druggist. However, filling prescriptions did not satisfy this young Ph.G. He wanted to know more about the action of drugs, so he enrolled as a medical student at Tulane, where he obtained his M.D. degree in 1898. After a hurried trip to Europe, he secured a position in the newly organized Pharmacology Department of Sollmann at Western Reserve. His association with Sollmann was very fruitful for the science of pharmacology. It resulted not merely in scientific papers and a treatise on materia medica, but also in the formation of an intellectual bond between these two zealous advocates of pharmacology. In 1904 he was called to Cornell, where he rapidly advanced to the professorship of an independent department of pharmacology. He taught and toiled at Cornell for over three decades. His association with that institution will be felt for many years to come. During his early residency at Cornell he was also called upon to organize and give the first pharmacology courses at Harvard and Chicago.

Hatcher was not only a great teacher and missionary of pharmacology but was always in the front rank of pharmacological experimentalists. Though there are not many branches of this subject that have escaped his attention, his name will be forever associated with two fields partly created by him—the analytical pharmacology of digitalis principles and the pharmacological study of emesis. His studies on the bioassay, absorption, elimination and mechanism of action of crude and purified digitalis preparations made the rational and effective use of digitalis in heart failure possible. It was the Hatcher-Brody cat unit of digitalis leaf that made accurate, effective and safe dosage possible in the rapid and cumulative methods of digitalis administration. Every patient with congestive heart failure, receiving cardiac glucosides, owes a debt of gratitude to Dr. Hatcher.

It always astonished Hatcher how little the most common symptom of disease, emesis, attracted the attention of physiologists. Since it happens to be one of the most common effects of a large number and apparently unrelated drugs, Hatcher felt that it is the business of the pharmacologist to throw light on emesis and emetics. As a result of his labors in this field we became familiar with the complex paths of the vomiting reflex arc, with the location and the nature of the vomiting center, and with the mode of action of centrally and reflexly acting emetics.

According to the Ostwaldian terminology, Hatcher was a typical classical investigator. He was introspective, detached and attracted only a few intimate personal students and followers. Perhaps only Eggleston, Soma Weiss and Harry Gold can be considered his students in the strict sense, although many pharmacologists worked in his laboratory and were profoundly influenced by him.

As a man, Hatcher was a conservative, unalterably opposed to modern ideas of experimental statesmanship. He dreaded ochlocracy and had little use for politicos whom he suspected of trying to bring it about. And yet, he was a liberal in the best sense of the word. He made no distinction between man and man and looked for a society where merit alone would rule. Some one once asked him how it happened that there were so many immigrants from different racial groups on the staff of his laboratory. "We can't fill all positions with Indians, there aren't enough of them," was Hatcher's terse and innocent reply.

In his later years he became more and more interested in the philosophical background of science. Some of his ideas he committed to writing and they are preserved in manuscript form. He had little use for idealistic philosophy, which he held barren. The conclusions of idealistic philosophers were contradicted by common sense and daily experience in his opinion. Idealistic philosophy reminds one of a puppy chasing its tail—without the fun that the puppy has, he wrote. He agreed with Locke, however, that a rational creature reflecting on the works of creation can not miss the discovery of Deity. Speculating on the nature of mind and intelligence, Hatcher came to the conclusion "that these reached

their highest development in God—who is infinite. God is the only one who has an absolute freedom of will and God's will has a greater velocity of motion than that of light, thus he rules the universe." He contended that only absolute knowledge can mean absolute happiness, and this ideal can only be obtained by God. Man can only approach that ideal, but he can know, if intelligent, that he can contribute something to the ultimate attainment of that ideal by others, by leading the life that wisdom dictates, Hatcher reasoned. At least he must convince himself that he can enjoy the happiness of knowing that he is striving toward the right goal and happiness is achieved in conscientious effort nearly as well, whether successful or unsuccessful. Happiness for the individual man is impossible before he has learned that the greatest good for the greatest number or the greatest truth is superior to his personal happiness, he concluded.

The great pharmacologist has passed into eternity. He advanced knowledge, he alleviated suffering, he worked hard to prevent hostile hands from uprooting pharmacology, that young tender branch of medical science. Belief in the independence of human dignity, in the independence of pharmacology, are the precious heritages of this pioneer of American pharmacology.

THEODORE KOPPANYI
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

DEATHS AND MEMORIALS

DR. WILLIAM SPENCER CARTER, physiologist, dean of the medical faculty, retired, of the University of Texas, died on May 12 at the age of seventy-five years.

PROFESSOR OSCAR M. STEWART, from 1905 until he retired with the title emeritus in 1940 professor of physics at the University of Missouri, died on May 17 in his seventy-fifth year. He was connected with the university for forty-four years.

DR. LESTER S. GUSS, head of the department of chemistry at South Dakota State College at Brookings, president of the South Dakota Academy of Science, died on May 17 in his fortieth year.

CHARLES STEWART BECKWITH, chief of cranberry and blueberry investigations at the College of Agriculture of Rutgers University, died on May 18 at the age of fifty-three years.

THEODORE WILLARD CASE, the physicist, president of the Case Research Laboratory at Auburn, N. Y., died on May 13 in his fifty-fifth year.

JAMES WALLACE BEARDSLEY, consulting civil engineer, retired, who was from 1905 to 1908 director of public works in the Philippines, died on May 15 at the age of eighty-three years.

THE death on October 12, 1943, at the age of sixty-eight years, is announced of Maulsby Willett Blackman, senior entomologist in the division of insect identifications of the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

THE hundredth anniversary of the first telegraph message between Washington and Baltimore on May 24, 1844, was celebrated throughout the United States during the week beginning on May 22. At New York University brief ceremonies were held on the site where Professor Samuel Finley Breese Morse demonstrated his invention of the electromagnetic telegraph to a few friends in 1838 before taking it to Washington to interest the Congress. Miss Leila Livingston Morse, granddaughter of Professor Morse, unveiled a temporary tablet (to be replaced when bronze again becomes available) in the Samuel Finley Breese Morse Study Hall on the site where the first instrument was built and demonstrated. Morse memorabilia, including a working model of the original instrument, were exhibited.

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

THE NATIONAL CHEMICAL EXPOSITION

THE Chicago Section of the American Chemical Society reports that the third National Chemical Exposition, to be held from November 15 to 19 at the Coliseum in Chicago, will not only demonstrate the importance of the chemical industry for the war effort but also for the post-war era. M. H. Arveson is chairman of the committee that is making arrangements for the exposition. The South Annex of the Coliseum has been leased and it is hoped also to acquire the North Hall, but despite the fact that more than twice the area of the two preceding expositions has been made available for exhibitors, there is indication that it may not be possible to provide space for all applicants.

The first exposition held in 1940 at the Stevens Hotel occupied over twenty-six thousand square feet of floor space, and the second in 1942, held at the Sherman Hotel, provided more than thirty-two thousand square feet. Floor space of the coming exposition will exceed fifty-six thousand square feet.

The National Industrial Chemical Conference will meet during the exhibit when authorities on virtually all phases of pure and applied chemistry will appear on the program which is now being arranged by the conference committee. The sessions will be held in the conference hall on the second floor of the South Annex.

Presentation of the Willard Gibbs Medal, founded in 1911 by William A. Converse, will be made during