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Obituary

HENRY DWIGHT CHAPIN, M.D.
1857-1942

Dr. Henry Dwight Chapin died in the early morning of June 28, 1942 at his home in Bronxville, N. Y., in his eighty-fifth year.

He was born in Steubenville, Ohio, on Feb. 4, 1857. As was the case with most ministers' families of that day, the Chapins lived in various communities, including Trenton and Princeton, and finally settled permanently in the city of New York when Henry was about 14 years old. He attended a famous secondary school for boys, the Chapin Collegiate School, which was established by his father. He graduated from Princeton University with the class of 1877 and from the College of Physicians and Surgeons (now merged with Columbia University) in 1881. Dr. Chapin joined the New York Post-Graduate Medical School and Hospital as professor of pediatrics in 1886 and continued his close connection with the babies' wards and with the hospital as a member of the board of directors until his death. In 1888 he became a charter member of the American Pediatric Society, of which he was president in 1910. He was chairman of the New York State Reconstruction Commission in 1919 and was president of the Child Welfare Federation in 1924. Dr. Chapin was several times chairman of the pediatric section of the New York Academy of Medicine and was chairman of the pediatric section of the American Medical Association in 1912-1913. The local, state and national medical societies received his loyal support throughout his entire medical career. Membership in the Society of Mayflower Descendants, the Society of Colonial Wars and the Century Club was perhaps an index of his interests outside of medicine. In 1933 he was awarded the Columbia University medal for "outstanding contributions to problems relating to the care of children and as a pioneer in hospital social service."

Dr. Chapin was the founder of the Speedwell Society. He was an attending physician for many years in the babies' wards of the New York Post-Graduate Medical School and Hospital and at the Willard Parker and Riverside Hospitals and was consulting physician at the Randall's Island Hospital, St. Agnes Hospital at White Plains, N. Y., the Convalescent Home for Children at Sea Cliff, N. Y., and the Hackensack (N. J.) Hospital.

Dr. Chapin's contributions to medical literature were extensive and vital. Perhaps his best known books so far as the medical profession is concerned are "The Theory and Practice of Infant Feeding," his textbook "Diseases of Infants and Children," written in collaboration

with Dr. Godfrey R. Pisek, and his "Pediatrics," of which he was the co-author with Dr. L. T. Royster. "The Theory and Practice of Infant Feeding" went through three editions and the "Diseases of Infants and Children" through four editions and six reprintings. His popular essays titled "Vital Questions" were published in 1902 and are perhaps



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This photograph was taken at about the time of his seventy-fifth birthday.

the most significant of his writings, in that they define the relationship of the physician to the social problems of the community, an interest which came to occupy a large part of his professional life. "Health First: The Fine Art of Living" appeared in 1917, and "Heredity and Child Culture" was first printed in 1922 and reprinted in 1928.

Besides these volumes there were many articles appearing in medical journals, having to do mainly with problems of hospitalization, infant feeding and the social aspects of medicine, especially as they related to children. Dr. Chapin taught a simple form of milk modification, as witness his writings and the Chapin dipper; but from the beginning he stressed the fact that milk was a biologic fluid and that other types could be made to have no more than a superficial resemblance to mother's milk, and that calories could never be more than a measure of fuel values and told nothing as to the suitability of a substance as a food. That he was quick to grasp the importance of a new agent for feeding was shown by his prompt request to duplicate at a reasonable cost a new sugar brought from Germany—a request that resulted in the manufacture of Dextri-Maltose, the first samples of which were tried out under his direction in the babies' wards. Clean milk, sanitary housing, the home hospital and finally the removal of the sick infant out of the hospital and into a good home at the earliest possible moment seem to represent his growth in pediatric practice through the years.

In the Forum for March 1894 he pointed out that the weak point of all hospital work for the poor "is due to the faulty conditions in the home." This was a point of view from which he never deviated and represented a conclusion based on hospital social service reports covering a period of four years. In 1890 he established this link between the babies' wards and the home, and he constantly emphasized to the staff that each ill child on the service represented a family tragedy and should be treated as if the parents were at the bedside. His philosophy of social service in the hospital and outside was that society should strive to "atone for its fearful inequalities, not by division and alms, but by strengthening the weak for a more successful effort" and that "the home is the source from which all lasting improvements must come."

In order to make the benefits of the hospital permanent, Dr. Chapin determined in 1902 to try the plan of boarding out in private country homes the bottle-fed infants who were not doing well in institutions or in their own homes. The first station was established in Morristown, N. J. The chance remark of Dr. Chapin that the street along which they were seeking suitable homes for convalescent babies furnished a proper name for the new endeavor resulted in the name "Speedwell Society." Other centers were formed, and by 1940 the society had since its founding taken care of approximately 20,000 children. The object of the Speedwell Society is to place homeless and needy children in the homes of selected and supervised women, who receive a certain sum of money each week plus a bonus for every pound gained by underweight babies. The growth of the project has been constant, both in the number of children cared for and in the broadening of the original

conception of the needs of the community, so that today approximately 1,200 children are received annually.

In 1910 a baby was picked up in a New York city park and a few days later found a temporary home with Dr. and Mrs. Chapin. With care and feeding the boy thrived and grew into an attractive child, who was wanted in a superior home. Out of this incident grew a nursery of four beds on the top floor of their home, into which went unattractive and forlorn waifs. As soon as they had been brought back to good health and promise they were easily placed in permanent homes. Ninety-eight unpromising-looking babies passed through this upstairs nursery in a period of ten years. At the end of that time the home nursery was formally expanded into the Alice Chapin Adoption Nursery. The combined record of these two nurseries is the adoption into homes of nearly 1,700 babies and the finding indirectly of homes for about 2,000 more children. Perhaps the most remarkable journey ever undertaken by a physician and his wife was that of Dr. and Mrs. Chapin in 1917, when they started on a so-called tour of inspection to the Pacific coast and back, stopping practically each night at a different home in which they had placed a child.

Dr. Chapin was primarily a teacher, a missionary and a pioneer. He embodied within himself, both physically and mentally, all that is best in the puritan tradition. He taught a practical kind of pediatrics which was easily grasped by physicians of all grades of preparation. He was perhaps the first to point out that milk is a biologic fluid, and he certainly was the first to establish a breast milk station in the East. He was ten years ahead of the times in recognizing the need of and in establishing a hospital social service that was a practical contribution to the community service of a hospital. The recognition of the importance of placing convalescent children in selected homes in the country is due almost solely to his efforts. He preached from the time when he was beginning the practice of pediatrics that "children give more than they take" and that "they are the great civilizers and humanizers of the race." The core of Dr. Chapin's philosophy of life was undoubtedly summed up in his own words: "The child has done more for the regeneration of the race than all the creeds that have ever been written."

It would not be straying far from the truth if it were to be written that Dr. Chapin in his quiet way was the most significant figure of his generation in the practice and teaching of pediatrics and that he was a pattern after which all doctors who love children would like to mold their lives. His name in the course of time may be easily forgotten (he would have been the first to say that this was proper), but the good which he initiated will go on as long as there are children on earth.

M. C. P.