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VITTORIO PUTTI AND WILLIS COHOON CAMPBELL

Two Great Men in Orthopedic Surgery

STANKO STANISAVLJEVIC, M.D.

*"Quisquis suorum posteriorum
Sive priorum
Sit sine cura
Morte futura apparitura."*

THE HISTORIES of art, music, medicine, and other human endeavor has many examples of great men living in the same epoch, a prime example being the Renaissance in Italy and Europe. Another wave of genius accompanied Romanticism. Probably genius is a synthesis of the culture of an epoch. There are few instances, however, of the close parallellism of the lives of Vittorio Putti and Willis Cohoon Campbell.

Both were born in 1880, Putti in Bologna, Italy, and Campbell in Jackson, Mississippi. The former died November, 1940, in Bologna and the latter May, 1941, in Chicago. Both obtained their M.D. degree young, at 23 and 24 years of age respectively. They soon became deeply interested in orthopedic surgery. During 1907-1909 both went to the founts of orthopedics of their times: Germany, Austria, and England.

After this period of learning and maturation both returned to their countries to become professors of orthopedic surgery as young men.

Campbell organized the Department of Orthopedic Surgery at the University of Tennessee in Memphis, and became professor in 1910 at the age of 30.

Putti became Director of Instituto Rizzoli in Bologna at 34, and at 36, Professor of Orthopedic Surgery at the famous Bologna University, attended in the past by such men as Petrarca, Galvani, and Malpighi.

These men lived in completely different countries and societies; but in spite of this the patterns of their careers were very similar. Italy was laden with secular traditions and customs, while in the United States these were to be established.

At the beginning of this century orthopedic surgery was in its infancy. It emphasized mechanical principles in conservative treatment and demanded surgical



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courage and technical ability in the operating room. Anatomy and clinical experience were the principal credos of the art at that time. In the early part of this century, research in the orthopedic basic sciences and in orthopedic pathology, the fruits of which we now enjoy, was in the morula stage.

In 1920 Campbell built the clinic which bears his name in Memphis. This became one of the most widely known orthopedic institutions in the world. Putti became director of the already famous and well established Istituto Rizzoli. It is interesting that during the same period, 1918-1922, he felt the need for a new hospital, and the result was the Istituto elio-terapico Alessandro-Codivilla in Cortina D'Ampezzo where cases of bone and joint tuberculosis were treated.

PUTTI AND CAMPBELL

Both men had wide interests and their personal contributions are numerous; but both were especially interested in joint arthroplasty. Perhaps the reason was the many stiff joints left as sequel to extremity wounds after World War I. The principles of managing and rehabilitating these injuries were different than they are today. This problem stimulated these two men to search for a solution to stiff joints and to search for adequate means to prevent their occurrence in the future. Both great men also had to cope with problems peculiar to their countries. In the United States the problem was the sequelae to poliomyelitis while in Italy it was congenital hip dislocation. Both men contributed greatly to the treatment of these conditions.

A cultured, professional person living in Europe is obliged to speak more than one language to communicate with neighbors. Putti spoke Italian, German, French, and English fluently and lectured as visiting professor all over the world, including the United States. He was visiting professor at Harvard five times and is still highly spoken of by senior orthopedists at the Massachusetts General Hospital.

The North American continent is enormous and English-speaking, a fact that has greatly influenced intellectuals living in it. Campbell could attend any meeting or serve as visiting professor from the Atlantic to the Pacific coasts, speaking one common language.

Both men felt the need for organizations which would improve communication and further the development of orthopedic surgery as a specialty. Campbell was one of the most fervent founders of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgery and was honored by being chosen its first president in 1933. Putti was a founder of the Société Internationale de Clinique Orthopaédique et Traumatologie and was its president in 1936.

Both men were excellent teachers, had pupils from all over the world and taught men who are leaders in their respective countries today. In the 19th century education was characterized by deep respect for the older and by silent obedience. Being children of this century, both men were severe with their pupils, critical, sometimes rude, but impartial, protective and fair. They loved their pupils.

Both men had an almost superhuman capacity for work. They started their days early in the morning by operating and concluded them with reading and writing until late in the night. Their energy was enormous and they withstood fatigue better than their youngest assistants.

Both were generous, and the testimony to their generosity is: Hospital for Crippled Children, Hospital for Crippled Adults, Memphis; Istituto Helioterapico Alessandro Codevilla in Cortina D'Ampezzo; Italian Hospital, Brazil.

Both were prolific writers, leaving many articles, monographs, and books to posterity all over the world.

Nature was an excellent mother to both, giving them both not only uncommon minds but also beautiful physical aspect. Contemporaries of both men admired and

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(From South. Surgeon, June 1941)

WILLIS COHOON CAMPBELL

loved them. R. Lériché said of Putti: "Beau comme un Grand Italien de la Renaissance". R. L. Saunders said of Campbell: "To know him was to love him, for his magnetic charm, his sincerity, his strong sense of fairness and his unfailing kindness and courtesy endeared him to all who came within his view. Indeed only a little time with him and one was convinced that here, indisputably, was greatness."

An American colleague characterized Putti in these words: "Those who knew him well discovered a depth of feeling and a capacity for friendship which were the true attributes of his character". A visitor to Istituto Rizzoli expressed admiration as follows: "Ma che Dottore, Che Direttore, quella e un principe, quello e un Re". (This is not only a doctor, not only a director, but this is a prince, this is a king.)

PUTTI AND CAMPBELL

Putti and Campbell were apostles of orthopedic surgery. They dedicated their entire lives to the specialty. This complete dedication plus their exceptional minds and ability probably brought them their greatness. (Putti sacrificed family life; he never married.)

Although their industry was superhuman, in the period when both men began to write of their enormous orthopedic experiences nature beckoned them. Everything in life must be paid for, and so did these pay: they died of heart disease within six months of each other.

While both worked and lived in different countries, orthopedists all over the world pay them daily homage, calling for instruments bearing their names or studying writings generously left to all of us.

It is a coincidence worthy of note that nature gave us two great men working in the same field, born in the same year, living in similar patterns, interested in similar things and taken from us at the same time with similar diseases. Twenty years after their deaths young orthopedic surgeons all over the world may still find inspiration and example in the lives and work of V. Putti and W. C. Campbell.

