

GERSTER ÁRPÁD

GERSTER, Arpad Geyza Charles, surgeon, was born at Kassa, Hungary (later Czechoslovakia), Dec. 22, 1848, son of Nicholas and Caroline (Schmidt-Adamkovitch) Gerster, and brother of Etelka Gerster, the famous prima donna. During his school days at the Kassa gymnasium an attachment for a young medical student influenced his choice of a profession and he entered the University of Vienna where he was graduated as a doctor of surgery in 1872. Following a year's service as second lieutenant and assistant surgeon in the Austrian army, he was appointed pathologist of the Kassa municipal hospital. Emigrating to the United States in 1874, he located first in Brooklyn, N.Y., where he became a general practitioner but in 1877 he moved to Manhattan, where he practiced surgery exclusively until his

death. He was appointed attending surgeon to the German (later Lenox Hill) hospital in 1878 and to Mt. Sinai hospital in 1879 and became surgeon to and professor of surgery in the New York polyclinic hospital in 1882, shortly after the opening of that institution. He occupied that chair until 1894 and won distinction as a teacher, his pupils including the Mayo brothers, of Rochester, Minn. In 1910 he became professor of clinical surgery at the college of physicians and surgeons, Columbia university, resigning that position and as attending surgeon to Mt. Sinai hospital Jan. 1, 1914. Gerster was a pioneer in modern surgical technique and was the author of the first textbook on the new surgery published in America, "Rules of Aseptic and Antiseptic Surgery" (1888). This work, which passed through three editions, was not only revolutionary in its subject matter but contained some of the earliest halftone pictures, made from the author's own plates. Gerster also wrote his autobiography, "Recollections of a New



York Surgeon" (1917) and published over eighty valuable medical papers. He was not only a brilliant surgeon, swift, accurate and deft in operating, but was an expert diagnostician and a gifted teacher. He had the faculty of bringing out the best talents of his assistants and pupils, was intolerant of laxity and generous with deserved praise and recognition. In treating his patients he usually succeeded in inspiring them with hope and confidence. He was a fellow of the American Surgical Association (president, 1911-12); corresponding member of the Royal Medical Society, Budapest, and a member of the German Association of Surgeons (Berlin), New York Academy of Medicine (trustee), New York Surgical Society (president, 1891), Medical Society of the County of New York, Hungarian Association of New York (president, 1895), Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks and Century Association. He especially enjoyed his membership in the Charaka Club and the relation, which it cul-

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tivated, of medicine to history, letters and art. An accomplished linguist, he was conversant with the Greek and Latin classics and widely read in Slavic, German, French, Italian, Spanish and English literature. He was a lover of natural history and fond of walking tours, camping, angling, shooting, skiing and woodcraft. His chief hobbies were painting in oil, sketching and engraving, many of his etchings being treasured by his friends. He also loved chamber music and the opera. He was married Dec. 4, 1875, to Anna Barnard, daughter of John Wynne, of Cincinnati, Ohio, and of their three sons only one, John Carl Arpad Gerster, reached maturity. He died in New York city, Mar. 11, 1923.

1923

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