

OBITUARY NOTICES.

John Jacob Abel, For. Mem. R.S., Hon. F.R.S.E.

THE death of John Jacob Abel in Baltimore on May 26, 1938, deprived science of an outstanding figure, and colleagues all over the world mourn the loss of a charming personality whose single-hearted devotion to research did so much to establish and advance pharmacology and endocrinology.

He was born in 1857, and received his Ph B. degree from the University of Michigan in 1883. He studied for a year under Newell Martin at Johns Hopkins University, and then spent seven years of study in the leading Universities of Europe. His teachers included many famous names amongst the founders of modern medical science, *e.g.* Carl Ludwig (physiology), Schmiedeberg (pharmacology), Hoppe Seyler and von Nencki (biochemistry).

In 1893 Abel became Professor of Pharmacology in the Johns Hopkins Medical School, a post which he occupied for nearly forty years until his retirement.

His most famous scientific work was connected with the isolation of hormones. In 1895 he commenced work which resulted in the isolation of the monobenzoyl derivative of adrenaline. As a result of this success others succeeded in isolating the pure crystalline hormone. Nothing had been known previously of the chemical constitution of any endocrine secretion, and hence this work represented a biochemical advance of major importance. Some thirty years later he succeeded in obtaining insulin in crystalline form. These two discoveries are his best-known contributions to medical science, but he was engaged in active research for some fifty years, and his publications deal with problems concerning every aspect of pharmacology.

In addition to his research activities he exercised a great influence as the founder and editor of journals. In 1905 he founded the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, and in 1909 he founded the *Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics* and subsequently edited it for twenty-three years.

His scientific record, seniority and reputation as an editor naturally conferred on him a great prestige, but these facts do not fully account for the influence he exerted on the development of pharmacology, since this was largely due to his special personal qualities. He combined an enthusiasm for research with an exceptional charm of manner and a special facility for communicating his enthusiasm to younger men. In consequence of this gift there is to-day a long list of persons holding Chairs who commenced their scientific career under Abel.

His international reputation is evidenced by the fact that he held honorary degrees of four American, two British and one Continental University, and was an Honorary Fellow or Member of six American and fourteen foreign scientific societies.

For at least a quarter of a century he was the recognised leader of pharmacology in the United States, and was accorded a very special respect and affection in this country.

See also *Obituary Notices of Fellows of the Royal Society*, vol. ii, 1936-38, pp. 577-581.

A. J. C.