

Obituary

Hermenegildo Arruga, 1886—1972

A shadow has fallen over the whole ophthalmological world at the death of Hermenegildo Arruga on May 17th in his 87th year, one of the very greatest ophthalmologists of the previous generation. His skill in surgery was legendary, his ingenuity in devising new techniques unique, his writings were profuse and excellent, his capacity for living a full life in every sense and his appreciation of its joys were only exceeded by his ability to create lasting friendships and inspire the warmest reciprocal affection.



Hermenegildo Arruga

The family came from Aragón and his father, Eduardo Arruga, an ophthalmic surgeon, was born in Barcelona. Here H. Arruga was born and started his medical studies at the age of 16, completing them in 1908. Thereafter the town council of Barcelona gave their brilliant student a scholarship

to study in France and Germany; he worked under Landolt, de Lapersonne, Hirschberg and Graefe. In 1909 he published his first paper on the serodiagnosis of syphilis, in 1926 his Thesis, presented in Madrid, was on a "simple and efficient modification of dacryocystorhinostomy", and his last paper, published in 1969, reviewed 1,000 encircling operations in the treatment of retinal detachment, a technique he himself introduced. It was through this subject that he sprang to international fame. A close friend and disciple of Jules Gonin, with him and Weve of Utrecht, Arruga may be said to have converted ophthalmologists throughout the world to adopt the new surgical method of treatment of a condition hitherto incurable.

He lived on the upper floor of his magnificent clinic in Barcelona whither an unending stream of patients flocked from all over the world as well as ophthalmic surgeons from many lands. Here the instruction was painstaking and the hospitality superb; the lucky ones spent weekends with him and his family in his house built on the edge of a cliff at Cap Rubí on the Costa Brava. His life in Barcelona was interrupted during the Spanish Civil War. While it lasted his family lived with colleagues in Europe and he went to South America where he spent a period of concentrated activity, teaching and practising surgery and doing much to raise the standard of ophthalmology in that continent.

Arruga's published papers ran into several hundreds, mainly on retinal detachment, the surgery of cataract, keratoplasty, dacryocystorhinostomy, and the participation of the eye in systemic diseases. His two classical books were *Retinal Detachment*, published in four languages in 1936, an extension of his revolutionary contribution to the International Congress in 1933 on the "Aetiology and Pathogenesis of Retinal Detachment", and his *Ocular Surgery*. This is a superb and beautifully illustrated volume derived essentially from his own practice with a critical appreciation of the work of others, first published in 1946, of which several editions followed in three languages; the third English edition, translated from the fourth Spanish edition, appeared in 1962, the chapter on the surgery of the extrinsic muscles being written by his son, Alfredo.

Fortunately, for his unique professional activities—and also for his qualities as a man—Arruga received a multitude of honours. In Spain he was created a Count in 1950 and he received the Grand Cross of four Orders. To these were added Orders from Greece, Venezuela and Brazil, the honorary memberships of 30 ophthalmological societies, honorary degrees from Barcelona and Heidelberg, the Honorary Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, and a host of civil awards and professional medals among which he treasured most the international Gonin Medal. In his honour the Hispano-American (now the Spanish) Ophthalmological Society instituted a medal to be granted every four years.

It must not be thought that Arruga's only joy was his professional work. In his youth he was brilliant at soccer, playing for several years as centre-forward for the Catalá Club, one of the leading Spanish teams of the time. He was an enthusiastic mountaineer and climbed most of the peaks in the Catalan and Pyrenees mountains; at the age of 70 he reached the summit of the Jungfrau. An ardent motorist, he finished fourth in the "Tour of Catalonia" in 1920; at the age of 55 he learned skiing; and until the age of 85, driving motor boats off the Costa Brava, at a speed and with a dexterity that terrified at least one of his visitors, was a favourite hobby. In quieter occupations he was similarly good; he was an accomplished artist, and at chess he once succeeded in drawing a match with Capablanca. At congresses (and he attended many) he was a delight, wise, courteous and colourful, and as a host he was unequalled.

Could one ask more from life?

In one sense only was "Chilo" (as he was universally known to his friends) a difficult companion; he never walked, he always ran, far outpacing his younger friends.

In 1914 he married Teresa Forgas from Bagur, a charming lady who tragically died after a motor accident. He is survived by his son, a distinguished ophthalmologist following his father and grandfather, and three daughters; to them our most sincere sympathy is extended.

The death of Arruga leaves a blank in the international ophthalmological community which cannot be filled; for this we are sad, but we are all glad that he lived.