Rudolph Matas

St. John the Baptist, then Orleans Parish, Louisiana

Matas, Rudolph, eminent physician, surgeon, and author, professor of surgery of the Tulane university of Louisiana was born at Bonnet Carre, St. John the Baptist parish, 28 miles from New Orleans, La., Sept. 12, 1860.  He is the son of Dr. N. Hereu and Theresa Jorda (Ponsjoan) Matas, both natives of the province of Gerona, Spain, and descendants of old Catalonian families.  Dr. N. Hereu Matas was a graduate of the University of Barcelona, a licentiate of Madrid and of the New Orleans School of Medicine.  He devoted himself to ophthalmology, and studied this specialty in Paris, where he was a pupil of De Wecker and Galezowski.  When about 4 years of age, the son accompanied his parents to Spain and France, and in this way obtained his elementary education in Europe.  Returning with his parents to America, his English education began in 1868 in the public schools of Brownsville, Tex., where his father had established himself in practice. Subsequently he took a 3 years' course in the literary department of Soulé college, New Orleans, returning again to the Mexican frontier, where he was graduated with honors from the Institute of St. John, Matamoros, Mexico, in 1876.  He matriculated in the medical department of Louisiana state university (now Tulane university) in 1877, and was graduated M. D. in 1880.  He served 2 years (1878-80) as an interne in the charity hospital of New Orleans.  While an undergraduate he was appointed medical clerk to the Yellow Fever Commission appointed by the National Board of Health to investigate yellow fever in Cuba in 1879, this commission consisting of Dr. Stanford E. Chaille, George M. Sternberg, John Guiteras and Col. W. J. Hardee.  In 1882 he was called by the city authorities of Brownsville, Tex., and Mier, Mexico, to aid in suppressing the yellow fever epidemics that prevailed on their frontier.  Dr. Matas was appointed medical inspector for the National Board of Health in 1881 and was given charge of the quarantine station at Vicksburg, Miss.  He since has held the following commissions:  Visiting surgeon to the Charity hospital of New Orleans since 1880; demonstrator of anatomy in the medical department of Tulane university from 1885 to 1894, professor of surgery in the same institution since 1894, professor of operative surgery and applied anatomy in the New Orleans polyclinic (now the graduate department of Tulane university) from 1888 to 1895, and subsequently Emeritus professor in the same school, professor of anatomy in the New Orleans training school for nurses from 1889 to 1894, lecturer at the post-graduate school and hospital in Chicago in 1893, senior surgeon to the Touro infirmary, New Orleans, since Dec. 9, 1906; consulting surgeon to the eye, ear, nose and throat hospital since 1895.  He is a member of the New Orleans medical and surgical association (president in 1886), merged since into the Orleans parish medical society; Louisiana state medical society (president 1894-5); American medical association (chairman of the section of surgery and anatomy 1907-8); association of American Anatomists; Fellow of the American surgical association (vice-president 1901, president 1910); Fellow of the American society of clinical surgery (vice-president 1909); Fellow of the Southern surgical and gynecological association (president 1911); association of Military Surgeons; Societe Internationale de Chirurgie (Brussels); honorary president surgical section of the first Pan-American medical congress, held in Washington, D. C., 1893; vice-president for Louisiana second Pan-American medical congress, Mexico, 1896; member and director of the national association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis (chairman of the section of surgery, Washington, D. C., 1909); member American society of Tropical Medicine (vice-president 1908 to 1911, inclusive); editor New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal, 1883 to 1895; Jerome Cochran lecturer, Alabama state medical association, 1911; first lieutenant U. S. army reserve corps since 1909.  In New Orleans he is a member of the New Orleans Academy of Sciences, Boston and Round Table clubs, the Art association, the Louisiana Historical association, etc., etc.  Dr. Matas is at this time vice-president of the American College of Surgeons, which was organized in 1913 at Washington, D. C., and was one of the speakers (by invitation of the surgical section) at the session of the International Medical Congress held in London, England, in Aug., 1913, at which he also submitted a special report on the "Surgery of the Vascular System."  Dr. Matas is an extensive contributor to medical and surgical literature, his articles appearing in such standard works as Buck's Reference Handbook of the Medical Sciences," ''Sajous' Annual of the Medical Sciences," Keating's "Cyclopedia of the Diseases of Children," Hare's "System of Therapeutics," Morrow's "System of Genito-Urinary Surgery and Dermatology," Dennis' "System of Surgery," Park's "Text-Book of Surgery," Warren & Gould's "International Text-Book of Surgery, Keen's Surgery" (vol. V., Vascular Surgery), etc.  Among the exhaustive monographs that have been written by Dr. Matas, the following may be mentioned:  "Traumatisms and Aneurlisms of the Vertebral Artery,'' "The Surgical Peculiarities of the American Negro," "The Surgical Treatment of Congenital Ano-Rectal Imperforations," "Surgery of the Chest," "Artificial Respiration by Intralaryngeal Insufflation, with Special Apparatus'' (the Matas-Smyth Positive Pressure Pump), "Methods of Local and Regional Anesthesia," ''Studies in Fractures, Comparative and Statistical," ''The Radical Cure of Aneurism, by the method of Intrasaceular Suture-Endoaneurismoraphy",  "The Suture in the Surgery of the Vascular System,'' ''Testing the Efficiency of the Collateral Circulation as a Preliminary to the Occlusion of the Great Surgical Arteries,'' ''Occlusion of Large Surgical Arteries, with Removable Metallic Bands to Test the Efficiency of the Collateral Circulation'' (in collaboration with Dr. C. W. Allen), which have been contributed to the transaction of various societies of which he is a member.  Apart from his earlier studies in yellow fever and other tropical diseases, in anatomy, and in experimental surgery, Dr. Matas has devoted his best energies to the teaching and practice of surgery, which he has expounded continuously since 1894 in the medical department of Tulane university.  In recent years he has devoted special attention to the problems related to the surgery of the vascular system, more particularly the radical cure of aneurism, with which his name is especially identified, and to the methods of testing the efficiency of the collateral circulation.  His original procedures and methods in this field are now familiar to students of surgery.

Note:  The original source includes a photograph of Dr. Matas.

**Fortier, Alcee, *Louisiana: Comprising Sketches of Parishes, Towns, Events, Institutions, and Persons, Arranged in Cyclopedic Form*, volume 3, Madison, Wis.: Century Historical Association, 1914, pp. 115-116.**

**Transcribed by Mike Miller**