

**Edmond Souchon.**

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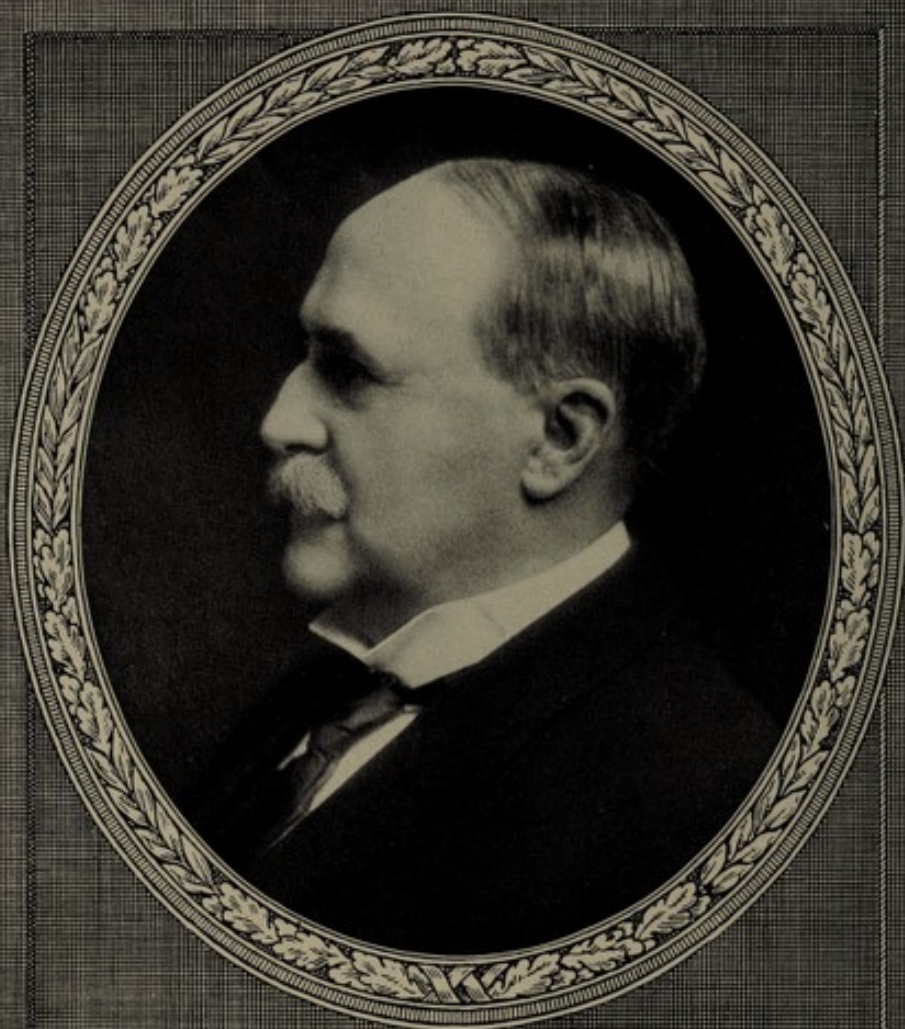
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1841-1924



## EDMOND SOUCHON

RUDOLPH MATAS, M.D., F.A.C.S., NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

ON August 5, 1924, Dr. Edmond Souchon, emeritus professor of anatomy and clinical surgery in the Medical School of the Tulane University of Louisiana, came to the close of a long life of great activity and distinguished service.

Dr. Souchon was a native of Louisiana and his professional life is intimately associated with the medical history of his state as an anatomist, surgeon, sanitarian, medical educator, and contributor to the literature and technical advancement of his profession.

Edmond Souchon was born in Opelousas, Louisiana, on December 1, 1841. His father, Dr. Eugene Souchon, and his mother, Caroline (Pettit) Souchon, were both natives of France. His earliest schooldays began at St. Martinsville, Louisiana, but at the age of 12 years his parents moved to Mobile, Alabama, and thence to New Orleans, where he studied in private schools. Owing to his father's ill health and reverses of fortune he was obliged to continue his education in the public schools under great disadvantage, to the extent of selling newspapers to aid in the support of the family. With his father's improving health the financial distress of the family was relieved, and the boy was sent to France to continue his collegiate preparation for a medical career.

A studious and ambitious pupil, he made rapid progress, and in 1860 matriculated in the École de Médecine of the University of Paris. With the outbreak of the Civil War at home his allowance ceased, and he was put on his own resources to meet his living and college expenses for the following 4 years. Urged by the spur of necessity he proved his mettle by passing a grilling *concours* for the internship of the Paris hospitals, standing fourth in a list of three hundred and fifty competitors, with the distinction of Laureat. He was admitted as a resident at the Charité, in the service of Velpeau, the most conspicuous surgeon in the Paris of that day.

It was there that Dr. Souchon first met Dr. J. Marion Sims, who was to be one of the two great friends of his life. Dr. Sims was then an obscure American physician who had had the temerity to cross the Atlantic to teach the great intellectuals and masters of surgery in Paris how to cure vesicovaginal fistula. Dr. Souchon acted as his interpreter and assistant, and becoming aware of his young friend's financial distress, Dr. Sims tided him over the most critical period of his



student career. Dr. Souchon's gratitude and admiration for Marion Sims is revealed in his "Reminiscences of J. Marion Sims in Paris" and "The Places Made Famous by Marion Sims in Montgomery, Alabama."

His father's death hastened his return to the United States, and he came back to New Orleans and received the degree of medicine from the Medical Department of the University of Louisiana in 1867.

A letter of introduction from Dr. Sims to Dr. T. G. Richardson, then professor of anatomy and clinical surgery, marked a second epoch in Dr. Souchon's life. He assisted Dr. Richardson in private practice, and became his prosector and chief of clinic at the Charity Hospital. How deeply and tenderly he cherished Dr. Richardson's favor and friendship is shown in his "Reminiscences of Dr. T. G. Richardson."

In 1872, Dr. Souchon became demonstrator of anatomy in the Medical Department of the University of Louisiana, and served for 4 years. In 1885, he was elected professor of anatomy and clinical surgery and filled this chair for 23 years. While professor of anatomy he laid the foundation for the Museum of Anatomy, now known by his name, which is entirely representative of his anatomical handicraft. It contains over 400 dissections, admirably preserved by original methods of injection and coloration, described in the *Anatomical Record*, Philadelphia.

As a teacher of anatomy his chief aim, like that of all his predecessors and contemporaries, was to teach human anatomy in its practical applications to the needs of the practitioner of medicine. He viewed the subject from the standpoint of what was most useful in the interpretation of function, disease, and injury in the light of the progress accomplished in his day. The importance that he attached to method and system in study is everywhere apparent in his work. These fundamental ideas are especially conspicuous in his "Plea for a Methodically Written Textbook of Anatomy," in his "Guide for Describing an Organ," in papers on "How to Learn and Remember Anatomy," and in his surgical teachings, as exemplified in his papers on the "Methodic Description of a Surgical Disease" and "Method of Reporting a Surgical Case."

In surgery he was essentially an operator of the anatomical era. He naturally excelled in all operations which required a knowledge of anatomy and in this he was soon recognized and quickly acquired an independent and lucrative practice. It was his ability as an anatomist that led to his association with Dr. Andrew Smyth, the eminent surgeon-in-chief of Charity Hospital, in connection with the historic case of Banks, the negro patient, whose innominate artery Dr. Smyth successfully ligated for aneurism for the first time in surgical history. This case stimulated Dr. Souchon to pursue his studies on aneurism, and later on dislocations of the shoulder joint. His many monographs on these subjects will remain conspicuous landmarks in the history of these subjects and are undoubtedly the most enduring literary monuments of his surgical career.



In addition to the exacting demands of a large clientele he found time to give expression to his thoughts and ideas in a large number of publications, which, up to the last years of his life, kept pace with his diversified activities and reflected the working of his busy mind.

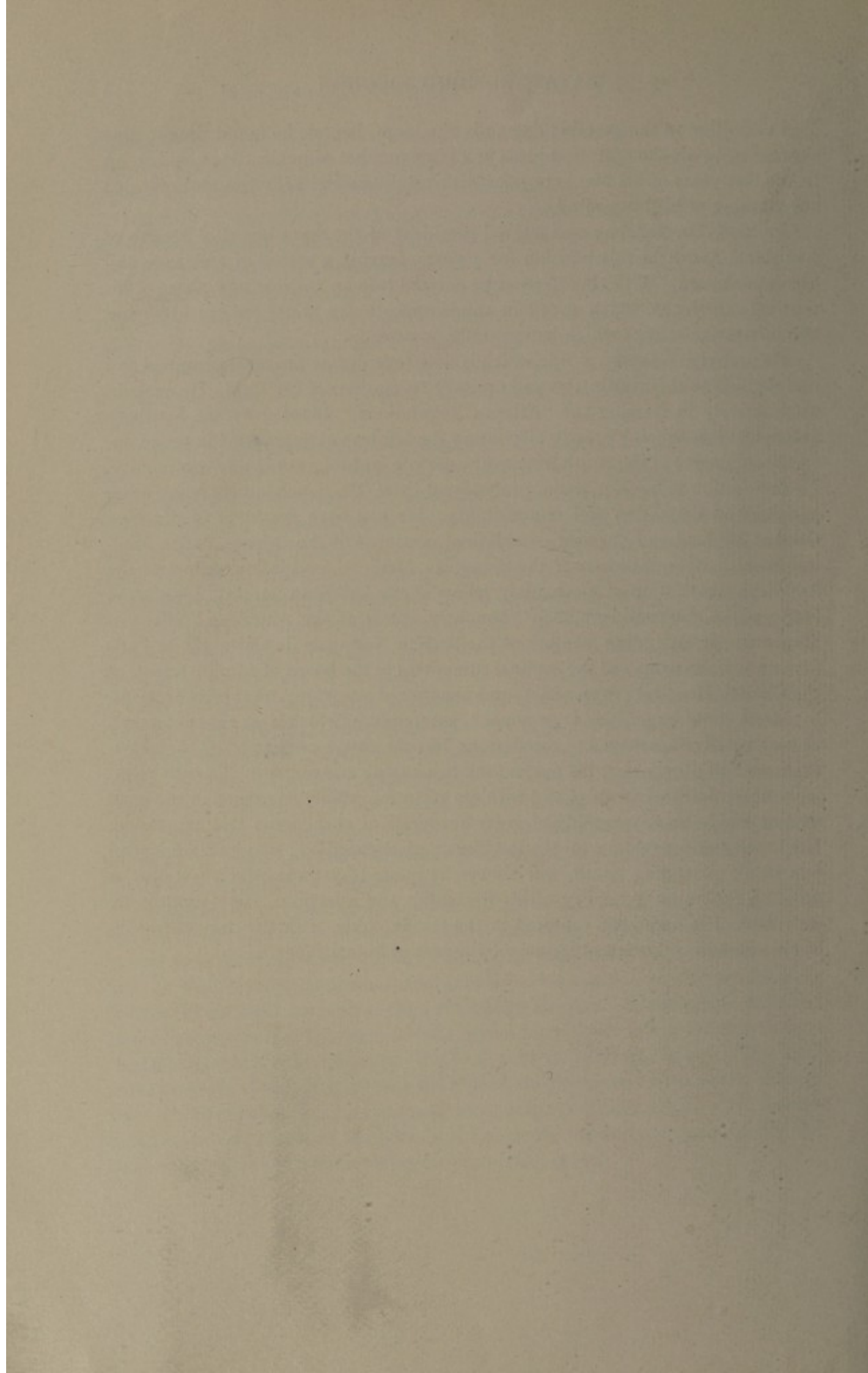
In 1898, Dr. Souchon was elected president of the State Board of Health of Louisiana, and held this position for 7 years, leaving a record of efficiency and accomplishment. With this election he entered into an entirely new phase of his medical experience, which gave him ample opportunity to use the executive and administrative talents which he naturally possessed.

He prepared a sanitary code which is now regarded as the most complete and useful guide to the health laws and sanitary regulations of the state. He contributed actively in framing the "Atlanta Regulations," adopted by the Southern States in 1898, thereby greatly alleviating the burdens of quarantine imposed upon the commerce of the South whenever yellow fever broke out in any community.

In addition to his official and professional titles, Dr. Souchon held many other positions of distinction and responsibility. He had been president of the New Orleans Medical and Surgical Association, president of the Orleans Parish Medical Society, vice-president of the American Medical Association, fellow of the American Association of Anatomists, fellow of the American Surgical Association (1895-1924, vice-president 1899); honorary fellow of the American College of Surgeons; corresponding member of the Société Nationale de Chirurgie de Paris (since 1900); chairman of the medical committee of the board of administrators of the Charity Hospital (1879-1882); and member of numerous other organizations.

Much could be said of his personal characteristics, which were those of a man of very positive opinions and convictions, but the two dominant traits that overshadowed all others were his passion for *punctuality* and method. Though seemingly unsentimental at times and with his attention wholly engrossed in the business at hand, he was capable of great outbursts of enthusiasm and expression. His loyalty and devotion to Marion Sims and Richardson, who had befriended him in his struggling youth, will always be quoted by those who knew him as proof of the undying quality of his friendship and affection. His domestic life was ideal. His happiness centered in the family circle, with the companionship of his wife and children as the *summum bonum* of his existence.









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