



## GUSTAF ASPLUND

In memoriam.

Gustaf Asplund died on the 27th of November, 1948. He was born on the 7th of February, 1876.

The following is a short account of his life. His father, Nils Mauritz Asplund, was chief surgeon at the Sahlgrenska Sjuk-

hus in Göteborg. Thus he grew up in a cultured medical home and, like his elder brother, the dermatologist, Mauritz Asplund, naturally chose to study medicine, after he had passed his Student examination in Göteborg. He qualified med. kand. in 1901 and med. lic. in 1906, from the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm.

He gained a thorough post-graduate experience in hospitals in the provinces and Stockholm. His choice of orthopaedics as his specialty was influenced by his appointment (from 1911 to 1914) as junior surgeon to the newly opened department for surgical tuberculosis and orthopaedics in St. Görans Hospital in Stockholm. Here, he was one of the first to work with Henning Waldenström in a department where the treatment of both surgical tuberculosis and orthopaedics followed more rational and effective lines than anywhere else in Scandinavia at that time. During this period the young chief and slightly older sub-chief formed a life-long friendship.

In the next years (1914-20), he worked at intervals in the Vanförestalten in Stockholm under Haglund, with whom, also, he formed a close friendship.

He found his own life work as Chief Surgeon at the Eugeniahemm (Stockholm), where he succeeded Samuel Hybinette.

The Eugeniahemm was founded in 1882 and was a home for invalid children (not only those with orthopaedic disabilities). In 1886 a small orthopaedic clinic had already been opened, and the Eugeniahemm can be said to have been the first place in Sweden to combine therapy and occupational training, a combination which later became the guiding principle of the Institutions for Cripples.

Asplund organised the surgical orthopaedics of the Eugeniahemm along wholly modern hospital lines.

It so happened that during those years, when the Eugeniahemm was working with the bigger institutions for cripples in Sweden, the most severely crippled children were admitted to the home and came under Asplund's care.

Particularly, many children with spastic paralyses were

admitted; and Asplund gained a wide experience of the, in many ways disheartening, treatment of these cases. He described his experience in a paper, published in *Acta Orthop.*, Vol. X, which played an important part in determining the lines which were followed later in dealing with the orthopaedic and social problems encountered in the treatment and occupational disposal of spastics.

Asplund also contributed toward the solution of important problems in arthrodesis of the shoulder-joint, whose technic he improved in several details.

In addition to his orthopaedic work, he held an appointment as doctor to the navy, and published various papers on subjects related to this work. After he had reached retiring age in 1943, and had resigned from his position as Chief Surgeon to the Eugeniahemm, he remained a member of the hospital committee on naval medical problems.

As one of the group of Scandinavian orthopaedists who formed the Nordisk Ortopedisk Forening in 1919, Asplund never failed to attend our meetings, at which he soberly, intelligently and with great understanding, took part in our professional proceedings.

We, in the other Scandinavian countries, feel Asplund's death as a particularly painful loss because of his rare personal and human traits. He was more "uniting" than any one else at our meetings, as he showed, when, as Swedish member of the committee during the war years, he took the initiative of holding a Scandinavian meeting in Sweden during the occupations of Norway and Denmark, in spite of the difficulties involved; and after the end of the war he revived the Scandinavian meetings as soon as possible. As President he had quite special abilities—everything was thoroughly and practically prepared and he conducted the meetings with that mixture of authority and informality, which characterises the, in the best sense of the word, superior personality.

Also at meetings which he attended only as an ordinary member, his active presence was of decisive importance in making the Nordisk Ortopedisk Forening not merely an

association which discussed professional subjects but also a society of friends.

It is difficult to describe Asplund accurately with words, but fortunately Albert Engstrøm has made an exceptionally lifelike portrait of him in the etching which is reproduced above. Asplund's personality was stamped by his unique humour. His speeches at our dinners were masterpieces of wit, with typical Swedish jokes and humour. They were usually carefully and elaborately prepared. It was, however, perhaps more important that he had the ability to manage pleasantly the discussions at our scientific and committee meetings, and he was the most important intermediary in bringing about an understanding between the members from the different Scandinavian countries. This was not always achieved by taking things a little humorously; but, just as his intelligent and benevolent eye was hidden by the thick glasses which his severe myopia forced him to wear, his keen intelligence and great heart were hidden behind an elegant and humorous pose.

Gustaf Asplund had a happy married life with Karen Asplund, née Moberg, whom he married in 1908. With her by his side he made an exceptional host to the guests who came to his home, and created an atmosphere of harmony which has given us many happy memories of the hours we spent there.

*P. G. K. Bentzon.*