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Ramon Guiteras, MD: Surgeon, Statesman, Big-Game Hunter

Bristol native founded the American Urological Association

MARY KORR
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Like his Harvard friend and classmate Teddy Roosevelt, Ramon Guiteras, Jr., lived a life of adventure and achievement. Named for his father, a Cuban businessman, Ramon was born in 1858 and grew up in Bristol, his mother Elizabeth Wardwell's hometown.

He attended Mowry & Goff's preparatory school in Providence, and studied at Harvard, where he became a winning heavyweight collegiate boxer, much to

his friend Teddy's delight. After a year at the Ivy, Ramon left for Europe to study languages and then travelled to Africa, to caravan for big game. Upon his return, he entered Harvard Medical School and graduated in 1883.

After studying in Europe under notable surgeons, Dr. Guiteras was appointed a surgeon at Charity Hospital on Blackwell's Island in New York City. He worked there for 18 months and then



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[The following is an excerpt from an article by Dr. Guiteras called "Meeting Roosevelt in Mombasa," and published in various newspapers in August 1909.]

The Jungle Perils

The insects of Africa that are most dreaded are the jigger, mosquito, tick and tsetse fly. The jigger is a wingless degenerate flea. It leeches under the skin, usually about the toe nail, and breeds, giving rise to a globular mass which if not removed goes on to suppuration and results perhaps in the loss of a toe, and causing difficulties and painful walking perhaps for some time. The black boys understand removing them and pick them out whole with a pin or needle. They are found about old camping grounds, in hotels and cars.

The mosquito is the same as our own. The bite of the anopheles causes malaria as it does with us but usually in a more severe form. The most dangerous is that known as black water fever, which incurs in debilitated subjects suffering from chronic malaria...They were very numerous in Mombasa and the coast and also on the steamers coming up from Mombasa. These steamer mosquitoes were of the malarial type and a number of the passengers contracted fever on board.

The tick is another disagreeable insect, resembling a crab. It fastens itself to the surface of the body, sticks its head under the skin and fills itself full of blood. After its removal a small papule or pustule remains. In Uganda the tick bite causes a fever that on examination of the blood shows a spirillum to be present, as the result of which it is called spirillum fever. It somewhat resembles malaria in its attacks. It has complications, nervous conditions, especially of the eye and facial paralysis. It lasts about two months and leaves the patient weak and debilitated.

The sleeping sickness has been known for a long time, but has only lately excited general interest. Since leaving Africa I have been asked many questions regarding this trouble by the people that I have met in Italy, France and England. It is the result of a bite of one form of tsetse fly that inhabits the shores of the great lakes, and the streams flowing out of them, as the Nile. It is said that after the bite the onset of the disease may be from one month to several years.

...The health officials are consequently cutting away the brush and grass by the shores of the lake, moving the people back into the country and planting citronella on the lake shores, as the flies cannot live under those conditions.

opened a surgical practice in New York City in 1887. Three months later he caught diphtheria from a patient and went to Cuba to recuperate for six weeks. He spent his time on the Guiteras' family coffee plantation, and rode horseback across the island. No doubt he had much to discuss with his cousin, Dr. Juan Guiteras, who would later work with Walter Reed in ascertaining the mosquito as the carrier of yellow fever.

When Dr. Guiteras returned to New York, he enjoyed the fellowship of his colleagues, and attended meetings of the N.Y. Genito-Urinary Society, a convivial group who gathered over wine and cheese to discuss the latest advancements in their chosen field. In 1902, the group disbanded and Dr. Guiteras is credited as the founder of the American Urological Association.

At this time, the Rhode Island Medical Society accepted his application to become an honorary member. President of the Latin-American Medical Association, he also served on many U.S. advisory boards. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson sent him to Cuba to assess the country's sentiment regarding World War 1.

He died suddenly, in December 1917, of meningitis, at age 59. His friend, attorney Augustus Bourn, Jr., delivered a memorial before the Rhode Island

