VINCENTZ CZERNY (Czerny of Heidelberg) was born in Trautenau, Bohemia, on November 19, 1842. In 1860 he matriculated as a student of medicine at the University of Prague, but after one year he journeyed to the University of Vienna and became a pupil of Bruecke, where he utilized his inclination to further histologic investigation of tumors.

In 1866 he received from the University of Vienna a Doctor of Medicine degree “summa cum laude.” He became an assistant to Theodor Billroth in 1868. In 1871 he was made Professor of Surgery at the University of Freiburg.

Czerny, in 1877, became Professor of Surgery at the University of Heidelberg; it was here his fame spread as a skillful and fearless surgeon. Czerny’s Surgical Clinic was renowned all over the world. The one question asked of all foreign surgeons visiting Europe was, “Have you seen Czerny of Heidelberg?”

Czerny was the first to perform successful laryngectomy. He popularized vaginal hysterectomy and did much work on surgery of the stomach, intestines and gallbladder. He is remembered by many for the “Czerny suture.”

Czerny was instrumental in the founding of the Institute for Cancer Research in Heidelberg in 1906. He was President of the German Surgical Society in 1901. In 1885 he was made a Fellow of the American Surgical Association.

Vincenz Czerny died on October 3, 1916. He was one of the world’s great clinical surgeons. Czerny published over one hundred sixty contributions in the surgical literature. He said on many occasions that he could “handle the knife better than the pen”; this we know was an understatement.