Charles Langdon Gibson was born on May 5, 1864 at Boston, Massachusetts, the son of Charles Langdon and Marguerette Carter (Smith) Gibson. He received his early education abroad, particularly in France and under private tutors. From this arose his most intimate knowledge of the French language and the French people. His mother and sister had been presented at the Court of St. James and they wished him to enter Oxford but he rebelled, returned to the United States and after a course of study at Adams Academy, Quincy, Massachusetts, entered Harvard University, where he obtained his A.B. degree in 1886 and his M.D. in 1889.

Doctor Gibson served an internship at St. Luke's Hospital, New York, from 1890 to 1892, following which he went abroad for postgraduate work at Heidelberg and Vienna. On his return he entered private practice as an assistant to Dr. Robert Weir, a famous surgeon of that time, and shortly joined the staff of St. Luke's Hospital and was quickly advanced to be a full Attending Surgeon. He became a Clinical Instructor in Diseases of the Genito-Urinary System in 1900 at Cornell Medical College. In due time he was made Associate Professor of Surgery and on the death of Dr. Lewis A. Stimson he became a full Professor of Surgery in 1918.

Doctor Gibson became a member of the New York Hospital Surgical Staff in 1907 and full Attending Surgeon in charge of the Cornell Division from 1913 until his death. He also served in the House of Relief of the New York Hospital and was consulting surgeon at the General Memorial Hospital. At the time of his death he was Consulting Surgeon at the New York Hospital, St. Luke's, Memorial, State Hospital for Deformed and Crippled Children, Vassar Bros. Hospital, Poughkeepsie, and Southside (Babylon) Hospital.

Doctor Gibson was a member of the New York Academy of Medicine and the New York Surgical Society, Fellow of the American Surgical Association, Member of the Society of Clinical Surgery, American Association of Genito-Urinary Surgeons, International Surgical Association, Practitioners Society, New York Clinical Society, Associate Member Academie de Chirurgie, Paris, Corresponding Member Academie de Medicine, Paris, and of the Union-Inter-Allie. He was a member of the Sons of the Revolution, Society of Colonial Wars, Military Order of Foreign Wars, University Club, and a former member of the Century Association.

Doctor Gibson had spent nearly all of his summer vacations in France and at the outbreak of the first World War he evidenced his great love for France by his personal efforts and visits, by organizing Surgical Relief for France and Belgium, and probably, although he was far too modest to ever mention it, by more direct contributions to
his beloved foster country. In February 1915 he obtained leave of absence to visit his friend, Dr. Antonine Depage, who was in charge of a Red Cross Hospital at La Panne just behind the lines of the Yser, in that small portion of Belgium not actually occupied by the Germans. He was instrumental in obtaining money and supplies for this hospital and later was decorated for his work by King Albert of the Belgians, who made him “Commandeur de l’ordre de la Courrone.” Other close friends were Doctors Henri Hartman, Thierry de Martel, Tuffer, Walther and Lambotte.

In April 1917 Doctor Gibson was commissioned a Major in the Medical Corps of the Army. He organized Base Hospital #9, the New York Hospital Unit, and was eminently successful in establishing this hospital in France. His wonderful organizing ability and his complete knowledge of the French people and especially their language were invaluable to the successful development of a great new hospital in a foreign land. With infinite tact and ready sympathy he placed his magnificent talents at the service of all, great or small, American or French. He was especially considerate of our nurses, who responded by an undying devotion to him. All the members of the Unit have the kindliest recollections of his helpfulness, his courage in tight spots, his generosity, and his genial companionship on many trips to Paris.

On the professional side Doctor Gibson kept the organization at a high level of efficiency and was instrumental in developing the debridement of wounds, the treatment of severe compound fractures, perforating and penetrating wounds.

A most interesting and instructive article by Doctor Gibson entitled “A Visit to Belgium and France in 1916” was published in the General Bulletin of the New York Hospital, March 27, 1917. It is of real historical value and well worth reading, not only for its medical knowledge but from human interest; particularly to be valued for its calm courage is a letter written by Nurse Cavell to her pupils, two days before her death. In this article Doctor Gibson expressed clearly his feeling for the French and Belgian people, his admiration for their great surgeons and physicians and his horror of war. Here too he speaks of many other American Surgeons, especially of Dr. H. H. M. Lyle, with highest praise.

Doctor Gibson returned to his professorship and to the service of the New York Hospital in 1918. This was at the crux of the most difficult and trying times of World War I. There was an increasing and menacing shortage of men, of funds, of space and facilities. Our present war time difficulties are real indeed but they can hardly compare with those of 1918. In this field Doctor Gibson’s extraordinary abilities shone. In spite of almost insurmountable difficulties the work was carried on and continued to improve rapidly as peace time conditions allowed. Toward
the end of his active career the great benefactions of Payne Whitney allowed the planning and building of the present magnificent plant.

Doctor Gibson with the aid of Dr. Lewis A. Conner and a renowned laboratory group carried on the work bequeathed them by the pioneers Polk and Stimson and added to the lustre and fame of Cornell and helped to bring it into the very forefront of medical activities. Perhaps two of Doctor Gibson's outstanding contributions to surgery were his fundamental work in gastric surgery and, above all, an accurate and complete follow-up system—one of the earliest and best in the country.

As a man Doctor Gibson was extremely reserved, quiet, and conservative yet always with an open mind for the new. Skeptical and hard-headed, he had a warm heart. He welcomed young talent and was greatly pleased at any efforts toward research on the part of his staff. These may seem insignificant in comparison with the present but again time, funds, and space were lacking.

After retiring from the chair of Surgery Doctor Gibson was made Professor Emeritus, and Consulting Surgeon to the New York Hospital. He continued his interest in medicine and became superintendent of the Burke Foundation in White Plains. In November 1944, after a long illness, Doctor Gibson succumbed to the very disease to the study of which he had devoted so much of his time and strength—the disease which had caused the death of his friends Ewing and Stockard. He was buried in the family plot in Mt. Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Massachusetts.