# Welcome to Dublin

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A famous Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, John Pentland Mahaffy, declared that in Ireland the impossible always happens; the inevitable, never. Well, the impossible (or what would have seemed impossible in pre-aviation days) is about to happen. Over a thousand of our colleagues will join us in Dublin from 27 June to 2 July for the tripartite meeting of the British, Canadian, and Irish Medical Associations under the Presidency of Mr Barry O'Donnell.

Dublin, with its many hospitals—and with medical schools at Trinity College, the Royal College of Surgeons, and University College—is indeed an appropriate venue for such a gathering. We bid you a warm welcome to a city already immortalised in literature, notable in the history of medicine, and rich in medical lore and legend.

## Georgian doctors and hospitals

Though Dublin's finest medical hour was the mid-nineteenth century, when the Dublin School led by Stokes, Graves, and

**The Charitable Infirmary, Jervis Street, Dublin**

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Corrigan surpassed the schools of Edinburgh and the Continent, some of our greatest (and often forgotten) doctors belonged to the Georgian era.

Thomas Molyneux (1641-1733), often known as the "father of Irish medicine," was president of the College of Physicians on four occasions; Professor of Physic in the university; State-Physician and Physician-General; and was created a baronet in 1730—the first of many Irish medical personages to receive this honour.

In 1710 Richard Steevens, Professor of Physic at Trinity College and a past President of the College of Physicians, died, leaving instructions to build a hospital with his estate. In 1733 Dr Steevens's Hospital was opened and among its early benefactors was Esther Johnson—the celebrated "Stella"—close friend of Jonathan Swift, Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral. When Swift died he left his money for the erection of a hospital for the insane—St Patrick's—which opened next door to Dr Steevens's in 1757. Of his bequest the great

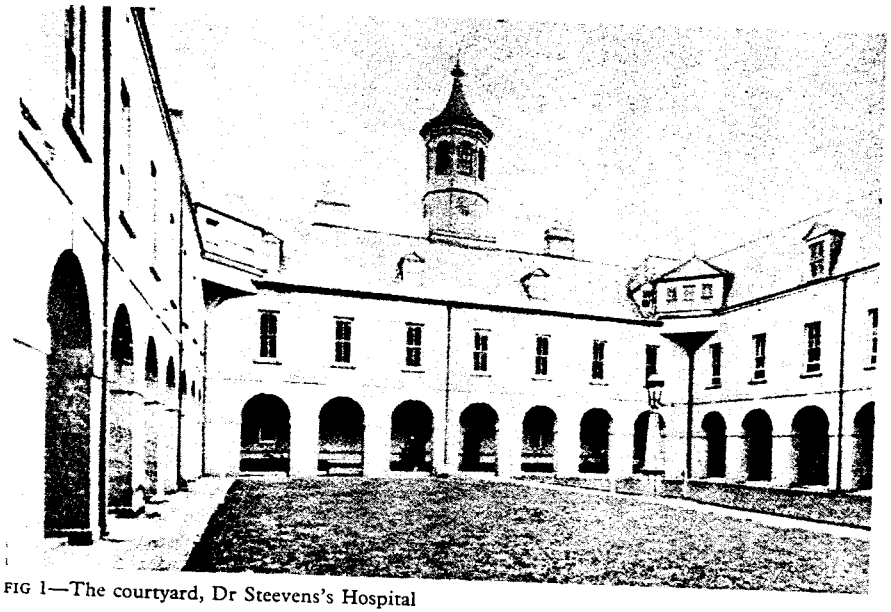

FIG 1—The courtyard, Dr Steevens's Hospital

Dean had this to say: "He gave what little wealth he had, To build a house for fools and mad; And show'd by one satiric touch, No nation wanted it so much."

One of the first physicians to serve on the staff of St Patrick's (or Swift's Hospital, as it was called locally) was Robert Emmet, father of "bold Robert Emmet," the patriot who was executed not far from the gates of the hospital in 1803 for his part in an unsuccessful insurrection. The staff of Dr Steevens's Hospital boasted among others Samuel Croker King, first President of the Royal College of Surgeons, and Abraham Colles (1773-1843) one of the College's finest teachers. He was the first of a small group of Dublin doctors destined to achieve eponymous immortality. Dublin has claimed as its own Patrick Dun (1643-1713), an Aberdonian physician who became a member of Parliament, and who, in 1696, received a knighthood. He left his considerable wealth to the College of Physicians for the foundation of a medical school, but over a century passed before his mismanaged bequest was partly fulfilled by the opening of the hospital in Grand Canal Street which now bears his name.

In a city where poverty and wealth were close neighbours it was not surprising that Bartholomew Mosse (1712-1759), a kind-hearted doctor, should devise a way of making the gentry and nobility provide for the less fortunate. Devoting his life to the care of the poor lying-in women of the city, he opened the first special hospital for obstetrics in George's Lane. Later, with money raised through lotteries, concerts, and plays (the most appropriately named being a translation of Racine's *The Distressed Mother*), he engaged the German architect Richard Cassells to build the now-famous Rotunda Hospital, which opened in 1757. One of its first masters was Sir Fielding Ould (1710-1789), who secured for midwifery its rightful place in medicine and who was considered by an admiring scribe to be worthy of greater honours:

*Sir Fielding Ould is made a knight,*
*He should have been a lord by right;*
*For then each lady's prayer would be—*
*"O lord, good Lord, deliver me!"*

Another Scotsman, John Cheyne (1777-1836), came to Dublin "neither expecting nor indeed wishing for rapid advancement." He went on to become very successful and rich with appointments to the Charitable Infirmary and the House of Industry (now St Laurence's) Hospitals. His description of that peculiar form of respiration so often a terminal event in apoplexy was recalled by William Stokes in 1854 and now bears their names.

These Georgian doctors were, of course, active outside medicine. Dr Henry Quinn, President of the College of Physicians, was a regular harpsichord player in the Musical Academy of Amateurs founded by Lord Mornington (father of the Duke of Wellington). This group sometimes performed in the celebrated Musick Hall in Fishamble Street, where in 1742

Handel's *Messiah* had its first production. The proceeds of that historic première went to the Charitable Infirmary and Mercer's Hospital (founded in 1734 by Mary, daughter of Dr George Mercer, a fellow of Trinity who had been obliged to vacate his fellowship for marrying secretly, marriage then being forbidden to fellows).

Gustavius Hume (1730-1812), a surgeon with a flair for architecture, built Hume Street and Ely Place and several other fine buildings in the city:

*Gustavius Hume in surgery excels,*
*Yet pride of merit ne'er his bosum swells,*
*He adds to Dublin every year a street,*
*Where citizens converse and friendly meet.*

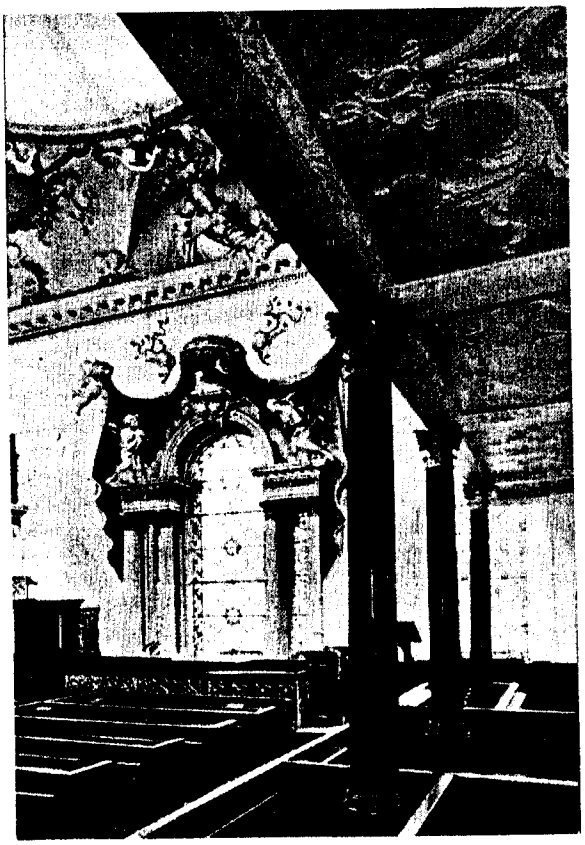

FIG 2—The Chapel, Rotunda Hospital

Whitley Stokes (1763-1845), physician to the Meath Hospital (later to be succeeded by his famous son William), was a fellow of Trinity. He had been sent down for one year for being a member of the United Irishmen, but at least he had the consola-

FIG 3—Sir William Wilde sharing a bottle of beer with William Stokes

tion of knowing that Wolfe Tone regarded him as "the very best man I have ever known." A scholar, he wrote some reasonable poetry, did some good translations, and published the Acts of the Apostles in Irish and English. There were other doctor poets too—William Drennan (1754-1820), who coined the phrase "The Emerald Isle" in the poem "When Erin First Rose"; but we can hardly include Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774), whose medical qualifications were not as impeccable as his poetic works.

### The great Victorians

Dublin's Victorian doctors were astute clinicians, usually having the literary ability to record their observations with style and clarity: consequently, their influence on medical development was out of all proportion to their numbers. The Victorian contribution might be said to begin with a paper in the *Dublin Hospital Reports* of 1827 by Robert Adams (1791-1875), surgeon to the Charitable Infirmary and later to the House of Industry Hospitals, which, among some novel cardiological observations, contains a description of a patient with apoplexy and a slow pulse. This was later to earn for him and Stokes the joint eponym today applied to syncope due to heart block.

But surely the happiest conjunction was the appointment of William Stokes (1804-77) and Robert Graves (1796-1853) to

the Meath Hospital. Remembered today by their eponymous contributions (Cheyne-Stokes respiration, Stokes-Adams attacks, and Graves's disease) their greatness lay not in these accolades, but in their iconoclastic approach to bedside clinical teaching. The admiration of Trousseau, their great French contemporary, was echoed in later years by William Osler—"I owe my start in the profession to James Bovell, kinsman and devoted pupil of Graves, while my teacher in Montreal, Palmer Howard, lived, moved, and had his being in his old masters, Graves and Stokes."

Another remarkable physician of the period was Dominic John Corrigan (1802-80)—all the more remarkable as he came from a Catholic artisan family in the Liberties of Dublin. Renowned for his observations in disease of the aortic valve, he was president of the College of Physicians five times and acquired for that body a permanent home, which now stands in Kildare Street. Honorary physician-in-ordinary to Queen Victoria, he was created baronet chiefly for his work as commissioner of education.

Arthur Jacob (1790-1874), professor of anatomy and physiology at the College of Surgeons for 40 years, was a talented ophthalmologist who described the layer of rods and cones of the retina, known as membrana Jacobi. His classical account of rodent ulcer for many years earned for that lesion the title of "Jacob's ulcer." A founder of the long-lasting Dublin Medical Press in 1839, he was also one of the founders of the City of Dublin Hospital in Baggot Street. Richard Carmichael (1776-1849), physician to the House of Industry Hospitals and a leader in medical reform and education, founded the Irish Medical Association in 1839. Francis Richard Cruise (1834-1912), a distinguished cellist and classical scholar, was physician to the Mater Hospital, where he introduced and modified the cystoscope. Joseph Michael O'Ferrall was chosen by Mother Mary Aikenhead as the first member of the staff of St Vincent's Hospital when it opened in Stephen's Green in 1834 and he was joined a little later by O'Bryen Bellingham, whose *Diseases of the Heart* is still a classic in cardiology.

Most of these eminent figures were remarkable people and made a brilliant social impact on a city which has always valued character and idiosyncracy. The close connection between medicine and literature, so typical of Dublin, has ensured that the foibles and virtues of these legendary figures have been gleefully recorded by their friends (and their enemies).

William Wilde (1815-76), one of the most colourful Dublin Victorians (father of Oscar and husband of "Speranza"), is remembered more for his amorous exploits than for his remarkable talents, not only as a doctor but also as an archaeologist. He was the author of many books (some of which are now being reprinted), and his prodigious labours in compiling the census returns of 1841 and 1851 earned him a knightnood. One of his close friends was Charles Lever (1806-72), who gave up medicine for literature and became a successful novelist, his best-

remembered work being *Charles O'Malley*. Wilde founded St Mark's Ophthalmic and Aural Hospital in 1844 (this was later incorporated in the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital). An aural surgeon of some merit—Wilde's incision in mastoid surgery was popular for a time—his ophthalmic prowess was not held in high regard by Bernard Shaw who never forgave him for treating his father's squint so effectively that "he squinted the other way all the rest of his life."

At the pinnacle of Wilde's career a former patient, Miss Mary Josephine Travers, sued Lady Wilde for libel, and Sir William found himself, in effect, on trial for molesting the good lady while she was under the influence of chloroform. Though Wilde won the case, this Victorian cause célèbre appears to have affected him deeply. He became eccentric and unkempt and is again remembered unkindly by Shaw as being "dressed in snuffy brown, and as he had the sort of skin that never looked clean he produced a dramatic effect, beside Lady Wilde (in full fig), of being like Frederick the Great, beyond soap and water, as his Nietzschean son was beyond good and evil."

**The twentieth century**

And so the stage is set for twentieth century Dublin medicine, on which I do not propose to pass judgment. But at the early part of the century the interchange between medicine and literature was striking. George Sigerson (1836-1925), a physician, was an accomplished political journalist and poet and a senator of the Irish Free State. He did not hold the younger W B Yeats in high regard, declaring that "since the poetry of this country began to be written by Mr Yeats nobody knows what words mean any more." The same Mr Yeats, later a senator himself, had a very high regard for another medical senator—Oliver St John Gogarty (1878-1957), ear, nose, and throat specialist, immortalised, much to his discomfort, as Buck Mulligan in *Ulysses*, by his one-time friend James Joyce. Gogarty's wit made him friends and enemies. He once said of a surgical colleague concerned in a divorce scandal: "There is a case of a man who made his reputation with his knife and lost it with his fork." His novel *As I Was Going Down Sackville Street* resulted in a libel action which he lost (and in which the young Samuel Beckett gave evidence against him). Gogarty is remembered more as a composer of limericks than as a poet:

*There was a young man of St Johns*
*Who wanted to roger the swans,*
*Oh no! said the porter,*
*Oblige with my daughter,*
*For the birds are reserved for the dons.*

He none the less figures prominently in Yeats's *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, but the inclusion of so many of his poems has been attributed to the claims of friendship rather than to the merit of his poetry. Perhaps Yeats's opinion of Gogarty as "one

of the great lyric poets of our age" should not be taken too lightly and poems such as *The Image-Maker* are evidence of his considerable talent:

*Hard is stone, but harder still*
*The delicate performing will*
*That guided by a dream alone,*
*Subdues and moulds the hardest stone,*
*Making the stubborn jade release*
*The emblem of eternal peace.*