

## The Cover

# Dominic Corrigan

*This portrait in oils by Stephen Catterson Smith, the elder, is reproduced by kind permission of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland. The cover is sponsored by Reckitt & Colman.*

Dominic Corrigan was born in Thomas Street on December 1st, 1802. His Catholic parents were reasonably well-to-do in a part of the Liberties where extreme poverty was the order of the day. Corrigan's father was a farmer, shop-keeper, dealer, chapman and collier-maker who made a good living by providing farm implements for Irish country labourers passing through the city on their way to work the English harvest. Young Corrigan received his education at the remarkable Lay College at Maynooth where in his last year he was apprenticed to Dr. Edward Talbot O'Kelly, physician and apothecary to the College. From this rather unusual apprenticeship Corrigan proceeded to the School of Physic at the University of Dublin and hence to Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital and Edinburgh University where he qualified with his famous contemporary William Stokes in 1825. Returning to Dublin, Corrigan commenced practice in Upper Ormond Quay and soon he was appointed medical assistant to his native parish of St. Catherine's and to the Sick-Poor Institution of Dublin in Meath Street. From this laboratory of human suffering and misery he published a series of papers in *Wakley's Lancet* which were to stand to his stead in his application for the post of physician to The Charitable Infirmary in Jervis Street in 1831. A year later he published the famous paper "On permanent patency of the mouth of the aorta; or inadequacy of the aortic valve" which earned him eponymous immortality. Other eponyms followed — "Corrigan's pulse", "Corrigan's button", "Corrigan's bed" and "Corrigan's cirrhosis"; and soon the Dublin physician, together with his colleagues Graves and Stokes, was achieving for Dublin an international reputation which became known abroad simply as the 'Dublin School'.

Corrigan was later appointed physician to Cork Street Fever Hospital and in 1840 he was appointed to the House of Industry Hospitals, comprising the Richmond, Whitworth and Hardwicke Hospitals. His career which was not always without polemic, was nonetheless, a remarkable catalogue of success. He was president of the College of Physicians for five successive years during which time the College hall in Kildare Street was erected; he was appointed physician-in-ordinary to Queen Victoria, created a baronet of the Empire, a commissioner for national education, a senator of the Queen's University and a Liberal member of parliament for the City of Dublin. At Westminster, Corrigan displayed remarkable courage and foresight in advocating a non-denominational national university of Ireland. This brought him into bitter conflict with the hierarchy of his church. He refused to compromise his liberal principles for what he saw to be doctrinaire Catholicism, fearing that the Protestant religious bigotry to which Ireland had been subjected for so long, might, with Catholic emancipation and the disestablishment of the Church, be replaced in time by a Catholic intolerance and pragmatism that would be to Ireland's disadvantage.

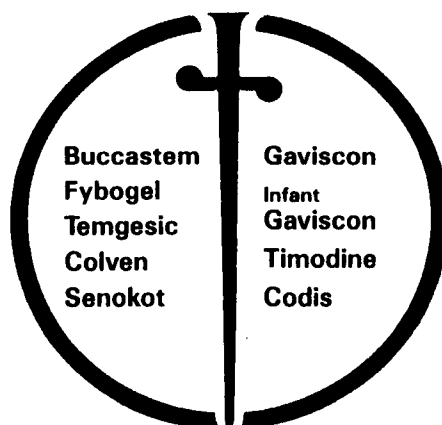
Dominic Corrigan died in his home at 4 Merrion Square West on February 1, 1880 in his seventy-ninth year and was interred in the family vault beneath St. Andrew's Church in Westland Row.

Stephen Catterson Smith, was a most popular portrait painter. He was succeeded by his son of the same name, which often leads to confusion in identifying which painted a specific picture. The father, an Englishman (1806-72), trained in the Royal Academy Schools in London, and later in Paris, and after a successful career in England as a portrait draughtsman, came to Ireland in 1839. He settled first in Derry, coming to Dublin in 1845. He became an RHA in 1844 and eventually succeeded to the presidentship of the society in 1859. He was undoubtedly better at portraits of women, where he had the opportunity of showing in their crinolines his superb brushwork. Most of his male portraits are strong and rich in colour but, perhaps because he was much too busy, often show less feeling for the character of his sitters than they should. His masterpiece, according to Anne Crookshank is the whole-length seated portrait of Dominic Corrigan which is in the College of Physicians. Exhibited in 1865, it is a rare example of a portrait by Catterson Smith which considers the personality of the sitter as well as his outward appearance and profession, showing Corrigan in his study with the presidential gown of the College lying casually in the background.

The following sources were consulted for this note: Strickland WG. A Dictionary of Irish Artists. Shannon 1969; Vol: pp. 363-76; O'Brien E. Crookshank A. Wolstenholme G. A portrait of Irish Medicine: An Illustrated History of Medicine in Ireland. Ward River Press, Dublin 1984; p. 14. O'Brien E. Conscience and Conflict. A Biography of Sir Dominic Corrigan 1802-1880. Glendale Press, Dublin 1983.

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