

The Cover Evory Kennedy

This portrait of Evory Kennedy by Charles Napier Kennedy is reproduced by kind permission of the Rotunda Hospital.

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Evory Kennedy was born at Carndonagh in Donegal on 28th November, 1806. His father, the Reverend John Pitt Kennedy was rector of Donagh in the Barony of Mishowen. No doubt it was the influence of his godfather, Thomas Evory, formerly Master of the Rotunda that guided young Evory towards Edinburgh where he graduated. How influential Evory Kennedy's godfather was in securing appointments for the young graduate at the Richmond Hospital School and the Rotunda is not recorded, but it can have been no disadvantage to find himself heir to his godfather's considerable estate. Kennedy succeeded Robert Collins as Master of the Rotunda in 1833 at the age of 27. Kennedy's mastership was notable on two counts. First, he played a significant role, with Creery Ferguson and Collins, in introducing the stethoscope (first brought to the attention of British medicine by William Stokes in 1825) to obstetrical practice with a little book entitled "Observations in obstetric auscultation". Second, he succeeded in overcoming the opposition of some of his colleagues and in obtaining the financial support to open a gynaecological unit in the Rotunda "for the humane and beneficial purpose of alleviating the sufferings of patients labouring under the diseases peculiar to women." He also founded the Dublin Obstetrical Society (later to be incorporated in the Academy of Medicine in Ireland) which was to prove the rock on which his obstetrical reputation foundered. Kennedy accepted, in common with many practising obstetricians the contagion theory of puerperal sepsis and advocated the building of cottages or chalets rather than hospitals for the treatment of maternity patients. He outraged the Governors of the Rotunda by accusing them at a protracted meeting of the Dublin Obstetrical Society (it went on for eleven evenings) of failure to recognise the faulty design of their hospital and to accept his suggestion of building chalets to accommodate two patients and one nurse. After his retirement from active professional life, Kennedy devoted himself to magisterial duties and to supporting the temperance movement. He died in London in 1886, and is buried under an imposing granite monument in Mount Jerome Cemetery.

The portrait and figure painter, Charles Napier Kennedy (1852-1898), son of Lieutenant Colonel John Pitt Kennedy, (a brother of Evory), studied art at the Slade School and in Paris. He exhibited for the first time in the Royal Academy in 1872 and in the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1886. He painted two portraits of his uncle, the finest being the present illustration which now hangs in the hall of the Rotunda Hospital. A smaller version of this portrait may be found in the Royal College of Physicians, and the National Gallery of Ireland possesses an interesting painting by Kennedy The Boy and the Dryad (NGI 543). Charles Napier Kennedy died at St. Ives, Cornwall in 1898.

The following sources have been consulted in preparing this historical note: Pinkerton JHM. Evory Kennedy: A Master Controversial. *Ir Med J* 1984; 77: 77-81; Strickland WG. A Dictionary of Irish Artists. Irish University Press. Shannon. Vol 2, p 476; O'Brien E, Crookshank A, Wolstenholme G. A Portrait of Irish Medicine: An illustrated history of medicine in Ireland. Ward River Press. Dublin. 1984. pp 19-21.



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