

## The Cover Sara Hampson

*This picture by Stephen Catterson Smith the younger,  
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Sara Hampson, one of the first group of Nightingale nurses trained at St. Thomas's Hospital in London, came to Dublin in 1891 as the first Lady Superintendent of the Rotunda Hospital. Prior to her arrival, nursing standards in the hospital were abysmally low. Staff sisters, nurses in training, and ward maids all had to sleep in the wards with the patients. The Board of the hospital, recognising that complete reorganisation of the nursing services was needed, fired the Matron, Mrs. Courtney and advertised for a Lady Superintendent at a salary of £80 a year and rations. Miss Hampson was selected from sixty-six applications and it is recorded that "to her tact and judgement is largely due the great success which attended the inauguration of the new nursing system in the Hospital". She held office until 1896, and when the Portobello Nursing Home opened in 1901, Miss Hampson became its first lady superintendent.

The Catterson Smiths, father and son, who both bore the same first name, Stephen, were popular portrait painters in Victorian Dublin, and they painted many portraits of medical personalities. The father, an Englishman, 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 became RHA in 1844 and eventually succeeded to the presidency of the society in 1859. According to Anne Crookshank, he was better at portraits of women, where he had the opportunity of showing in their crinolines his superb brushwork. His most famous medical portrait is the whole-length seated study of Dominic Corrigan in the Royal College of Physicians.

Catterson Smith, the younger (1849-1912), never achieved the eminence of his father. He painted many doctors including Aquilla Smith in the College of Physicians and Charles Benson in the College of Surgeons, both adjudged by Anne Crookshank to be competent but dull. His most remarkable medical portrait is of Sara Hampson. Despite the numerical superiority of women on hospital staffs, they were virtually never considered worthy, and still are not, of being portrayed. Miss Hampson is shown seated, writing in uniform, with a statuette of her mentor, Florence Nightingale in the background. The Rotunda did not commission this painting; it was presented by Sir William Smyly, who may have had it painted in gratitude for her services to nursing.

(This portrait is reproduced from *A Portrait of Irish Medicine: An Illustrated History of Medicine in Ireland*. E. O'Brien, A. Crookshank and G. Wolstenholme. Ward River Press, Dublin, 1984. Photography by D. Davison. Details on Miss Hampson and Stephen Catterson Smith may be found on pages 15, 18, 136, 137 and 263, and further details on Miss Hampson are to be found in: *The Book of the Rotunda Hospital*. T.P.C. Kirkpatrick and M. Jellett. Adlard & Son, London. 1913, pp. 187-9.)

# RESTING SNUGLY



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**Reference:** <sup>1</sup>Oswald, I. (1984) *Br. J. Hosp. Med.* 31, 219-224. PA No. 22/26/2.

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