

# Robert William Magill Strain (1907–2000)

President of the Ulster Medical Society

1968–69

**Presidential Opening Address**  
Ulster Medical Society  
17th October 1968

UNIVERSITY SQUARE  
A SENTIMENTAL RETROSPECT



ON A Spring evening in 1938 there was a knock on the front door of my parents' home, 9, University Square, and I answered it. Standing on the step was our neighbour, Reggie Blackwood. He had a framed picture under his arm. "This is for you," he said. "It's your birthday, and I think you may appreciate it more than I do." For the only time in my life, I am quite sure, all my relations had forgotten the anniversary, and the gift was doubly welcome. It was a copy of the well-known though scarce lithograph of Queen's College, now the University, and I have treasured it ever since. It was quite typical of him to know when I was born. He probably knew when everyone in University Square was born.

A gentleman of private means, Reginald Walter Henry Blackwood (Fig. 1) had lived all his life either in 24, University Square, which had been his father's house before him, or at the family farm at Castlenavin near Seaforde in County Down. His father had been a director of the Ulster Bank, and had intended that his



son should become a solicitor, so Reggie found himself for a time in the offices of Messrs. l'Estrange and Brett. But for our present purposes it is enough to say that such a life was not to his liking, for his outside interests were many. He was a noteworthy amateur herald, one of the most knowledgeable in Ireland, and was distinguished for his extreme accuracy, his excellent draughtsmanship, and his remarkable heraldic library, probably the largest in the country apart from those of the professional heralds. From his love of heraldry there sprang almost inevitably an insatiable interest in genealogy, and he made a vast collection of family trees of Ulster people, distinguished and humble alike. Much of his information he gleaned from wills, and one of his favourite pastimes was a holiday in London spent delving into these documents and any other papers that would throw light on the affairs of local families. He had a large personal collection of beautiful furniture, glass, silver and china, but his pictures were of historical rather than aesthetic value. He published little, the only paper I know of being one on the three

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1. Reginald Walter Henry Blackwood

small churches at Loughinisland, near his country home. With his love of books, and his need for a good reference library, it is small wonder that he took a keen interest in the affairs of the Linenhall Library, and that he was for many years its President. On his death in 1961 it was found that he had bequeathed to it all his books and manuscripts.

I was once told that among his personal papers was a typescript history of University Square, and it is through the good offices of Mr. J. W. Vitty, M.A., the

Librarian of the Linenhall, that much of the information that follows has come into my possession. Far from being typewritten, his notes are in longhand and in a small Stationery Office notebook, and are almost telegraphic in form. In places, too, they are now beyond interpretation, as some of them are in pencil and much worn.

My own interest in all this arises from the fact that I was born in No. 3, though as we lived there only a short time after that event, I can recall nothing of it. I came back to No. 9 with my father and mother in 1913, and that was my home until my marriage in 1947, when my wife and I occupied No. 8 for seven years. There is no house in the terrace that does not hold personal memories for me, and now, as it becomes University property, and a place where hardly anyone lives, I feel that the time has come when someone who knew it intimately and affectionately should set down something of its history. It is, without doubt, the most handsome street of terrace houses in Belfast, but it is, above all, a place where people were born, lived and died; thirty houses in which families had their homes. It would be a pity if Mr. Blackwood's industry, and the notes he made, were to lie forgotten and unused. This account of University Square has thus two main sources of information: the Blackwood notes and my own memories. These are bound to overlap. My own contribution is highly personal, and is garnered especially from my childhood and school days. The period of my student and professional years is covered by Mr. Blackwood's history of each house, but I have taken the opportunity of adding many personal memories of people who lived in them. Forgive me, then, if there is too much ego in my cosmos, but the little world I am trying to recapture and describe is one dear to me. It represents a way of life fast disappearing, and in many respects gone for ever.

My own earliest recollections of the Square are of eating wild strawberries in the front garden of No. 9 while the arrangements for our transfer there were in progress. Several large shrubs with a central quite enormous holly had made a wilderness where a small boy could hide, safe from discovery, and where the fruit had similarly escaped notice.

It cannot have been long after we were settled in that a historic occurrence became fixed in my memory. I was wakened one night and brought into the front bedroom to hear men tramping up the street singing "When Johnny comes marching home again", for it was April, 1914, the guns for the Ulster Volunteer Force had been successfully run into the province, and not every car in the terrace had spent

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the night in its own garage.

The University never seems to have been out of the hands of the builders for any length of time, and about then there were two projects in hand : the one, an extension westward of the library, and the other, of political significance, the construction in the grounds of a large hatted hospital (Fig. 2) for the casualties expected among the members of the U.V.F. should there be war in Ireland over the Home Rule question.



2. *The Ulster Volunteer Force Hospital*

The hospital was started in the old wooden Exhibition Hall between the old O.T.C. Headquarters and the big conservatory in the Botanic Gardens, and gradually it was extended up the slope to the south of the old part of the Physics building. The premises were never used for their original purpose, and just as the U.V.F. became the nucleus of the 36th (Ulster) Division of the British Army, so the hospital became a military one, and was eventually to spread right to the University Road and to occupy ground where the Whitla Hall now stands. This last portion was an orthopaedic wing, and it is interesting to recall that one junior American medical officer to serve in it was Orr of Nebraska, afterwards famous for his plaster treatment of osteomyelitis, and who cannot have failed to profit from the wise guidance of A. B. Mitchell and S. T. Irwin while in that hospital, for they, like several other local doctors, held R.A.M.C. commissions while working there. The U.V.F. Hospital still survives at Craigavon and Galwally, both of which provide accommodation for ex-service patients. It is within the memory of most of us that the University used the old hospital premises until comparatively recent times. My own early recollections of the front of the University are therefore of wounded men in hospital blues, of students playing tennis on the front courts, and of Harry Millar's laundry hanging up in the back yard of the Hamilton Tower. Little did I realize then how well I would subsequently get to know him

in the Physiology Department, where he was the senior technician for many years.

The Hamilton Tower (Fig. 3) erected in honour of the Rev. Thomas Hamilton, Vice-Chancellor of the University, in his lifetime, and taken down before his death, is now remembered by few, but a story is told of how some students played a frightful prank on an old man called Donnelly who kept a cab at the gates of the Methodist College. When trade was bad he spent his time inside the vehicle asleep, and thus it happened that his cab was led gently down to Queen's and through the gate of the Hamilton Tower. There it was turned round, the horse taken out of the shafts and led outside the gate which was then shut. The shafts were then pushed out through the bars of the gate and the horse harnessed in again.

University Square was a good place for small boys, and though the University grounds were officially out of bounds, old George Robinson, the Steward in the front hall, was unable to keep out the army of invaders, neither was William Fulton, Steward of the Union, nor Sammy Keyes who looked after the furnaces under the library and who had therefore a special responsibility for the gate in the middle of University Square. To be chased by any of these people was itself a safe and delightful experience, for they were all easily outdistanced, especially if we had bicycles.

My youthful contemporaries were numerous. There were our next-door neighbours, the Fullertons, in No. 8, Cecil and Eric with their sister Irene, and in No. 7 Jack and Jimmy Colville, conspicuous in the kilt, and their sister Jean. On the other side in No. 10 there was Margaret Lowry, later Mrs. C. H. G. Macafee, and further down in No. 16, the Russels, Billy, Archie and their sister Pearlie, and in No. 18 Mary, Jack and Charlie Mitchell. The Kirks in No. 21 were very junior,



3. *The Hamilton Tower*

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and the Russell girls in No. 4 were hardly much older. Margaret, Sinclair, Tom and Charlie Irwin in No. 29 seemed in those days to be miles away apart again from the gulf that at that age a few years can create.

The ordinary push bike was the great toy. A favourite trick was to rush down the path from the library to the Union and, reaching up into a tree, haul yourself into its branches, leaving the machine to be caught by a friend, or there were flights of stone steps that could be ridden down if you had no respect at all for the bike. A more staid performer was Dr. Letts, the Professor of Chemistry. We could all mimic his manner of mounting, for he would push himself out into the Square with one foot resting on the step projecting from the hub of the back wheel until sufficient momentum had been gained to permit of a slow and dignified descent into the saddle. My recollection is that it was always summer and always sunny: hot days and long evenings.

The Square was busy professionally as it has never been since. Every afternoon the continuous but ever-changing rows of the motor cars of patients stood by the pavement, each with its varnished coachwork glistening, its lamps and other metal work a gleam of brass or nickel plate, and its attendant chauffeur in his livery. Years afterwards I heard an echo of those times. W. W. D. Thomson was introducing James Craig for the Honorary Fellowship of the Ulster Medical Society, and in his remarks he referred to his own early days in No. 25. At the end of an afternoon's work he was going down with a handful of letters to the pillar box at the foot of the Square when he met James Craig. "James," he said, "took his hands out of his trousers pockets. In one were fifteen silver shillings, and in the other fifteen golden sovereigns, and I was very jealous." But for the schoolboy there were no such distractions. Enough pence to go round to Mr. Ireland's tuck shop opposite Grattan's met most of the physical needs, and financial worry was far ahead. One of the hobbies of the time was the collection of cigarette cards, and I often wished I had kept mine, for they were beautifully designed and printed. I well remember the military uniforms series given with Player's Navy Cut and the dogs with Wills' Three Castles. Students tackled for these cards were seldom annoyed at being asked, and two in particular always kept their cards for us. Both were to become Presidents of the Ulster Medical Society: Robin Hall, who was then in training for the Universities' Long Jump Championship which he won and for which he had a special track between the library and the Union, and J. R. Wheeler, then a Rugby international.

If horse-drawn traffic had practically disappeared from the front of the Square, where my mother remembered Mrs. Brice Smyth feeding red apples to her husband's carriage horses, the mews (Fig. 4) still had its stables. The bedtime and waking hours of my childhood are associated with corresponding noises of various kinds: the rattle of wheels on cobbles, the whinney of horses, the solitary clop ringing out at night as a shoe was stamped on a stone stable floor, and the sound of halter chains dragged up and down through the sides of metal mangers. There were horses in the mews for years, for the Trotter brothers, surely the perfect example of the occupational name, kept cabs there except during the years of the 1914-18 War when they were serving with the Royal Horse Artillery. Among the chauffeurs and car washers at the back there were plenty of characters too: Bob Polly who could spit with uncanny accuracy, Tommy McKnight, Sammy Lemon, William Eager and many another.



4. University Square Mews

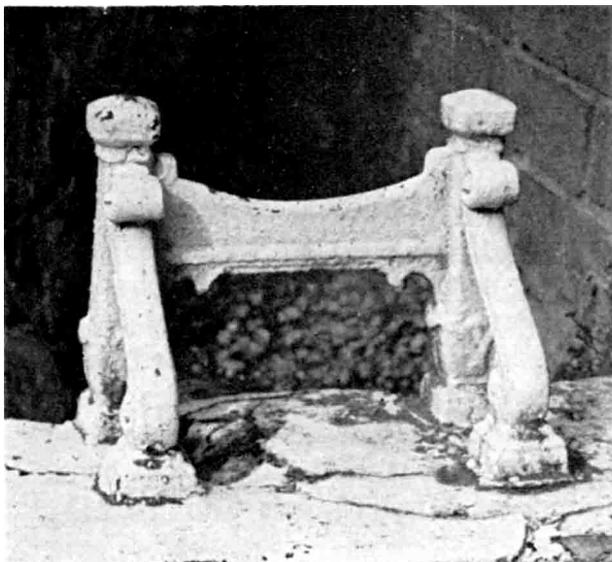
My own bedroom looked north over the city. I can still recall the joyous rhythmic clash of church bells on a Sunday morning, the factory sirens on week days, the hammering of goods train buffers shunting at night, and the fog horns in the Lough when the weather was bad. In the summer martins screamed round the eaves all day. 1921, the year of the Troubles, contributed a special noise: rifle fire. Indeed, Reggie Blackwood, the compiler of the notebook on the Square, was standing at a back window one evening when the glass was shattered round him by a bullet which came to rest in his pocket book, for which reason my own bed was moved to a different part of my room. Later, in my student days, it was, of course, a great convenience to live so close to the University. My neighbour, Aileen Kennedy, now Mrs. Alex Sproule

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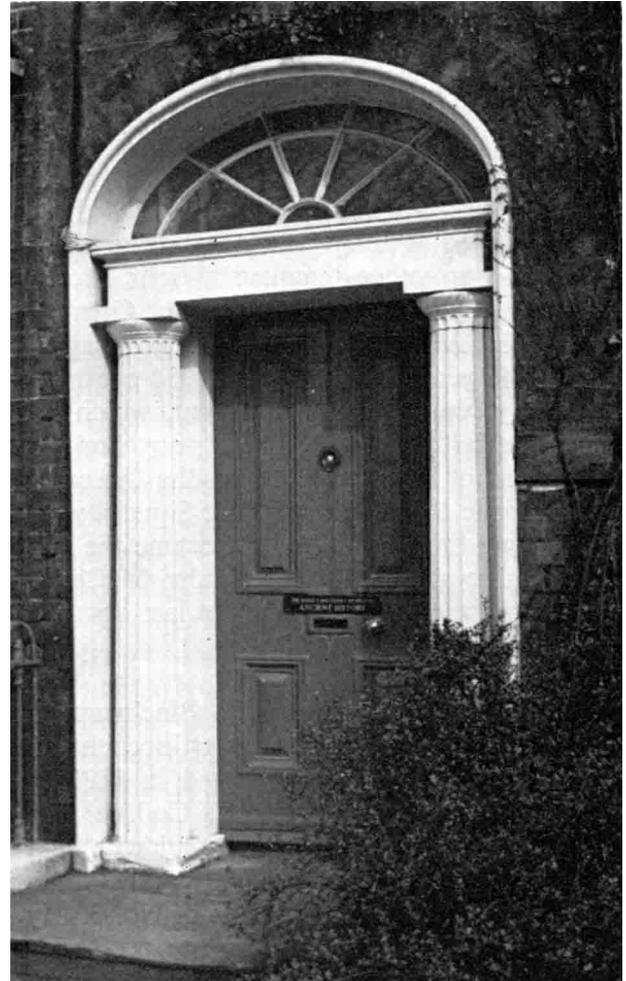
of Gilford, was in the same year, and was actually closer to the side gate, as was her brother, Rex, some years later, but for none of us did this mean that we were never late for a lecture. As far as I know I was the first person actually born in University Square to graduate in Medicine at Queen's, and in spite of the many years I had already lived there it seemed strange eventually to put up my plate in what had become by that time an almost exclusively medical enclave.

The ideas of those who planned University Square are no longer known, or whether there was ever any intention that it should surround more than one side of the College. It seems not unlikely that eastern and even western portions could have been laid out had steps been taken early enough. Certainly it never had any name other than University Square, in spite of the fact that there was no University, for Queen's College was only a constituent part of the Queen's University in Ireland. The reason was simple. There already was a College Square: the College Square North and College Square East that still face the Royal Belfast Academical Institution, which, before the days of Queen's College, provided higher education in Belfast.

The first page of the Blackwood notes records that the Head Lease was signed on 12th July, 1826, between George Augustus, Marquis of Donegall, and the Rev. Gorman Gregg. Many of the houses were under construction by 1852, and the order for paving the footpath was made on 1st February, 1854. The surface of the carriageway itself must have fallen far short of modern standards, for nearly all the houses still have their original foot scrapers (Fig. 5). The



5. Footscraper



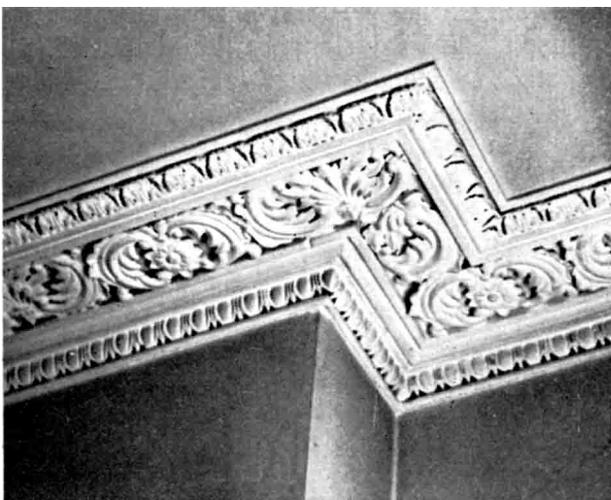
6. Georgian style doorway

notes are full of details of the various deeds by which the parcels of land were led or the houses transferred from one owner to another. It does not seem necessary to refer to these and their dates in full, but as far as I know all the resident families are mentioned. There are, too, genealogical notes and family trees far beyond the scope of this paper. Even the characters of those who lived in the Square have not always escaped the Blackwood tongue, and one is described as "a bad plant". The sums of money for which the houses changed hands at various times, including the ultimate transfer prices to the University, are more often than not quoted, but to repeat them here might arouse feelings which are not those of brotherly love.

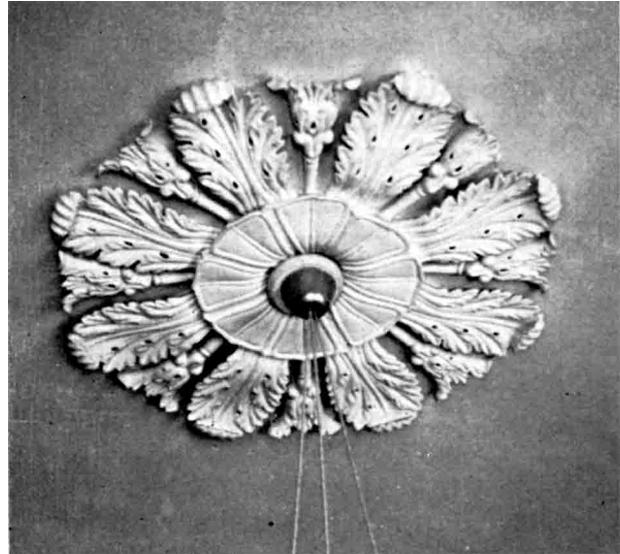
While strictly Victorian in time, the majority of the houses are in traditional Georgian style, with characteristic doorways (Fig. 6) and fanlights, but Nos. 1, 2 and 3 are of a later period, and are of truly Victorian architecture. No. 25 is the only one to retain

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all the small panes of glass in its sash windows, though most of them have preserved them in the upper stories. The houses were built to come forward or recede in small blocks. A few of them are double, and some of the single ones have three windows in the first and second floors and some only two. None of the bay windows is original. In spite of these minor variations there is great unity in the terrace, which would be more evident could it be painted to emphasise the blocks rather than the individual houses, and thus show their relationship, one to another. Towards the east end the footpath slopes downwards, so that the last five houses have basements and more front steps than any of the others. This little slope also necessitated a double kerb to the footpath at one time, though with extensive resurfacing of the road this has disappeared. The late R. J. McConnell used to call this part of the Square "Kirk's Brae", for Thomas Sinclair Kirk lived about the point where it begins. Some of the houses were built with stables, and some had back gardens. Some even had both. One of our neighbours lost a bet because he insisted that my mother had in some ingenious way so placed a great gold and red broom bush that it showed over the top of the bottom wall, while it was in fact safe in the ground at the foot of the garden. There were several good apple trees in the garden of No. 24, and there would have been room for a tennis court there. In later years nearly all the houses sacrificed their gardens for garages. Heavy iron railings and gates protected the fronts of all the houses until they were requisitioned during the 1939-45 War, but samples can still be seen between Nos. 7 and 8, and at the houses with basements. The interiors are characterised by handsome reception



7. Characteristic cornice



8. Medallion

rooms with high ceilings, excellent cornices (Fig. 7) and central medallions (Fig. 8), many of which are still in good repair. The houses have, however, the faults of their period: dark and gloomy kitchens, completely enclosed inner yards, and more stairs than can be conveniently managed with modern domestic help. Nevertheless, they represent faithfully the small town house of a more leisurely and gracious period than the present; a period of which I was privileged to see the last phases.

In the early days the residents were for the most part business men and their families, with a fair admixture of academic and clerical interests, but it was about the turn of the century that medical men began to arrive. They came from Wellington Place and College Square North, from Great Victoria Street and the Dublin Road, so that in later days there lived here many of the consultants and the clinical Professors of the Medical Faculty who, together, formed the Honorary Staffs of the Voluntary Hospitals. There were also general practitioners and dentists. All this finally gave the terrace its claim to be the Harley Street of Belfast.

The top three houses, being built later than the others, were not occupied until 1877. The numbering had then to be changed for all the others, not for the first time. This account uses the subsequent and still existing numbers.

### No. 1

The first resident of No. 1 was George Phillips, but by 1880 the premises had become a girls' school under Miss Reeves, and ten years later was described

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as Oriel College with Mrs. Elizabeth Miles as Principal. From 1902 the house never lost its dental attachments until purchased by the University. The first dental surgeon was Ezekiel Agnew, L.D.S.F.P.S.Glas., who was, as the Blackwood notes point out, the son of Andrew Agnew of Kilwaughter, Larne. He was followed by Herbert Clifford, L.D.S.R.C.S.Eng., and in 1918 by William Marshall Swan, L.D.S.R.C.S.Eng., the son of Thomas Swan of Buncrana. He was one of the original team who founded the Belfast Dental School. During his occupancy there was also room to squeeze in, for a period, two surgeons from the Royal Victoria Hospital: Henry Price Malcolm, and Ian Fraser, Marshall Swan's cousin.

## No. 2

The first resident of No. 2 was Mrs. Henderson, to be succeeded by William Close and his daughter, but in 1894 the professional element had taken over in the person of William Bowden, a dental surgeon. During parts of this period there were two other tenants: Wiclif McCready, a surgeon on the staff of the old Belfast Ophthalmic Hospital in Great Victoria Street, and Miss M. L. Gardner, M.I.S.T.M., a pioneer of physiotherapy in Belfast.

The years from 1922 to 1934 are of historic interest. In 1921 Northern Ireland was given its own Parliament, which was duly opened by H.M. King George V in Belfast that year. There were, however, no Parliamentary buildings, and, while Stormont was being built, the Assembly's College of the Presbyterian Church, opposite the east end of the Square, was used for the meetings of both Chambers. During those years No. 2 became the temporary Assembly's College.

Subsequently Dr. Alexander McCambridge Monypeny practised here, and the last owner, and, in fact, the last doctor to live in the Square, was James Kinloch McCollum.

## No. 3

"Mrs. Hunter", says the Blackwood note, "was the first tenant of No. 3. She originally took No. 1, but on account of it having so many windows she changed to No. 3." She was followed in 1890 by John Park, D.Litt., Professor of Logic and Metaphysics in Queen's College. The next resident was James Bristow Lyons, Linen Merchant, whose second wife was Margaret Julie, daughter of Jules Festu of Villaninez, Calvados, Normandy, an area destined to become familiar in wartime to two subsequent residents of No. 3. My father came next, and there I was born. By 1909 the

house was in the professional hands of Mark Francis Cahill, M.D., and the last owner was Thomas Howard Crozier.

## No. 4

For better or worse, the door of No. 4 never seems to have borne a professional plate; not even when, in its recent University days, it was the temporary home of Harold Rodgers on taking up the Chair of Surgery in Belfast. It had been No. 1, was first occupied in 1854, and had a rapid succession of tenants: Daniel Kirk, Linen Merchant; George Smyth of Messrs. Lindsay Brothers; and Michael Manlon, Timber Merchant.

Then came Dr. Thomas J. Cantrell of the Ulster Medical Hall, Castle Place. In 1852, he had, in partnership with Sir Henry Cochrane, Bart., of Dublin, founded the firm of Messrs. Cantrell and Cochrane. A memorial house plaque in Ashfield school records that:

"Dr. Cantrell was a leading Belfast chemist who by his skill, acumen and integrity contributed to the commercial wealth of our City by developing a business which carried Belfast mineral waters across the seven seas, and thus gained for the City a world-wide reputation which still stands supreme."

Then followed Augustus Minchin Ferrar of Messrs. Jaffé Brothers; John McCallum, Senior Inspector of National Schools; Hugh Ross, Goods Manager of the Belfast and Northern Counties Railway; Robert Anderson; Mr. and Miss Woodside; William Morrison; John Francis Mulligan, Solicitor; and finally William Russell of Messrs. Forster Green and Company. Perhaps a strange coincidence is the occupation of the house by Robert Anderson of Messrs. Anderson and McAuley, who became High Sheriff and Lord Mayor of Belfast, a Knight, and subsequently a Baronet; and William J. Morrison, Managing Director of the Bank Buildings. Sir Robert Anderson's wife was the daughter of the Rev. Andrew Long of Monreagh in Co. Donegal, and they have at least two relations among the Fellows of the Ulster Medical Society: J. A. Smyth and D. A. D. Montgomery.

## No. 5

Occupied from 1854, No. 5 shows the usual type of resident, the successful business man, with the professional exception of one dentist: Robert Atkinson, Merchant; William Gelston, Tobacconist; Mortaiz Portheim, Linen Manufacturer; James Clarke, Dentist; Mrs. Eliza Simpson William Greenhill, Corn

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and Coal Merchant and Charles Stanley Sinclair, Yarn Merchant.

### No. 6

Following the Rev. Adam Hudson; Thomas Hughes, Gentleman; Mrs. Agnew and her son Henry, in 1900 No. 6 became the home of Dr. William Gillespie McKenzie and his American wife. They were succeeded by their son, William Richard McKenzie, Gynaecologist to the Samaritan Hospital until his early retirement in 1938. His son, Kenneth, was one of the famous Fighter Pilots of the Battle of Britain. When a firm of architects took over No. 6, for many it marked the beginning of the end, and College Gardens clacked its tongue!

### No. 7

John Oulton, Flax Merchant; Plato Oulton, Secretary to the Water Commissioners; Charles Oulton, Cashier in the Northern Bank; and Miss Grace Oulton occupied No. 7 from 1854 to 1907. It then became the home of James Colville, B.A., M.D. He was of County Down farming stock, but it was his wife, the daughter of a Glasgow Bailie, who insisted that my childhood friends, Jackie and Jimmy, wore the kilt. James Colville was in general practice, was a Past President of the Ulster Medical Society, and one of the foundation trustees of the Robert Campbell Memorial Fund. He was followed in 1936 by Eric Oliver Blake from Trinidad, a Queen's graduate with a large practice on the Newtownards Road as well as in University Square. When he died, the funeral crowds filled the Square and blocked all traffic. The last occupant, and in fact the last professional entrant to the Square was dental, Stanley McCullough.

### No. 8

The early occupants of No. 8 were Mrs. Rosetta Harrison, Henry Harrison, William Campbell, James McCorry, Linen Merchant; Rev. Lowry S. Berkley, Mrs. Eliza Scott, Mrs. Hughes, Mrs. Gunning, and William Clugston. Then came two great medical, or, rather, surgical names: Andrew Fullerton and Cecil Armstrong Calvert.

Andrew Fullerton (Fig. 9), the son of a Methodist Manse, was Professor of Surgery at Queen's University from 1923 to 1933. Enthusiastic, diligent and painstaking, he was a poor lecturer, but a magnificent and stimulating bedside teacher. One of the Irish pioneers of cystoscopy, his contributions to urology should be better known than they are, especially his discovery of diuresis occurring on the affected side in unilateral kidney disease, a finding of



great assistance before the elaboration of later simpler techniques. All the urine specimens from his wards in the Royal Victoria Hospital were taken home and examined in his own house. I should know. His hand centrifuge was attached to his consulting room mantle-piece which was in our party wall. He did many cystoscopies in his own house. In my student days in the afternoons the telephone would sometimes ring. I would be told that the front door was open and that I was to walk in as his assistant. This I often did, and saw bleeding papillomata and other bladder lesions beautifully demonstrated. "Andy" was a great little man. He was very conscious of his position: C.B., C.M.G., a full Colonel who had served in France in the 1914-18 War as a consultant surgeon, President of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland; but he was just as jealous of the reputation of his medical school which he did much to adorn. I am very proud of having been his dresser, his resident pupil and his houseman.

Cecil Armstrong Calvert (Fig. 10) is remembered with affection by all who know him. Gentle in manner as he was in technique, he could have adorned any branch of surgery. It might have been orthopaedics, for he was for many years assistant to S. T. Irwin, but eventually he and G. R. B. Puree set out on their

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10. Cecil Armstrong Calvert

pioneering work in neuro-surgery, and it was to this speciality that he devoted the remainder of his life which ended so tragically in a motor accident. His work at St. Hugh's Military Hospital at Oxford during the 1939-45 War gave him an international reputation. I never remember his study being in darkness at any hour of the night in all the years he was our next door neighbour, for he was widely read and published many articles.

My wife and I lived in No. 8 for the first seven years of our married lives.

### No. 9

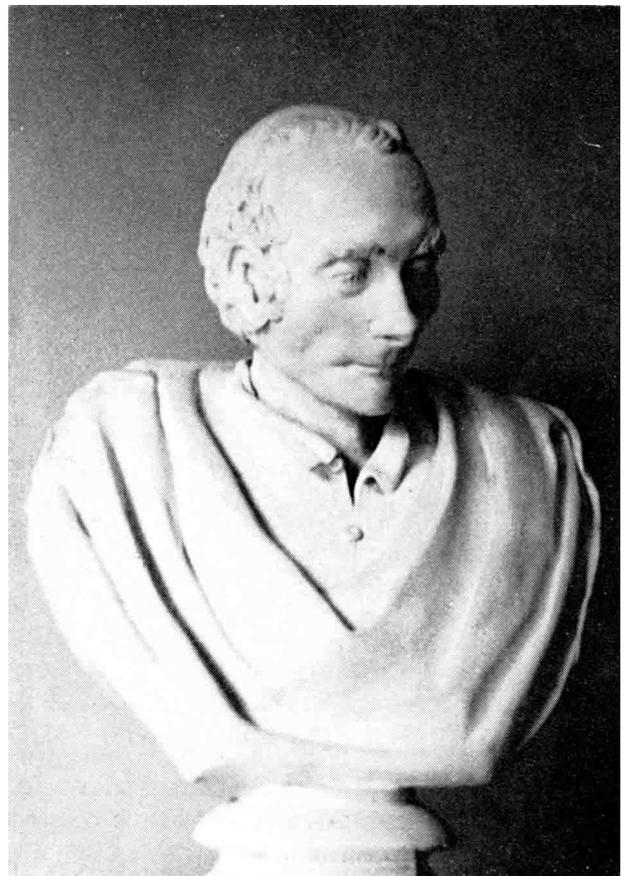
For No. 9 the great names are not to be medical.

In 1857 there resided here the Rev. James McCosh, M.A., LL.D., D.Litt., Professor of Logic and Metaphysics in Queen's College (Fig. 11). He was born in Ayrshire in 1811, and had been a Presbyterian minister in Arbroath and Brechin before coming to Belfast. At Queen's he showed powers of administrative ability that were to carry him far. He was not only a voluminous writer on his own subjects; he was one of the first to advocate at Queen's extra-mural study for business people and others not in a position to take full advantage of an academic

course. He felt that this should not necessarily be vocational, but should be, as Moody and Beckett, in their history of Queen's University, quote him as saying:

"... a judicious mixture of science and literature, (as) it would be a great error to suppose that persons engaged in business would prefer those classes which seem more intimately connected with their professions (to those which) as most congenial to their taste, would relieve their minds in the midst of the pressure of business.

An inspiring teacher, they add, a leader of opinion, an educationalist, above all a fluent and powerful writer, he spent seventeen very fruitful years at Belfast, becoming known to a wider public than probably any of his colleagues. His election to the presidency and the chair of philosophy at Princeton in 1868 was a measure of his reputation. There had been little scope in Queen's College, Belfast, for the academic statesman in McCosh at Princeton, on the other hand, the opportunity awaited the man. McCosh led Princeton with courage, sagacity and vision through twenty critical years, during which the



11. Rev James McCosh

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college was transformed and prepared for the new status of university which it attained in 1896.”

He must therefore rank as probably the greatest of the Square’s distinguished residents.

It is coincidence that when I went to look for the bust of James McCosh I found it in his own old drawing room in 9, University Square, for it is coincidence that it now houses the University Department of Philosophy, and it is coincidence that 1968 is the centenary year of McCosh’s translation to Princeton.

The residents who followed him were Daniel Kirk, and then Francis Davis Ward and William Yeates, both of the firm of Messrs. Marcus Ward and Company. This printing works had in its day an international reputation, for the standard of its work has seldom been rivalled. Next came the Rev. William Magill, D.D. My grandfather was the Rev. George Magill, D.D. These two Presbyterian clergymen were close personal friends, though not related in any way. Both had been in Cork at the same time, and while they were there they were known as the Rev. William and the Rev. George. Samuel James McMullan, M.A., Professor of History and English Literature at Queen’s came next, to be followed by John William Russell, Chief Accountant of the Ulster Bank, who in turn was succeeded by my father, David Strain, manager of its Donegall Place branch. It was thus my own home for 34 years, and my mother lived there until her death.

### No. 10

The first resident of No. 10 was Arthur C. Weir, Linen Manufacturer of Donegall Place. He was succeeded by William Crossley, also in the linen business; Charles King, Railway Contractor; Robert K. Tomlin; William A. McKay; George and Dora Phillips; Robert Thompson; Hugh Brown, and Andrew Cuming, Wine and Tea Merchant. From 1906 onwards medicine was firmly entrenched: William Joseph Maguire, B.A., M.D., M.R.C.P.I.; Professor C. G. Lowry, who afterwards moved to No. 12; Dr. S. H. Davison who after a short period went to Australia; Dr. Thomas Kennedy, for many years Deputy Coroner for Belfast, and then his son Reginald Graham Kennedy. His son, Graham, represents the third generation of medical Kennedy’s who have lived in this house.

More than one person claims to have seen the ghostly figure of a man enter No. 10 through the closed door.

### No. 11

Solid business marks the early days of No. 11. The list starts in 1854 with Thomas Gowland, Colonial

Merchant; then William Higgins of Messrs. John Hind and Sons, Flax Spinners; John Thompson, Shirt and Collar Manufacturer; William John Robertson of the Bank Buildings; and Samuel Gaffikin. Medical possession began in 1904 with James Colville before he moved to No. 7, and he was followed in 1908 by James Craig.

James Andrew Craig, M.B., F.R.C.S.Eng., was for many years a leading consultant in ophthalmology and oto-rhino-laryngology, and was Lecturer in the University as well as surgeon to the Royal Victoria Hospital. He had great skill, charm and kindness, but, at times, a tongue like a keratome. He once asked a rivetter from the shipyard how long his eyesight had been bothering him, and when the victim said that it had been ever since the first day he went into the Queen’s Island, James Craig made his classical reply, “Of course, my friend, I remember the morning perfectly.” In the days when foreign travel was more difficult than it is now he used to go off every Easter to Madeira with his friends Gardner Robb and William Massey Burnside.

### No. 12

From 1854 No. 12 was occupied successively by



12. William Baird McQuitty

# Robert William Magill Strain

Mrs. Jamieson, William Dickey Henderson, Insurance Agent and Commission Merchant; John McClinton, George

Thompson, William Druham McBride, and Mrs. Elizabeth Holland. This lady's grand-daughters, Elizabeth and Susan Holland, now Mrs. W. H. Ekin and Mrs. D. A. D. Montgomery, are both medical graduates of Queen's.

The Faculty is well represented from 1910 onwards. The list starts with William Baird McQuitty, M.A., M.D. (Fig. 12). He was a physician of great repute on the staff of the Royal Victoria Hospital, where his name is commemorated by an exhibition, but he died that same year at the early age of 48. He was followed by Edmund Albert Letts, D.Sc., Professor of Chemistry in Queen's, and an authority on sanitary science. The next resident was James Graham, M.D., J.P., for many years the City Coroner. He was one of several practitioners who had begun their professional lives as dispensers. I remember the night before we sat our finals he said to Aileen Kennedy and me, "Hold up your heads, and don't give a damn for any of them." The next resident was William A. Clugston, followed in 1922 by C. G. Lowry from No. 10.

Charles Gibson Lowry, M.D., D.Sc., F.R.C.S.Edin.,



13. Charles Gibson Lowry

F.R.C.O.G. (Fig. 13), who had started his professional life in general practice, was on the staffs of the Ulster, the Royal Victoria and the Belfast Maternity, afterwards the Royal Maternity, Hospitals. He was Professor, first of Midwifery from 1920, and then of Midwifery and Gynaecology from 1937 to 1945. His forceful teaching, his pawky wit, his inability to suffer fools gladly, and his almost Churchillian appearance and manner will never be forgotten by his students. "Boys," he used to say, "always keep your head well flexed like the foetus in utero, for if you don't, someone will flex it for you."

The marriage of his daughter, Margaret, to C. H. G. Macafee, who succeeded him in the Chair, prolonged the Lowry interest in University Square.

"C.G." was followed in 1946 by William George Frackelton, a Past President of the Ulster Medical Society.

## No. 13

In 1854 No. 13 was the home of James Guthrie, Sub-Treasurer of the Town Council and afterwards Town Clerk. He was followed by Archibald Reynolds, Mrs. Charlotte Shaw, and Mrs. Agnes Monypeny. Then, by one of those strange coincidences, there was another Civic Official, Robert Meyer, afterwards Sir Robert, Town Clerk of Belfast.

In 1913 the house became the home of the Elwood family. Walter H. Elwood was a dentist of the old school, and he had three sons, two dentists and a doctor. I well recall the daily sight of old Walter Elwood with his sons, Herbert and Walter, setting out for their surgery in Pakenham Place, and returning in the evening, always on foot. The old man was a striking figure, slim, elegant and frock-coated, his silver head crowned by a silk hat at all seasons of the year. His son, Herbert, was one of the founders of the Belfast Dental School. Barnes Elwood, M.C., F.R.C.S., practised medicine in the Square. They were all keen yachtsmen, and their boat was one of the largest and most beautifully kept on Belfast Lough.

Numbers 14, 15, 16 and 17 were built in 1852 by William Linden. He was a confectioner, with a shop in Cornmarket, and the business was in existence until recently, when the premises were demolished to make room for more modern buildings. Before the days of the Benn Dinners at Clifton House, the Linden family had for many years provided the residents of the Belfast Charitable Society's Institution with a special Christmas dinner.

## No. 14

No. 14 began its career in 1854 as Miss Harold's

## Robert William Magill Strain



14. Robert James Johnstone, Kt.

Boarding School, and she was succeeded by I. D. Croome, Headmaster of the School of Design. Then followed Charles Wolfe Shaw, Linen Merchant; Samuel McCausland and his son; George F. Roughan, M.A., Local Government Board Inspector; Hans McMordie, Solicitor; Rev. H. Evans, D.D., Editor of the Irish Christian Advocate; and Mrs. Margaret Andrews. Two distinguished medical men conclude the list.

In 1909 Robert James Johnstone (Fig. 14) moved to University Square from Great Victoria Street. He had been destined for the Church by his father, and it was only when he had won a medical scholarship at Queen's that his defection was discovered. He was surgeon to the Royal Victoria Hospital and the Maternity Hospital, now the Royal Maternity, where his name is commemorated in Johnstone House. He was offered the Chair of Midwifery and Gynaecology at Queen's, but would accept only Gynaecology, of which he was Professor from 1920 to 1937.

He represented the University on the General Medical Council, and was one of its first representatives in the Northern Ireland House of Commons. When the British Medical Association met in Belfast in 1937 he was an obvious choice for the

Presidency, for he commanded immense respect and affection.

He was a fast but gentle operator, yet he used few instruments. As a visiting American once said to him. "Say, Doctor, I guess you ain't hard on the ironmongery department". Wise in committee, his deep voice was seldom heard until he had found the essential problem and its solution. B.A., M.B., LL.D., F.R.C.S.Eng., F.R.C.O.G., he was knighted shortly before his death in 1938. It was my special privilege to know R.J. both as a surgeon and as a relation, for his wife and my mother were sisters. Simplicity and kindness marked all he did.

The last medical resident of No. 14 was Samuel Ireland Turkington, M.D. (Fig. 15). A scholarly man of Napoleonic appearance from Mid-Tyrone, his main clinical interest was chest disease. He was a physician on the staff of the Royal Victoria Hospital, where he was a popular teacher of basic medicine. Many of his students will recall his mnemonic of the thirteen P's for the diagnosis of pulmonary tuberculosis even if many have likewise forgotten what they stood for. His opening address to the Hospital in 1937 on "Students of Medicine" is outstanding among a series of very remarkable opening addresses, and should be read by



15. Samuel Ireland Turkington

## Robert William Magill Strain

all who have not already done so. His sister still lives in No. 14. This is the last private residence in the Square.

### No. 15

No. 15, the second of the Linden houses, had for its first resident the Rev. Edward Hartrick, Incumbent of Magdalene Church; then Finlay McCance, J.P., Linen Merchant; Henry Hugh Bottomly, Sub-Sheriff; John Greenhill, Town Councillor, Grain and Coal Merchant; Thomas Matthews of Messrs. Miller Boyd and Reid; Rev. James Dawson, D.D., Minister of Berry Street Presbyterian Church; S. G. Ruby, United States Consul; William S. Mollan; J. Black, Linen Merchant; John McC. Loewenthal, Linen Merchant and Brazilian Vice-Consul; William D. O'Brien of the Franklin Laundry, Ormeau Avenue; and Alexander Gardner Robb. One of John Loewenthal's daughters, Amélie, qualified in medicine at Queen's, and married James Dixon Boyd, Professor of Anatomy in the University of Cambridge.

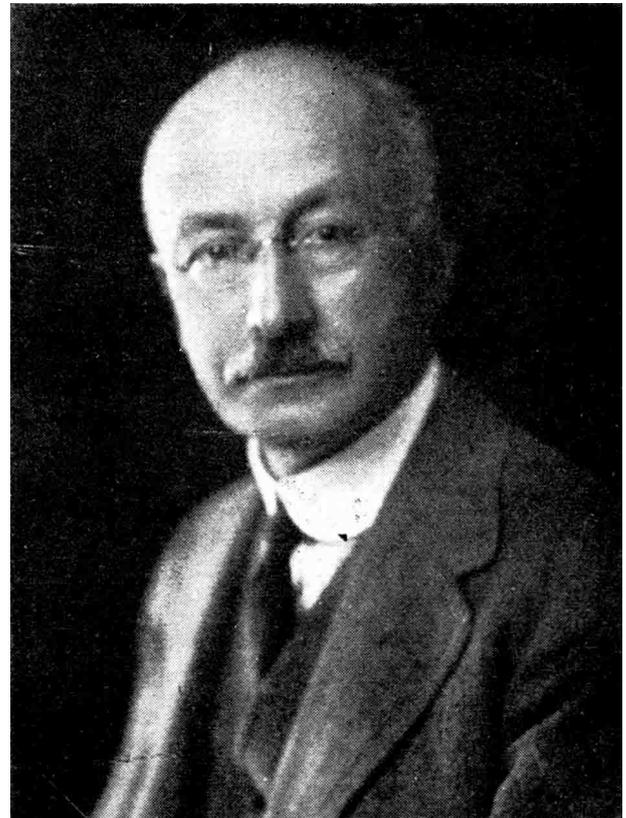
Gardner Robb, M.D, was a physician who specialised in fevers, and had charge of the infectious diseases wards in the Union Infirmary, now the City Hospital, where his name is perpetuated in Gardner Robb House. He was also Superintendent of the Fever Hospital at Purdysburn. In my earlier days I recall him as the proprietor of a series of fox terriers each of whom made any approach to his open motor car a sheer impossibility. Later I was to remember him as great clinical teacher. He was of striking appearance in his later years for he kept his hair so closely cropped as to give the impression that he had none.

### No. 16

No. 16 has a shorter history than most of the houses because many of the tenancies were long: John Bates, Town Clerk; Mrs. Savage, widow of Lieutenant-Colonel Patrick Savage of the 24th Light Dragoons; Hugh Hamilton, Auctioneer; James Gardner, and William Russell, Director of Messrs. Henry of Belfast. I have already mentioned the Russells as childhood friends. William qualified in medicine at Trinity College, Dublin, and is in practice in Northwood, near London. The only medical resident was Doctor Samuel Donnan who arrived in 1938 shortly after qualifying. He died, tragically early, the following year, but his parents continued to live there.

### No. 17

No. 17's early residents were John Bates; Samuel Thompson, Merchant, of Corporation Street, and Local Director of the Provincial Bank of Ireland; Adam



16. Henry Lawrence McKisack

T. McAuley, General Manager of the Belfast Banking Company; and William McKean of Messrs. William Ewart and Sons.

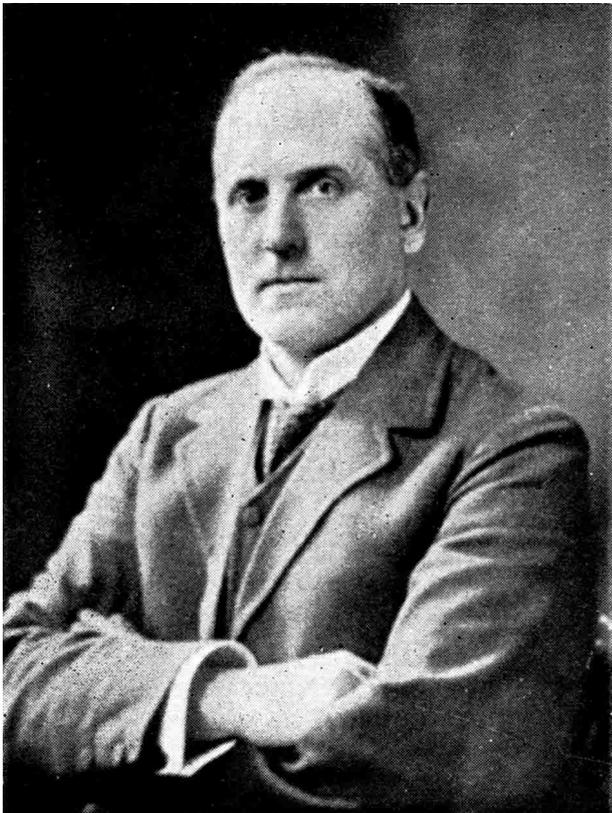
Medical possession began in 1903 with Henry Lawrence McKisack, M.D. (Fig. 16), Physician to the Royal Victoria Hospital. A brilliant consultant, he is always spoken of in the warmest terms by those who knew him as a great teacher and a great gentleman. He is to be remembered by the Ulster Medical Society as the donor of the 1914-18 War Memorial panel.

Next came Dr. Marian Andrews, Consultant Gynaecologist to the Ulster Hospital, and one of the first women to practise in Belfast. She was followed by Dr. Patrick Loy who afterwards went to Liverpool, and finally by Samuel Russell Foster, M.C., M.B., who was later joined in practice by his son, Peter.

### No. 18

No. 18 was inhabited as early as 1852. Henry Black, Wholesale Grocer of Waring Street, was followed by Mrs. Murray; Robert Roddy, Linen and Damask Manufacturer of Donegall Street; Rev. Hamilton Moore, B.A., D.D., first Minister of Elmwood Presbyterian Church; Hugh Moore; Waring Manley, Linen Manufacturer; Miss Roberts, and Alexander

## Robert William Magill Strain



17. Arthur Brownlow Mitchell

Gibbon.

Medical occupation began about the usual time, the first decade of the century, for in 1908 the owner was Arthur Brownlow Mitchell, M.Ch., F.R.C.S.I. (Fig. 17). A.B. is remembered by many. He was a great teacher and a sound surgeon, especially in gastro-intestinal conditions, but in his later years he suffered from increasingly crippling deformity of the hands, so that younger men recall him more for the wisdom of his opinion than for his technical dexterity. One of his sons, John Myles Mitchell, qualified in medicine at Queen's, and is in practice in Yeovil, Somerset.

In 1930 the house became the home of the Macafees. Professor Charles Horner Greer Macafee's wife and I share the distinction of being, as far as I know, the only people to have lived in three houses in University Square, though the number of persons who have lived in two is remarkable. The Macafee medical tradition continues with their sons, Jeremy and Allister.

### No. 19

No. 19 is one of the double houses, the first from the University Road end, and for many years a

conspicuous feature of its front steps was the pair of lions guarding its entrance. Though they have slipped off to the suburban peace of Ballyhackamore, they have, indeed, achieved literary fame, for Forrest Reid refers to them in his "Apostate" when describing his childhood with his nurse, Emma.

So, he wrote, we sallied out with our little parcel of provisions (for) the battered stone lions in University Square, creatures I fed daily on my morning walks.

In 1852 the house saw a joint tenancy by John Wylie, Wholesale Grocer in Victoria Street, and Alexander Dickey, both Bursars at Queen's. They were followed by Charles Finlay of Messrs. Finlay Brothers and Company, and then the Rev. Samuel Edward Busby, so that for a time the house was the St. Andrew's parsonage.

By 1915 the owner was Sydney Herbert George Blakeley, M.D., who practised there until he moved to Bedford in 1927. He was succeeded by William George Frackelton, who had been for a time in the practice with him, and who afterwards moved to No. 12. The last resident was Reginald Hall.

### No. 20

A palm tree characterises No. 20, another double house. The first resident was the Rev. William Dool Killen, D.D., LL.D., Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the Assembly's College.

He was succeeded by James Thomson, D.Sc., LL.D., F.R.S., whose father had been the professor of Mathematics in the Academical Institution. He himself was Professor of Civil Engineering in Queen's College from 1857 to 1873, and he afterwards held a similar chair in Glasgow. He was a man of great distinction, whose reputation as an engineer stands as high in professional circles today as that of his more widely known brother, Lord Kelvin.

Then followed John Alexander Arnold, Merchant Clothier; Mrs. Workman, and J. J. Phillips, the architect and antiquarian. I personally remember him for his remarkable rhinophyma. In 1900 the house came into the possession of Dr. Brice

Smyth and afterwards of his son, Dr. Malcolm Brice Smyth, Physician to the Belfast Children's Hospital in Queen Street, now the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children.

### No. 21

No. 21 is a single house between double ones, yet the alignment of the whole is not seriously interrupted. The first resident was Mrs. Killen, and she was followed by George Bartlet Coulter, in spite of

## Robert William Magill Strain



18. Thomas Sinclair Kirk

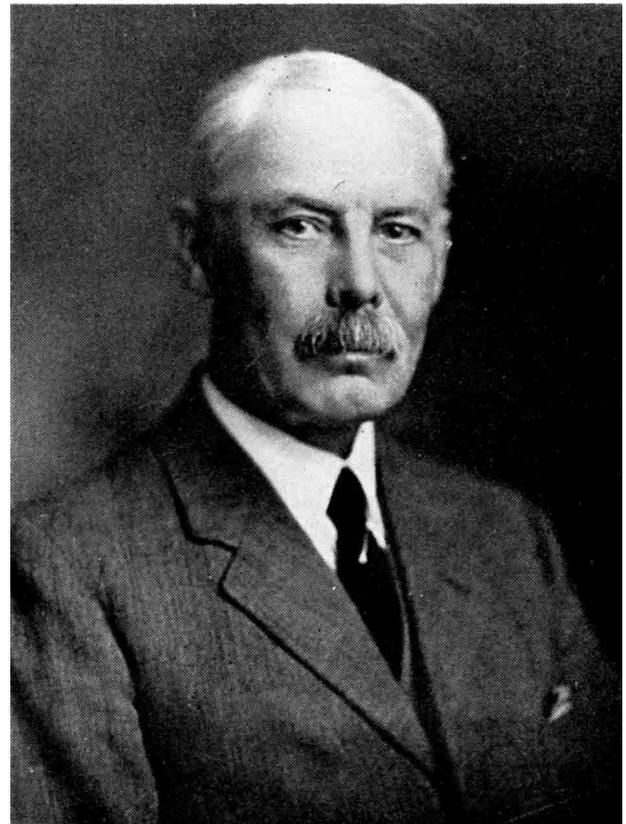
the temporary tenancy of Hector Freeman Gullan, M.Inst.C.E., City Engineer.

1905 saw the beginning of one of the longest ownerships of the whole Square, when the house became the home of Thomas Sinclair Kirk, B.A., M.B. (Fig. 18). His plate said simply "Surgeon Kirk", and he was the last person in Belfast to use this professional prefix. Many will remember his deep quiet voice, his brown eyes and his gentle manner. He was both a great gentleman and a definite character, perhaps the greatest medical character the Square has produced. He had some ideas that he pushed perhaps further than others would have done. Many will recall with horror the period when all who came near his ward kitchen in the "Royal" were fed on sandwiches of dried serum from old cows, and the emphasis was on the old, to increase the antibodies. Those who saw it will not soon forget the wonderful effect of filling a dirty wound with urea crystals and leaving it overnight under oiled silk, but he would pour a whole jam pot full of urea into the open abdomen, and he would blow up the subcutaneous abdominal wall with oxygen to combat acidosis. Certainly his artificial limbs would have become world famous in his lifetime if he had had the light alloys at his disposal that we

know of today. But if some of his views were unusual, he was a true pioneer, and was held in deep affection. He drove a very ancient two-seater car, so old that my own recollection of it is that it resembled more than anything else a mechanised sedan chair. One day when I was a student I was in the kitchen of Wards 9 and 10 in the "Royal" when Ian Fraser came in to ask him about something, and by way of winding up the conversation, and of offering him a lift home if necessary, asked him if he had his car with him. "Why?" said Pa. "Do you want a tow?" His son, Christopher, qualified in medicine at Queen's, and his daughter, Denzil, married Thomas Walmsley, Professor of Anatomy in the University.

### No. 22

No. 22 reverts to the double type of house common in this part of the Square. Occupancy started in 1852 with the Rev. Murphy. This was interrupted for a few years by William Girdwood, Solicitor, but then he was in residence again. The Rev. James Greer Murphy, D.D., D.Litt., LL.D., was a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, was Headmaster of the Classical School at the Royal Belfast Academical Institution, and then Professor of Hebrew at the



19. Thomas Sinclair

# Robert William Magill Strain

Assembly's College. He was succeeded by John McConnell Higginson, J.P., Registrar of the Diocese of Down and Connor and Dromore, who afterwards inherited his father's home, Carnalea House. There followed Henry Seeds, Solicitor; David Brown, Merchant, afterwards of Bloomfield House, and Adam Duffin, LL.D., Stockbroker.

From 1902 Medicine was represented by a single distinguished proprietor. Thomas Sinclair, M.D., M.Ch., F.R.C.S.Eng. (Fig. 19), was the son of Samuel Sinclair, Yarn Merchant, and was Professor of Surgery at Queen's from 1886 to 1923. Like Andrew Fullerton, his successor in the Chair, he served in France in the 1914-18 War as a Surgical Consultant with the rank of Colonel, and was awarded the C.B. For many years he represented the University on the General Medical Council and in the House of Commons at Westminster, as well as in the Northern Ireland Senate. He was small in stature, quiet in manner and always beautifully dressed. He was one of the last men I can recall who often wore a white slip inside his waistcoat. I was present in the theatre at what must have been his last operation, when he assisted Professor Fullerton to remove a thyro-glossal cyst from the neck of his own chauffeur, surely a largely University Square event.

## No. 23

No. 23 is distinguished by being the only house in the Square to have a bay window that rises to two stories, and rumour has it that this was done to annoy the neighbours in No. 24. The house was built in 1852 by the Rev. John Edgar, D.D., who was its first resident. His wife was one of the Grimshaw family who were among the founders of the Belfast cotton industry. In 1868 Thomas H. King, the United States Consul, lived there. In 1877 the occupant was Mrs. Sydney Elizabeth Sinclair, widow of Thomas Sinclair of Hopefield, and she was followed by F. Howard Sinclair. Then came the Rt. Hon. William Henry Holmes Lyons, J.P., D.L., P.C., the first of the Square's Old Harrovians, and later William Russell, whose son William lived afterwards in No. 16.

In 1899 the owner was a dentist, John James Andrews, L.D.S.R.C.S. One of his daughters was the wife of Sydney Blakeley of No. 19, and another was married to R. J. McConnell. As a small boy I remember the elegant Mrs. Andrews wearing a long train on her gown on which sat one or more Pekinese dogs, too lazy to walk.

Medicine came into occupation in 1928 with the arrival of John Andrew Smyth, whose son, Gordon Dill Long Smyth, has followed in the professional

tradition.

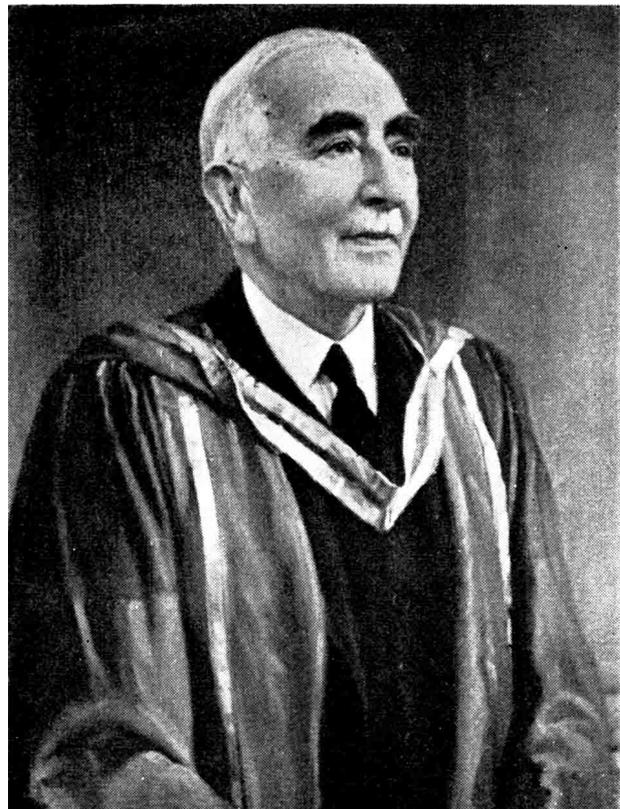
## No. 24

No. 24 has a short history. In 1852 George Cliborn Pirn of Messrs. E. and W. Pirn, High Street and Donegall Street, lived here and was followed by Thomas Hughes.

In 1884 the house was purchased by James Taylor Blackwood, a Director of the Ulster Bank, and the father of Reginald Walter Henry Blackwood, the compiler of the University Square notebook. Reggie often told me of the Square's second ghost. This was his old Aunt Kayley, then long departed. He claimed he had often seen her walking up and down the footpath, or going into No. 24, while at other times he had seen her sitting in an armchair in the drawing room of his sister's house, the most northerly of the three little houses to the north of the new Students' Union.

## No. 25

No. 25 was built and resided in by the Rev. George Beilis, D.D., Secretary of the Board of Missions of the Presbyterian Church and a Moderator of the General Assembly. His wife was the daughter of Samuel



20. William Willis Dalziel Thompson, Kt.

# Robert William Magill Strain

Arnott, Surgeon, of Belfast. Charles Dickens dined in this house as the guest of the Bellis family, and the teapot used on the occasion is still in the possession of their descendants. He was succeeded by his son, James Huet Bellis, and then by his nieces, the Misses Maude and Mary Martin. In 1912 the house was the Ulster School of Cookery and Domestic Training under Margaretta C. Angwin, and this was followed by the tenancy of John S. Larmour, Linen Merchant.

1915 marked the arrival of William Willis Dalziel Thomson (Fig. 20). "W.D." is, of course, still clear in the memories of most of us. He was a commanding figure, tall, slim, silver haired, with twinkling eyes below great black eyebrows, and with a voice that never lost the wood notes of his native Annahilt. Attired, often on quite ordinary occasions, in formal morning clothes, he looked, as indeed he was, the fashionable consultant, a position well founded on clinical acumen and deep scholarship. B.A., B.Sc., M.D., F.R.C.P.Lond., he occupied the Chair of Medicine at Queen's from 1923 until his death in 1950, and was a Physician to the Royal Victoria Hospital. He was a Deputy Lieutenant for the City of Belfast, and was knighted for his services to Medicine. His only son, Humphrey Barron Thomson, who qualified in medicine at Queen's, was killed in the Far East on active service with the Royal Army Medical Corps. Lady Thomson still retains a flat in this house.

## No. 26

No. 26 was occupied as early as 1851 by the Rev. G. T. Payne, but the following year it became the home of Mrs. Anne de la Cherois Purdon, widow of Henry Purdon, M.D. of Sans Souci, Co. Antrim, formerly of Co. Westmeath, and third daughter of Samuel de la Cherois Crommelin of Carrowdore Castle. Then followed John McDonnell, Wholesale Grocer of Skipper Street; John Praeger, Merchant; Joseph Hall Boyd; Patrick Ewing of Messrs. Thornton Ewing and Company, and later of Glendhu, Strandtown, and then Mrs. Boyd.

In 1868 it was the home of the Rev. Josias Leslie Porter, D.D., LL.D. He was married to a daughter of the Rev. Henry Cooke, D.D., better remembered as "The Black Man", and, like his father-in-law, he lived at a time of bitter religious controversy, a fact not without bearing on his own public life. He had been for ten years a Presbyterian Missionary in Damascus, and was to become Professor of Biblical Criticism in the Assembly's College and Secretary of the Faculty, Presbyterian Dean of Residences in Queen's College, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, Assistant Commissioner of the

Education Board, and, finally, President of Queen's College from 1879 to 1889.

There followed James M. Thompson, Commercial Agent of Donegall Place; J. F. Harbinson, Watchmaker and Jeweller of 1, Royal Avenue; Mrs. Thompson; Henry S. Parker, LL.D., Headmaster of the Methodist College, and Miss Storey. In 1900 No. 26 was the Ulster Academy of Music under the direction of F. Koeller, D.Mus. Oxon., who was also the Conductor of the Belfast Philharmonic Society. The premises were next, for a time, the Headquarters of the Queen's University Contingent of the Officers Training Corps, and later the house was purchased by David Kilpatrick, who subsequently moved to Knock.

Medical occupation was delayed as late as 1929, when the resident was Thomas William Gerald Hogg, an Ophthalmic Surgeon, who moved on taking up a full-time appointment.

He was succeeded in 1937 by James Stevenson Loughridge, whose son, William Gordon Gault Loughridge, who was born in the Square, follows in the medical tradition.

## No. 27

No. 27 is another of the houses with a short history. Mrs. Mary Anne Knox lived there in 1852. She was the widow of the Rev. Edmund Francis Knox, B.A., Perpetual Curate of Ballymascanlon, Co. Louth. There followed the Rev. Deane Knox Mitchell, Minister of Crumlin Road Presbyterian Church; William Harvey of Messrs. McLaughlin and Harvey; Elizabeth Morgan; Mrs. Emily Elizabeth Coates from No. 30; and in 1923 it became the Headquarters of the Higher Education Division of the Northern Ireland Ministry of Education.

By 1932 it was the home of Richard Sydney Allison.

## No. 28

No. 28 was first occupied in 1854 by Thomas Price, Gentleman: a rare description among the Square's inhabitants! There followed the Rev. Edward Hartrick; Alexander Gill of Messrs. Gill and McTear; William J. Jenkins, Muslin Manufacturer of Adelaide Place; Rev. William Shaw Darley, and the Rev. John Boyce McCartney.

In 1919 it became the home of John Lawrence Rentoul, M.B. Lawrie Rentoul was a pioneer of clinical bacteriology, and had his own laboratory in University Square. He was one of the survivors of the sinking of the "Britannic" in the 1914-18 War.

He was followed in 1927 by Robert John McConnell, M.B., M.Ch. (Fig. 21). He is recalled in

## Robert William Magill Strain



21. Robert John McConnell

great affection by many. A small, sandy coloured man of somewhat rugged appearance, Bobbie John was a great practical surgeon who served the Royal Victoria Hospital with distinction for many years, having been in the R.A.M.C. in the 1914-18 War. One morning, arriving at the "Royal", and asking for his ward sister, a probationer nurse gave him a chair in the corridor, where he was duly discovered.

### No. 29

From 1854 No. 29 showed an unusually wide diversity of residents: James Siebert, Linen Merchant; William Boyd of the Vitriol Works; Dr. Pilleau, Surgeon Major; Benjamin Graham Sadler of the Linen Hall; George Scott, Fountain Street; George Smyth of Messrs. Lindsay Brothers; Adam Duffin, whose wife was the daughter of John Swanwick Drennan, M.D., of Dublin, and who afterwards moved to No. 22 and then to Dunowen; Thomas Crowe, Professor of Music; and Richard Rodgers, Linen Merchant.

Medicine moved in in 1909 with Cecil Edward Shaw, M.A., M.D., on whose early death in 1914 the house was purchased by S. T. Irwin.

Samuel Thompson, Irwin, M.Ch., F.R.C.S.Edin. (Fig. 22) was one of the Square's great medical figures. He

was on the staffs of the Royal Victoria and the Ulster Hospitals, and, though he was a pioneer in orthopaedics, was a surgeon of wide skill in every field, and the personification of sound common sense. He played Rugby for Ireland, represented the University at Stormont, and was awarded the C.B.E. and a Knighthood for his services to Medicine. His eldest son, John Walker Sinclair Irwin, followed him to the international Rugby field and to his two hospitals, and his other sons, Samuel Thompson Irwin and Charles Gibson Irwin are also doctors. All three were born in the Square. C. G. Irwin's Christian names are a reminder that in the middle of the night on which he was born, C. G. Lowry slipped down University Square Mews in his dressing gown to attend the confinement.

### No. 30

The last house is No. 30. Charles Finlay of Messrs. McClure and Company of Corporation Street, resided there in 1854, and there followed: Mrs. Susan Black; Thomas B. Topping, Pork Merchant and Lard Refiner; and William Trelford Coates, Assessor to the Belfast Corporation, Plumber and Gasfitter.

In 1913 the resident was Lieutenant Colonel



22. Samuel Thompson Irwin, Kt.

## Robert William Magill Strain



23. Henry Hanna

Hugh Blair Cunningham, M.D., F.R.C.S.I., Ophthalmic Surgeon to the Ulster Hospital, and the first Commanding Officer of the Queen's University O.T.C.

From 1919 No. 30 was the home of Henry Hanna, M.A., B.Sc., M.B. (Fig. 23), Consultant in Diseases of the Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat to the Royal Victoria and the Belfast City Hospitals. He bore the nickname of "Snooty", for he neither minced words, nor in the voluntary days, could he stand the sight in hospital of a patient who might have gone to his own house privately. Shrewd, with a dry wit, he was a sound clinician of a generation that has passed, and many of his *obiter dicta* are recalled with glee by his former students.

So I come to the end of my sentimental journey, and pass out of University Square into Botanic Avenue with its pillar box, as so many of us have done so often before. This can be a chilly experience, for to leave either end often means an encounter with a blast of cold wind, because the Square is very sheltered and really has a climate of its own. This is proved each year by its show of unusually early snowdrops and crocuses, and, later, its magnificent magnolias. It is still a street of great architectural character, but it is not, as many of us can recall it, a

residential place in spite of its professional preoccupations; where fathers could, and often did, prune the roses, where mothers sometimes sat in the front gardens or at open drawing room windows, and where small boys tore their clothes on the tall spikes of the University railings. I cannot but regret its change from that state.

What will become of this street, unique in Belfast? At least it is not to end its days as salerooms for motor cycles or second-hand cars, or crumble into decay at the hands of small shopkeepers. After all, it is not as old as the main block of the University, and is of the same mellow liver-coloured brick. Indeed, to new generations of students in many Faculties it is not just a precinct (Fig. 24), but has become established in tradition and affection as part of the University itself. Long may it be allowed to contribute its grace and charm to the civic scene!

This account is already over-long for its present purpose, yet a volume could be filled with the record of those who lived here, who contributed so much to the commercial and administrative prosperity of Belfast, to the academic life of the College and University, and to Medicine. Nor have I referred to the years of the 1930-45 War, when, for example, such things as a Postal Censorship Office, an A.T.S. Sick Quarters and a Military Psychiatric Out-Patient Department found themselves housed in premises whose professional occupants were in the Forces. I wonder, indeed, how many people I have mentioned.



24. In the University precincts

## Robert William Magill Strain

My own recollections cover almost half the period. The list includes many friends, among whom are some of my old teachers and my present colleagues.

Which of us did Reggie Blackwood describe as “a bad plant”?



25. University Square – the end