

TRANSACTIONS OF THE ULSTER MEDICAL SOCIETY.

SESSION 1885-86.

President—JOHN FAGAN, F.R.C.S.I.

Hon. Secretary—JAMES A. LINDSAY, M.D., R.U.I

Wednesday, June 2, 1886.

Sketch of the Ulster Medical Society and its Presidents.

By ROBERT ESLER, M.D., Belfast.

IN a paper which I read before the Ulster Medical Society in January, 1885, I gave some account of medical matters in Belfast during a period of two centuries.* That paper concluded with a hope that, on a future occasion, I should be enabled to ask this Society to accept the custody of the portraits of its former presidents. It is with that pleasing object we have now met.

The Ulster Medical Society was constituted on May 4th, 1862, by the amalgamation of the Belfast Medical Society—a Society which had been in existence from 1806—with the Clinical and Pathological Society, which was originated in 1853 by Dr. Malcolm. Another Society, called the Ulster Medical Protective Association, with Dr. W. M'Gee as President, and Dr. Samuel Browne as Secretary, was in active operation up to that time. It is also merged into the new Society. For our present purpose it will be necessary to ante-date the union by a few years, so as to include some of the presidents of the old association who had been instrumental in the formation of the Ulster Medical Society.

The first portrait to be uncovered is that of Dr. Thomas Reade. He was President of the Clinical and Pathological Society. Dr. Reade was born in Dublin in 1794, and was the son of a merchant of that city. One of his brothers was a medical man, and for many years one of the surgeons to Mercer's Hospital. Another brother was an officer in the army. Dr. Reade was a student of Trinity College, Dublin. He took his B.A. degree in the University of Dublin in 1818, and his M.B. the same year; M.R.C.S.E., 1820; and M.R.C.S.I., 1825. He commenced practice in Letterkenny in 1822, afterwards removed to Londonderry, thence to Coleraine in 1831, and finally to Belfast in 1840, where he made a large circle of friends. He published, among other papers, a valuable treatise on the Brain. In person he was tall, and had a striking

* See *Dublin Journal of Medical Science*, Vol. LXXIX., page 158, February, 1885.

appearance. In manner he was rather pompous, but bore the character of being an accomplished physician, surgeon, and gentleman. He died May 28th, 1873.

The next portrait is that of Dr. Pirrie. John M. Pirrie, M.D., was son of William Pirrie, of Conlig, Co. Down. He was born in November, 1824. At the close of his undergraduate course, in 1845, he took his degree in Arts in Trinity College, Dublin, and also his M.B. the same year. The M.D. degree he obtained in 1848, having in the meantime continued his studies in Paris and at Heidelberg. He at once commenced the practice of his profession in Belfast, where he soon attained a good position. He contributed many valuable papers to the medical journals. For 26 years he was on the medical staff of the General Hospital, and also one of the surgeons to the Lying-in Hospital. On several occasions he acted as *locum tenens* for the Professor of Midwifery in Queen's College. He was for 25 years a member of the Belfast Harbour Board. He was a prominent member of the Masonic body, and in politics a leading Liberal. He enjoyed a large midwifery and general practice, and was in the very zenith of his prosperity when cut off by death in July, 1873. He was formerly President of the old Medical Society, and was a man of uncommon ability, and exceedingly popular.

The third portrait is that of Dr. Samuel Browne, L.K.Q.C.P., R.N., & J.P. Dr. Browne had been President of the Belfast Medical Society, and also of the Clinical and Pathological Society. He has been a man of mark in Belfast; was the founder of the Ophthalmic Hospital, and introduced ophthalmology as a special branch of surgery. Besides being surgeon to the General Hospital, Dr. Browne has been a general practitioner, Town Councillor, Mayor of Belfast, Justice of the Peace, and Consulting Sanitary Officer. Dr. Browne's portrait is that of a model surgeon, a dignified mayor, a respected citizen, and a perfect gentleman.

The portraits which we may expect to be added of the Presidents of the old Society include those of Dr. Henry MacCormac, Dr. T. H. Purdon, and Professor Gordon.

The first President of the Ulster Medical Society was Professor Ferguson; the Vice-Presidents were Drs. Whitaker and David Moore, and the Treasurer Dr. J. W. T. Smith.

The formation of the Society was mainly due to Drs. Halliday, Murney, D. Moore, and W. MacCormac. The minutes show that the new Society was in a vigorous condition from the beginning. When the reading-room and library were put in order, the question of the propriety of keeping the reading-room open on Sunday arose. The following resolution was agreed to :—" That, inasmuch as the Society consider it inexpedient and unnecessary to make any rule on the subject, each

member is allowed the right and afforded the means of acting in the matter according to his own judgment." Each member had a key admitting him to the library. Even at this date the subject of sacramental wine was before the Society, and a sample submitted was declared by one of the best chemists in the Society to contain ten per cent. of alcohol.

John Creary Ferguson, M.D., was born in Tandragee, August 22nd, 1802. Having finished his preliminary education, he entered Trinity College, Dublin, in 1818, where he took first place and obtained a gold medal. He studied in Edinburgh in 1824, in Paris in 1825, and graduated M.B. of the University of Dublin in 1827. He became a Licentiate of the King and Queen's College of Physicians in 1827; was appointed King's Professor of Practice of Medicine, 1845-1850; Censor, 1832 and 1845. Was also M.A. of Dublin University. He obtained the Professorship of Medicine in Queen's College, Belfast, in 1850; was on the medical staff of the General Hospital, and an Examiner in Queen's University. During the cholera epidemic of 1832 he was sent to Ennis by the Government, and took an active part subsequently in the treatment of famine fever in Dublin. He was a member of the Trinity Brothers of St. Patrick, Dublin, and of the Ulster Club, Belfast. Dr. Ferguson was a man of scholarly attainments, and had great literary and musical ability. His public lectures and his private friendship were both keenly appreciated. He was the son of a medical man, his father having occupied a high position in the profession in Dublin. He died June 24th, 1865. His professional brethren erected a monument to his memory.

James Patterson, M.D., was President in 1863 with the same treasurer and secretaries. The business of the year was chiefly of a routine character. A committee was formed to give practical effect to some changes introduced into the new British Pharmacopoeia. We have no portrait of Dr. Patterson, but the following resolution, passed on the occasion of his death by this Society, is of interest:—"That we record the respect in which we hold the memory of one of the most valuable members of the Society. We always found him an active, intelligent, and kindly counsellor and co-operator, whilst by the general community he was recognised as a useful citizen, and a man of stainless integrity." Dr. Patterson was son of the Presbyterian minister of Magherally, Co. Down.

Robert Stewart, M.D., was President for 1864. Dr. Stewart was born at Swords, Co. Dublin, in 1803. His father was rector of the parish. He was descended from a Scotch family who settled in the Co. Donegal early in the 17th century, and claims to trace connection through Alexander, Lord High Sheriff of Scotland, with the Royal line of Stewart. His education was obtained at the Park-street School of Medicine, Richmond Hospital, and Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, He graduated M.D. in Glasgow, 1829, and engaged in general practice

in Dublin. He was appointed superintendent of the District Asylum for the Insane, Belfast, in 1835. This appointment he held for nearly forty years. He soon made his mark by a new and bold method of dealing with the insane. Up to that time restraint was the recognised method of dealing with asylum patients. Dr. Stewart was one of the first to advocate the non-restraint system, and he lived to see the whole method of treatment changed. In consequence of the success attendant on the new method, the Government made it a rule that medical men only should be appointed as superintendents of district asylums. Dr. Stewart also advocated the moral treatment of insanity by the introduction of music and amusements among the patients. While chiefly occupied with the duties of his appointment he did not neglect the study of general medical matters, and gave much of his spare time to the meetings of the Medical, the Clinical, and Pathological, and the Ulster Medical Societies, having acted in the capacity of President to each. He was for thirty years hon. secretary to the Belfast Branch of the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund Society of Ireland. It was while engaged in collecting funds for the latter society that he caught a cold which resulted in his death after a few days' illness. He was brother of Dr. Stewart, the founder of the Stewart Institute, Dublin. He died in March, 1875.

The presidential chair in 1865 was filled by the surgeon artist of the profession in Belfast, and the characteristic signature "James Moore, M.D.," is regularly attached to the minutes of that session. Dr. John Moore was secretary, and Dr. Cuming treasurer. This was literally a surgical year. Dr. James Moore was the son of Dr. David Moore, R.N., his mother being the daughter of Signor Antonio Medin, Governor of Curzula. He pursued his medical studies in Edinburgh, where he took his degree in 1842. In the same year he became a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh, after which he attended hospital practice in Dublin and Paris. He commenced practice in Belfast, where, for forty years, he held a distinguished place as a surgeon. He was on the surgical staff of the General Hospital, and consultant in several of the special hospitals of the town. He also held an appointment in the District Lunatic Asylum, was Medical Inspector of Emigration and of Quarantine to the Port of Belfast. As a surgeon Dr. Moore held a distinguished place by virtue of his rare diagnostic skill, his delicacy of touch, and his intrepidity as an operator. Dr. Moore was a man of double identity. In addition to being a surgeon he took good rank as an artist, and added to his other qualifications that of Hon. Mem. R.H. A. He was also an Associate of the Scotch Academy. Landscape painting was the branch which he ardently followed, and in which he excelled. Even in his student days his artistic taste was manifested, and he was selected by Professor Syme, of Edinburgh, to illustrate his well-known work on Surgery. It was his habit all through life to illustrate his clinical lectures

by sketches of deformities and tumours, and many of us can bear testimony to his truthfulness to the original, even when delineating objects which he may have seen but once. In archeology and geology he was also a proficient, and had accumulated a large collection of specimens. He was a member of the Werner Society of Antiquarians, and in this relation formed friendships with men of genial minds and similar tastes. Possessed of a kindly spirit, Dr. Moore found a suitable outlet for his sympathy with all living creatures in his active membership of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Being an artist he took a great interest in the drama, and was the intimate friend of nearly all the leading actors for a period of two generations. Dr. Moore was admired by all classes and conditions of men, but by none more than by the leaders of his own profession. Sir Charles Bell bequeathed him his case of instruments, Professor Goodsir paid him a similar compliment, as did also Dr. Thomas Reade, his fellow-townsmen. Dr. Moore was a genius, and like most men of genius had certain peculiarities, but we, who were his pupils, would remember those only which leaned to the side of virtue.

Following the surgeon artist came the physician poet—John S. Drennan, M.D.—as President. This year—1865—was characterised by a large increase of membership. Medical matters received more attention than usual. Reference is made in the minutes to the property owned by the Society—library, models, furniture, &c. The following entry is so important that I transcribe it in full:—" Drs. MacCormac, Pirrie, and Murney, joint trustees with Mr. Girdwood for the erection of the new wing to the hospital—the donation of Mr. Charters—were present, and concurred in stating that both rooms in the basement of the wing had been specially prepared, and were intended for the Society's use; all the expenses of preparation having been defrayed out of the supplementary grant of £500 from Mr. Charters." We have not been furnished with Dr. Drennan's portrait, but I am authorised to present a copy of his works to the library.

James Seaton Reid, M.D., was elected President in 1867. He had been a member of the Medical Society from 1844, and was President of the Clinical and Pathological Society in 1859. Dr. Reid's portrait represents one of the most dignified and one of the kindest of men. No man is more respected for his worth or more trusted for his skill than Dr. Reid.

James Cuming, M.D., was elected President on May 1st, 1868, Dr. MacCormac, treasurer ; with Drs. John Moore and Hill, secretaries. The Society at this time had four Vice-Presidents—two from the county and two from the town members. The Channel Fleet being on a visit to Belfast Lough the medical officers of the Fleet were entertained at dinner by the Society on Sept. 6th. Dr. Cuming had presided over both of

the old Societies, and again over this in 1881. Dr. Cuming has been one of the leaders in medical matters for a quarter of a century in Belfast. He is a wise counsellor, an earnest friend, and a trusted consultant.

J. W. T. Smith, M.D., succeeded Dr. Cuming as President. The vice-presidents were Dr. John Moore and Dr. Murney; Dr. William MacCormac, treasurer; with Drs. Hill and Porter, secretaries. During the session a very large amount of professional work was brought before the Society. On March 8th, 1870, a special meeting was held to consider the Contagious Diseases Act of 1866. The result of the conference was in favour of the continuance of the Act, as it had tended to increase morality and diminish vice. In the competition for success in professional life Dr. Smith has out-distanced most of his competitors, and enjoys one of the largest practices in Ulster.

At the annual meeting on May 3rd, 1870, Dr. (now Sir William) MacCormac was elected President, Dr. Pirrie treasurer, and Dr. J. W. Browne, secretary. On 23rd May a special meeting was held to consider— 1st. The New Medical Act Amendment Bill; 2nd. The representation on the Medical Council; 3rd. The Irish Pharmacy Bill. Resolutions on the various questions were forwarded to the House of Commons. On 25th March, 1871, Dr. MacCormac resigned his Presidency on his removal to London.

Sir William MacCormac has a world-wide fame in surgery. During the Franco-Prussian war he gained a reputation for skill and courage, and has since been recognised as an authority on military surgery. He was among the first to join the ambulance corps formed by the late Marion Sims.

Henry Murney, M.D., President (1871). The work of this Session was very full and complete, as recorded by Dr. Hill. On August 14th a special meeting was held to consider the propriety of asking the British Medical Association to hold its annual meeting in Belfast in 1873. The proposal was negatived by a majority of one. There is no portrait of Dr. Murney.

Dr. Henry Martyn Johnston (1872) President; Dr. John Moore, secretary; Mr. Fagan, treasurer. The meetings were held this year on Saturdays at 3 o'clock in the General Hospital. Dr. Johnston was born at Banbridge in January, 1827. His father was the Rev. John Johnston, D.D., who for some fifty years was minister of the Presbyterian Church, Tullylish. His brother is the Rev. Wm. Johnston, D.D., of Belfast. He was educated in Belfast and Dublin. In the latter city he was resident pupil in the Richmond Hospital. After taking his medical qualification he spent some time in London, and subsequently settled in Belfast, where he was elected Dispensary Medical Officer. He afterwards became Visiting Surgeon to the Belfast Union Infirmary. Dr. Johnston's devotion to his profession, his genial disposition, and generous

sympathy with human suffering secured him a large and remunerative practice. He was most popular with all classes, and was an especial favourite with his professional brethren. He ever took an active interest in the success of his juniors in the profession. After some twenty years practice the wear and tear of professional life began to tell on a not very robust frame ; at length he had to resign his public appointments, and go abroad, to seek that rest which was denied him at home. His recovery was partial and temporary; for some years he struggled against a serious chest affection, but died at the early age of fifty-one, on the 3rd of March, 1878. He left the reversion of his property for the benefit of the poor, suffering from cancer and consumption, in the district where he had chiefly practised, and where his name is still held in affectionate remembrance.

John Moore, M.D., was President for 1873. During this year the deaths of four old members were reported—viz., Dr. Thomas Reade, Dr. Pirrie, Dr. Murray, and Dr. Wm. M'Gee, J.P. In August, 1874, the British Association met in Belfast, and on that occasion the medical members were invited to breakfast by the Society. The President, Dr. Moore, occupied the chair. The following toasts were proposed and responded to:—" The British Association," responded to by Sir Wm. Wilde, Dr. Michael Foster, and Dr. Carpenter. " The Queen's University," by Professor Cleland, and Professor Redfern. " Our Foreign Visitors," by Professor Gluge. " The Ulster Medical Society," proposed by Dr. Carpenter, and responded to by the President. Dr. Moore has filled almost every post in connection with this Society, and always did so with energy and ability.

Dr. C. D. Purdon was chosen President for 1874; Dr. J. J. Charles, secretary; Dr Fagan, treasurer. The subject of the President's Address was—"The Past Medical Charities of Belfast, compared with the Present." During the course of the session the President read a paper upon " The Factory Reports on the Last Two Epidemics of Small-pox." A large number of papers were read during the session on medical subjects.

Charles de la Cherois Purdon, M.B., was born in Belfast in 1819. He was the son of Dr. Henry Purdon, Staff Surgeon, and brother to Dr. T. H. Purdon. Three of his sons are in the profession, so that the Purdons are literally a medical family. Dr. Purdon received his education at the Royal Academical Institution, Belfast, and at Trinity College, Dublin, where he took his degrees of M.A. and M.B. in 1840, having obtained the diploma of the Irish College of Surgeons in the previous year. He commenced the practice of his profession in Belfast, where he made a large circle of friends. He employed much of his leisure time in the study of archæology, and was at all times of a studious and retiring habit, yet no member of the profession was more entertaining or more

popular when he appeared among his brethren. He had a pleasant polished manner, and from his *répertoire* of anecdote he was always able to add fresh interest to any discussion. Dr. Purdon was an earnest churchman, and a man of unblemished character and spotless life. He did much for the amelioration of the condition of the working classes and took an active interest in the Belfast Charitable Society, and the Deaf and Dumb Institution. He appeared occasionally as a public lecturer, and at the very time of his death he had an engagement to lecture to the Young Men's Christian Association on one of his favourite subjects "The Huguenots." By his pen he also contributed to the literature of the profession. He was certifying Factory Surgeon for Belfast. He died 8th January, 1882, aged sixty-three years.

Thomas Kennedy Wheeler, M.D., President, 1875. The papers read during this session were very varied, and were of a thoroughly practical character. Dr. Wheeler is one of the most popular and most respected of all the ex-presidents.

Richard Ross, M.D., was elected President on November 2nd, 1876; Dr. Whitla, secretary. The subject of salicylic acid in the treatment of rheumatic fever gave rise to an interesting discussion. The minutes for the year are very full and explicit. Dr. Ross's portrait is that of a most kind, agreeable, and popular man. He deservedly enjoys the esteem and affection of a large circle of patients and friends.

George F. Wales, M.D., was made President on November 7th, 1877. The session opened with a discussion on "Alcohol—is its moderate use beneficial or injurious?" The subject proved to be of nearly as much interest to the members as it is of profit to the vendors, and only on the fourth night of discussion was the President able to put the finding in the form of four resolutions to the meeting. To put it briefly, the conclusion was :—"That in health alcoholic stimulants are unnecessary; and that they are generally hurtful." A motion was submitted by Professor Dill on the death of Dr. William Stokes, of Dublin, hon. member of the Society. He was characterised as "a perfect gentleman, an accomplished scholar, a great teacher, and an able physician." Dr. Esler read a paper "On the Disposal of the Dead," out of which an animated discussion arose on the practice of wearing funeral emblems. It was resolved:—"That believing the custom of wearing shoulder-scarfs at funerals by medical men to be objectionable, we resolve, as far as we can, to discountenance the practice."

Dignity, ability, and merited success are characteristics of Dr. Wales. During his year of office the work of the Society received a fresh impetus.

Alexander Harkin, M.D., J.P., 1878, President; Dr. Esler, treasurer. This session was inaugurated by an able address from the president on "The Milk-Feeding of Infants," and was followed by a practical dis-

cussion on the same subject. The injection of hot water in *post-partum* hæmorrhage was first brought before the Society. The funds of the Society were this year greatly augmented by special subscriptions for library purposes. Dr. Harkin takes rank as one of the most attractive and witty *raconteurs* who have passed the chair of this Society.

Robert Foster Dill, M.D., was elected President for 1879. The rules of the Society, table of fees, and code of medical ethics were revised and printed, many valuable papers were read, and the work of the session was altogether of a very thorough character. The year was characterised by more social friendship and hospitality than usual.

Dr. Dill possesses many distinctive appellations. He is at once professor, coroner, gynæcologist, and consultant. He is an ardent friend, an honest enemy, an able debater, and a popular President.

J. Walton Browne, M.D. (1880). The Society's affairs being in an easy and prosperous condition, nearly the whole time of the members was occupied with purely professional work. Professor Gordon read a valuable paper on fractures of the femur. A lengthened discussion took place on the subject of "Abuses of the Medical Charities of Belfast." Resolutions were drawn up and sent to the various hospitals.

Dr. Browne's portrait is that of an aspiring and successful teacher and operator in the surgical branch of the Medical School.

Professor Cuming (1881). His opening address reviewed the changes in practice during a period of thirty years. The session was characterised by smoothness and good work.

William Alex. M'Keown, M.D. (1882). Dr. Dempsey, Librarian, with the same secretary and treasurer. Many valuable papers were read, and patients and appliances frequently exhibited. Dr. M'Keown's portrait is that of a pure specialist, who has proved that success is to be attained by doing honest and original work.

Professor Dill (1883). Dr. M'Kenzie, secretary. The energy of former years was thrown into the work of the Society by the President, and the minutes of Dr. M'Kenzie are very full and satisfactory. The medical event of the year was the meeting of the British Medical Association in Belfast, when about 600 members from various countries were present. Professor Cuming was President, Drs. Moore, Dempsey, and Byers, were the local Secretaries, and Dr. Whitla, Treasurer. The meeting extended over five days, from July 29th till August 2nd. On the Saturday excursions were made to the Giants' Causeway, Garron Tower, and Newcastle. The writer having prepared a guide book specially for the occasion, has much pleasure in presenting a copy to your librarian as a memento of the event.

John Fagan, F.R.C.S.I., was elected President for 1884. The place of meeting was changed to the Museum, College-square, North, and the meetings partook of a more social character than hitherto. For the present

session, 1885-6, Mr. Fagan was again chosen President; Dr. Lindsay secretary. The records of these years will be published in due course so of them I need not say anything.

Your own portrait, Mr. President, although last, is not the least important. It is that of a President who for two consecutive years has watched over the deliberations of this Society with great dignity, ability, and acceptance.

And now, sir, it devolves upon me, as the temporary custodian of these portraits, to ask you, on behalf of the various donors, to accept the safekeeping of them for the Society. I hope that each succeeding year may see an addition to their number, and I can only wish that the historian of the future may have as satisfactory a record of human goodness, professional skill, and good public reputation to submit as it has been my pleasing duty to furnish on this interesting occasion.