

# A History of the Ulster Medical Society

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## THE BELFAST MEDICAL SOCIETY.

THE Ulster Medical Society was founded in 1862 by the amalgamation of two earlier bodies—the Belfast Medical Society and the Belfast Clinical and Pathological Society.

The first of these societies was founded in 1806, and records exist which state that "the most respectable physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries, not merely of the town (Belfast), but of the vicinity likewise, soon became enrolled under the designation of The Belfast Medical Society." The annual subscription was fixed at one guinea.

There were nineteen original members of this Society, which must have included most of the doctors in Belfast at that time, as the city boasted only twenty-two thousands of a population.

The intentions of the Society were to hold regular meetings at which matters relevant to the profession could be discussed; to form a medical library, and, as an additional attraction, to make a collection of "anatomical preparations."

The first president was Dr. S. S. Thompson, who was in turn succeeded by Dr. W. Halliday, Dr. W. Drennan, Dr. R. Magee, Mr. R. McCluen, surgeon; Dr. A. Marshall, and Dr. R. McGee.

But discord appears to have entered the ranks of the Society's members; their relations became strained, and at an early date the meetings became neglected. The Society was dissolved in 1814.

Unsuccessful attempts were made to reconstitute the Society four years later, and it was not until 1822 that Dr. R. Stephenson in association with Dr. Forcade, Mr. Moore, R.N., and Dr. McDonnell succeeded in doing it.

Little is known of Dr. Forcade and Mr. Moore; but Dr. Stephenson is known to have been a distinguished graduate of Edinburgh University, and to have been a visiting physician to the Belfast General Hospital. He was also one of the first members of the Belfast Branch of the Royal Medical Benevolent Society. In an obituary notice published in the "Belfast News-Letter," dated September 25, 1869, it is stated: "In his practice he (Dr. Stephenson) was thoughtful, clearheaded, and judicious. Some people might say he was curt, but those who knew him best were aware of the genial and kindly nature which he possessed." He died September 24, 1869.

Dr. James McDonnell is better known as the founder of the Belfast Medical School, and the first physician to give clinical instruction in the old General Hospital. He was born in the Glens of Antrim in 1762. He received his medical education in Edinburgh, where he obtained the degree of M.D. in 1784. His thesis on this occasion was entitled, "On the Drowned." This thesis is of special interest,

for it suggests the then rather advanced idea of blood-transfusions in cases where the usual methods of resuscitation had failed.

After graduation, young Dr. McDonnell came to Belfast to practise, and found life there a pretty crowded one on account of the political events then taking place. Yet he found time for much philanthropic work. The poverty of the people who were often unable to obtain medical advice in case of illness, touched his heart, and by his efforts a sum of fifty pounds was raised to open a dispensary to supply free medicine and free medical advice to the indigent poor.\*

The success which followed the inauguration of the dispensary encouraged Dr. McDonnell to propose the erection of a public hospital, where patients suffering from fever could be admitted. Typhus and typhoid fevers were rampant in Belfast at that time, and it was impossible to control infection while the patients remained in their own homes. Dr. McDonnell's earnest pleading for funds for such a hospital resulted in the renting of a house in Berry Street, at a cost of twenty pounds per annum, to be used as a fever hospital. A nurse was appointed, and on April 27, 1797, it was opened, with six beds—the first fever hospital to be opened in Ireland.

The hospital was as great a success as the dispensary, but Dr. McDonnell and his assistants all developed typhus, and it had to be closed only a few months after opening.

On the doctor's recovery, his first thoughts were for the re-opening of the hospital. A sum of one hundred and thirteen pounds was collected by means of a charity sermon, and three houses in West Street were taken and converted into a new hospital. Dr. McDonnell was appointed physician-in-charge, and he devoted every spare moment of his time to organize it and to attend to its patients.

The value of this hospital was soon recognized, and it was decided to enlarge its scope; and in 1810 a plot of ground was leased in Frederick Street for the erection of a general hospital. The new hospital was opened in 1817, and its later history is concerned with the Belfast Medical School, rather than with the Ulster Medical Society. It is mentioned here because it owed its origin to Dr. James McDonnell.

Dr. McDonnell resigned from active duty in the general hospital in 1828, and on that occasion was presented with a service of plate worth seven hundred pounds, as a token of the appreciation of the community for his public services. The inscription read:

"To James McDonnell, Esq., M.D., who during a period of nearly forty years has devoted his time and eminent talents to the work of humanity, whose gratuitous advice has always been at the service of the poor, and to whose exertion this town has been principally indebted for that invaluable institution, the Fever Hospital and Dispensary, this service of plate has been presented by the nobility, Ladies, and Gentlemen of Belfast and its vicinity, as a tribute of their respect and esteem. A.D. 1828."

For many years after this date Dr. McDonnell continued to practise his profession, but he took little part in public affairs. He is described as being "a man of

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\* It must be remembered this was before the time of Poor Law dispensaries for poor people.

medium height, and his countenance was open, impressive, and cheerful. He was quick and able in speech, and had a good style of composition."

He died on April 5, 1845, in his eighty-second year.

These four gentlemen—Dr. Stephenson, Dr. Forcade, Mr. Moore, R.N., and Dr. McDonnell, formed the nucleus of the revived Belfast Medical Society, and before the first year of its existence had been completed, they were joined by Mr. Bryson, Mr. McCleary, Dr. Coffey, Dr. McKibben, Dr. Halliday, Dr. Young, and Mr. Mawhinney.

These early members of the new Society set about making a set of rules of such a nature as to make its future as secure as possible. Amongst these rules was one passed in 1825, which gave exemption from further annual subscriptions to all members who had made twenty years of *uninterrupted* subscriptions. This rule, it is believed, established a greater confidence in the Society's permanency than all the other rules combined.

The principal objects of the Society were the formation of a good medical library of standard works, and to hold meetings for the discussion of all matters concerning the medical profession.

The minute book of the Society shows the wide range of medico-political matters discussed. In 1832, the subject of a Medical School for Belfast was raised, and it was through the activities of the Society that the formation of the school was realized in 1835, in connection with the General Hospital and the Royal Academical Institution, Belfast. In 1841 the Medical Reform question was agitating the profession, and grave consideration was given to it at a number of meetings of the Society. The Society was instrumental in forming a Belfast Branch of the Medical Benevolent Fund Society of Ireland in 1843, a year after the foundation of this Fund. Sir James Graham's Medical Reform Bill of 1845 was also discussed, and resolutions passed in its support.

The activities of the Society apparently were at first confined to matters affecting the profession, rather than in the discussion of purely medical subjects; and it was not until 1845 that systematic discussions on purely medical and surgical subjects became part of the regular monthly meetings.\* And a year later, a further extension of the Society's interests was made by the exhibition of pathological specimens at its meetings. These specimens, when approved, were preserved in a museum founded by the Society as an addition to its library, then located in a room granted for that purpose by the authorities of the Belfast General Hospital.

So successful was this latter feature of the Society, it is recorded, that four hundred specimens were in the collection in 1851.

#### THE BELFAST CLINICAL AND PATHOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

The Belfast Clinical and Pathological Society was not founded until 1853. Its first president was Dr. T. H. Purdon; its first treasurer, Dr. J. H. Halliday; and its first secretaries, Dr. A. G. Malcolm and Dr. G. F. Wales.

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\* A curious custom of the Society at this time was to elect as chairman the fifth member who entered the meeting.

This Society owed its formation to the activities of Dr. Malcolm. He thought that the Medical Society was too narrow in its interests, as it catered only for doctors and surgeons residing in or near Belfast. The new Society, which Dr. Malcolm succeeded in founding, had a wider outlook, and made provision both for town and country membership. At its foundation there were forty-nine members, and before its first year had been completed there were ninety-six on its roll of members.

The young Society seems to have been very much more active than the older one. The minute book shows that thirty-nine meetings were held between the 8th of October, 1853, and the 27th of May of the following year. The minute book states: "The business of the Society consisted in the exhibition and explanation of pathological specimens, generally of recent disease; the exhibition of interesting original cases; the reading of results of microscopical and chemical examinations submitted by members for analyses; brief statements of clinical facts and statistics; the reading of short papers on new modes of treatment, and the discussion of particular subjects for debate."

So successful was this young Society, that only one year after its foundation it is recorded: "With a view to encouraging the adhesion of country members, it was resolved (February 8, 1885) to publish weekly abstracts of its proceedings."

These abstracts were published, without doubt, as a later minute states that they "were highly approved of." Unfortunately, no copies appear to have been preserved.

The Clinical and Pathological Society held weekly meetings in the General Hospital on Saturdays at 3 p.m., and the meetings appear to have been well attended.

A conversazione was held in a public hall each year, to which non-medical guests were invited. One of these was held in the Belfast Corn Exchange in 1856, the year in which Dr. Malcolm occupied the presidential chair. A "Belfast News-Letter" report of this meeting states: "Great interest was evinced during the evening in some of the microscopic demonstrations by members of the Society, such as the polarization of light, the circulation of the blood in the foot of the frog, and in some experiments illustrating the physiological effects of strychnine by Dr. Hall's frog test. None of these could be viewed," the report continues, "with indifference even by those accustomed to similar spectacles, while to the uninitiated they were productive of surprise and amazement."

The first president of the Society, Dr. F. H. Purdon, was born in Chichester Street, Belfast, in 1806. He received his early education in the Royal School, Armagh, and at the age of thirteen years entered Trinity College, Dublin, where in due course he graduated M.A., M.B. He also became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, 1827. He was one of the surgeons to the General Hospital, and was one of the first to be associated with the establishment of a dispensary for the poor of Belfast.

In 1832 he took an active part in the treatment of patients suffering from Asiatic cholera, which was then epidemic. He was among the early and successful operators

for laryngeal obstruction, and a tracheotomy tube was used by him as early as 1840.

Dr. Purdon was a liberal-minded and charitable man. He was one of the largest contributors to the Medical Benevolent Fund Society of Ireland, and was permanent president to the Belfast Branch up to the time of his death, which took place in his home on August 6, 1886.

Succeeding Dr. Purdon in the presidency of the Society were:—Professor J. C. Ferguson, Dr. D. Cuming, Dr. A. G. Malcolm, Dr. S. Browne, R.N.; Dr. Reid, Dr. Gordon, and Dr. James Moore.

The originator of the Society undoubtedly was Dr. Malcolm, one of the most distinguished members of the medical profession at that time in Belfast. Dr. Malcolm was born in Newry, County Down, in 1818. He received the rudiments of his medical education in the Royal Academical Institution, Belfast, and completed his studies in Dublin, Glasgow, and Edinburgh. He graduated M.D. of Edinburgh University in 1842. His thesis on that occasion was entitled "Fever," and for it he obtained one of the three gold medals awarded. Dr. Malcolm then began the practice of medicine in Belfast, where he "attended for two years on the poor gratuitously," according to the custom of the time. He was appointed physician to the General Hospital in 1845, where he rapidly gained a great reputation as a clinical teacher, and he was always surrounded by a class of eager students. He held advanced views on matters of public health, and succeeded in the appointment of the first sanitary committee in Belfast. He was one of the first to advocate the control of working conditions in factories and mills, and in 1855 read a paper before the British Association in Glasgow, entitled, "An Inquiry Into the Physical Influence of Mill Life." This paper was afterwards published in the *London Statistical Journal*. It is of particular interest, as it contains recommendations for the medical examination and supervision of mill workers, on the lines embodied in the factories and workshops acts in force to-day.

#### ULSTER MEDICAL SOCIETY.

As time passed, it became evident that the interests of the profession of medicine would be better served by a single Society instead of two competing Societies, and in 1861 discussions took place between representatives of the Belfast Medical Society and the Clinical and Pathological Society. These discussions are referred to in a minute of the Medical Society dated March 21, 1862. It states: "Dr. Dill moved and Dr. Browne seconded: 'That a committee be appointed to make the necessary inquiries for a Central Room for the use of the new Society.' " This committee reported on April 7, 1862, "That two rooms with water closet attached be taken in the house, No. 33 High Street, at the rental of £12. 10s. per annum, taxes included."

The report was approved, and a special meeting was held on April 26, 1862, to formally seal the decision of union between the two Societies. The minute of the Medical Society of that date states that the following resolution was passed unanimously: "That this meeting, having heard the report of the previous proceedings

of this Society, and having read the alterations about to be made in its rules, hereby approve of the proposed changes, and desire to unite this Society with the Pathological and Clinical under the title of the Ulster Medical Society."

A meeting of both Societies was held on April 30, 1862, and it was resolved: "That this meeting approves of the proceedings already undertaken for the amalgamation of the Medical and Pathological Societies, and hereby declares the union of the respective bodies, under the title of the Ulster Medical Society."

After this resolution had been approved, the first meeting of the Ulster Medical Society was held, and the rules of the new Society were passed. It was also agreed to rent the rooms in 33 High Street, and that the first annual meeting of this new Society was to be held on Saturday, May 3, 1862, at 3 p.m., at which the first office-bearers of the Ulster Medical Society were to be elected.

The objects of the new Society followed closely the ideals of Dr. Malcolm, in embracing the whole of the medical profession in the Province of Ulster, and it is to be regretted that Dr. Malcolm did not live to see its formation. He died in 1856 of "disease of the heart," the year in which he had occupied the presidential chair of the Clinical and Pathological Society. Dr. Malcolm probably did more for the advancement of medical science in Belfast than any other man of his time. He was a true reformer and missionary, and not only did he bring the Belfast Clinical and Pathological Society into existence, but he exerted himself untiringly on behalf of public health reforms; and it was mainly through his activities that the first public baths and washhouses were opened in Belfast.

So highly was Dr. Malcolm esteemed by the public of Belfast that it was suggested in the columns of the "News-Letter," September 23, 1856, that "a statue should be erected to his memory within the palings of the General Hospital, where he had laboured so faithfully and devotedly."

The statue was never erected, but instead a scholarship was founded by his widow for competition among the students of the General Hospital (and its successor, the Belfast Royal Victoria Hospital). This form of memorial is one that would have appealed to Dr. Malcolm more than any useless statue, for it encourages the closer study of clinical medicine, a subject that was dear to his heart. A modest tablet has been erected to his memory in the corridor of the Royal Victoria Hospital. It reads:

THE MALCOLM EXHIBITION  
FOUNDED FOR THE BENEFIT  
OF STUDENTS OF THE  
BELFAST MEDICAL SCHOOL,  
AND IN MEMORY OF  
ANDREW GEORGE MALCOLM, M.D.,  
ONE OF THE PHYSICIANS  
OF THE ROYAL HOSPITAL, FREDERICK STREET,  
WHO DIED DECEMBER 19, IN  
THE YEAR 1856,  
AGED 37 YEARS.

The first president of the Ulster Medical Society was PROFESSOR J. C. FERGUSON, M.D., a native of Tandragee, where he was born in 1802. He studied medicine in Trinity College, Dublin, from 1818 till 1823, in Edinburgh in 1824, in Paris in 1825, and graduated M.B. of the University of Dublin in 1827, when he was successful in obtaining first place with a gold medal. He was appointed the King's Professor of the Practice of Medicine in Dublin University, 1845, a post which he retained until his appointment to the Chair of Medicine in Queen's College, Belfast, in 1850. He was on the honorary staff of the General Hospital, Belfast, and an examiner in the old Queen's University of Ireland. Dr. Ferguson died on June 24, 1865.

JAMES PATTERSON, M.D., was the second president of the Society. He was elected in 1863. Dr. Patterson was the son of a Presbyterian minister in Magherally, County Down, and little else is known of him apart from the resolution passed by the Society on the occasion of his death. This resolution reads:

"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 recognized as a useful citizen and a man of stainless character."

During this second session of the Society, the only important business was the appointment of a committee to give effect to some changes introduced into the, then, new British Pharmacopœia.

ROBERT STEWART, M.D., the third president, was elected in October, 1864. He was a native of Swords, County Dublin, where he was born in 1803, a son of the rector of the parish. He obtained his medical education at the Park Street School of Medicine, Richmond Hospital, and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. He graduated M.D. in Glasgow in 1829, and then returned to Dublin, where he engaged in general practice. He came to Belfast in 1835 as superintendent of the District Asylum, an appointment which he held for nearly forty years.

Up to the time of Dr. Stewart's appointment, restraint was the recognized method of dealing with asylum patients. Dr. Stewart, however, was one of the first to follow the teachings of another Irishman, Dr. John Connolly practising in England, and instituted the non-restraint system of lunatics.\* Stewart went even farther than Connolly, and practised the "moral treatment" of insanity, by the introduction of music and amusements among his patients. He was a man of great charity, and for thirty years was honorary secretary to the Belfast Branch of the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund Society of Ireland. It was, indeed, while engaged in collecting funds for that Society that he contracted a chill which resulted in his death, after only a few days' illness, in March, 1875. His brother was the founder of the Stewart Institute, Dublin.

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\* Connolly's work, published in 1830, "An Inquiry Concerning the Indications of Insanity, with Suggestions for the Better Treatment of the Insane," was the beginning of a new outlook throughout the civilized world on mental disease and its treatment. Connolly was the first asylum superintendent to put away straight-jackets, handcuffs, and leg-locks.

During Dr. Stewart's year of office, it is known that an "anniversary dinner" of the Society was held on Tuesday, November 8, 1864. This is the first record of a formal communal dinner among the members of the Society. It is reported in the "Lancet" of November 12, 1864. The report ends: "During the evening several eloquent speeches were made, and the company separated highly gratified with the arrangements of the day."

The presidential chair in 1865-6 was occupied by JAMES MOORE, M.D., one of the most amazing personalities ever seen in the Belfast Medical School. He is described by Robert Esler in his "Sketch of the Ulster Medical Society" as "the surgeon-artist," for in addition to being a distinguished surgeon, he was an artist of great ability; and in addition to having obtained the degree of M.D. of Edinburgh University in 1842, he was an associate member of the Scottish Academy of Art, and an honorary member of the Royal Hibernian Academy.

After graduation, Dr. Moore commenced practice in Belfast, where for forty years he held a foremost place as a surgeon on the staff of the General Hospital, and consultant to several of the special hospitals of the town. He was also Medical Inspector of Emigration and of Quarantine to the Port of Belfast.

In his student days, Moore's artistic abilities were recognized by Professor Syme of Edinburgh, who selected him to illustrate his well-known work on surgery.

Dr. Moore was also an eminent archæologist, and was a member of the Werner Society of Antiquarians. He was admired by all kinds and conditions of people, but by none more than by the leaders of his own profession. Sir Charles Bell, in his will, left him his case of operating instruments. Professor Goodsir of Edinburgh paid him a similar compliment, as also did Dr. Thomas Reade, one of his colleagues in Belfast.

"Dr. Moore was a genius," writes Esler, "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."

An anniversary dinner was held this year, according to the "Lancet," on December 7, "in Thompson's Rooms."

In these early days the Ulster Medical Society held many meetings in its rooms at No. 33 High Street. But they were either to discuss medico-political matters, or for the discussion of unusual or difficult cases. No formal papers on purely medical or surgical subjects are recorded. Its history at this period contains little of general interest, apart from the characters of its presidents.

JOHN S. DRENNAN, M.D., was elected president for session 1866-7. A son of the famous Irish Volunteer, Dr. William Drennan, he was born in 1809, and died at the age of eighty-four years. Little is known of him apart from the fact that he was first Professor of *Materia Medica* in the Leeds Medical School, and that he afterwards practised in Belfast. But his year of office is important in the history of the Ulster Medical Society, as the following entry from the minute book shows:—\*

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\* The original minute book for this period is lost, and this entry is quoted from Esler's "Sketch of the Ulster Medical Society," *Quarterly Journal Medical Science*, 1886.



"Doctors 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 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."

The Society in this year vacated the rooms in High Street, and settled in "a more congenial atmosphere of the General Hospital."

The first president to be elected, after the Society had settled in their new home during the session 1867-8, was PROFESSOR JAMES SEATON REID, M.D. Reid was born in 1811, and died at the ripe age of eighty-five years, on May 3, 1896. He held the position of visiting physician to the Belfast Union Fever Hospital for nearly fifty years, and he occupied the Chair of Materia Medica in Queen's College for thirty-three years. He was recognized as the greatest authority of his time on the diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment of fevers. He was brusque and somewhat rough in manner, but those who knew him well testify that this was but a mask to conceal a tender heart.

PROFESSOR JAMES CUMING, M.A., M.D., F.R.C.P.I., succeeded Reid in the presidential chair for session 1868-9. He was born in Markethill, County Armagh, 1833, and died on August 27, 1899. He was one of the earliest students of Queen's College, Belfast, which he entered in 1849, the year of its foundation. He graduated M.D. in 1855, and M.A. in 1858, and after post-graduate study in Paris and Vienna, began practice in Belfast, where he soon became one of the ablest physicians of the city. He was appointed to the Chair of Medicine in 1865 at Queen's College, a position which he occupied until 1899.

Professor Cuming left practically nothing behind him in the way of publications. But it is known that he published an important paper entitled, "Contributions to the Study of Some Thoracic Diseases," in 1869, and a paper, "The Sphymograph," in 1868. Yet in spite of this fact, he was during his lifetime the recognized head and leader in all professional matters, and "he reigned with undisputed sway over a loyal kingdom of devoted subjects, nearly all his old pupils and friends, whose respect and esteem for him deepened with his advancing years."<sup>\*</sup>

Professor Cuming as a lecturer was a remarkable success, being a thorough master of literary style, and of calm, philosophic reasoning powers, which made his classroom utterances models of everything which a lecture should be.

The range and accuracy of his reading were phenomenal. There was no department of human knowledge, ancient or modern, which could be said to be entirely new to him, and he could have filled with distinction at least half a dozen Chairs of the College. His knowledge of English history and literature was accurate and profound, his highly-cultured mind grasping the spirit of the authors which he

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\* Sir William Whitla: "Proceedings of Ulster Medical Society," 1901.

loved to study, yet he shrank from parading his scholarship, and was seldom heard to quote even from his favourite authors, Horace and Homer. His familiarity with French, German, and modern Italian literature was no less profound.

But the keynote of Professor Cuming's character was his spotless integrity. He was as just a man as ever lived, and his judicial mind almost invariably led him to a correct and absolutely impartial judgment upon any matter left to his decision.

J. W. T. SMITH, M.D., was elected president for session 1869-70. During his term of office important matters were discussed by the Society; not the least of these was a discussion which took place in March, 1870, on the desirability or otherwise of continuing the Contagious Diseases Act of 1866. The result of this discussion was a resolution in favour of continuing the Act, "as it had tended to increase morality and diminish vice."

Dr. Smith was born in 1830, and died on August 11, 1890. Into the forty years of his working life he crowded an amount of work seldom or ever achieved by the longest lived member of our profession.

He wrote little, and hence has left practically nothing behind him to swell the literature of medicine. Few men, however, have more nobly and successfully laid their impress upon their generation than Dr. Smith. He was a brilliant clinical teacher, and the influence of his teaching upon the students and young practitioners of the Belfast Medical School could hardly be exaggerated. In diagnosis he was absolutely unrivalled. At the bedside in the hospital it was not enough to say that he shone in diagnosis: he was often sparkling and really lustrous. His perceptive faculties were developed to a rare state of perfection, and they were ever on the alert, though to the student and to the casual observer he hardly seemed to exercise them at times, but appeared to arrive at his conclusion of what was wrong by a method of intuition or instinct, scarcely himself knowing or understanding how or why. Those who knew and understood him best, however, were satisfied that he did not arrive at his diagnosis by an effort of instinct: he arrived at his decision by a rapid inductive process (often apparently automatic), drawing his inference from a number of observed facts or features which ordinary men generally overlook. The bent and configuration of his mind was such that he never guessed, and consequently he was very seldom wrong. He possessed a valuable gift which prevented guessing, and which consequently saved him from the degradation of attempting a so-called "lightning diagnosis"—he had the rare endowment of conscientiously taking infinite pains in every examination which he undertook. Even after he satisfied himself about the correctness of his diagnosis, he rapidly but accurately determined the condition of every organ in the body, where this was possible, before prescribing for his patient and before committing himself, which made the teaching of Dr. James Smith a power for good in the training of the medical students.

The "Lancet" of June 4, 1870, contains the following notice regarding the Society:—

"The Ulster Medical Society have petitioned the House of Lords against proceeding with the Medical Bill without further inquiry. They object to the power given to

the Privy Council in the Bill, even as amended by Lord de Gray; and to the diplomas bearing other than the Imperial name. They petition for a reconstruction of the Medical Council, and for the discontinuance of the Apothecaries Hall of Ireland as a medical authority."

Dr. Smith was followed in the presidential chair in 1870-1 by WILLIAM MACCORMAC, M.D., F.R.C.S.Eng. Dr. MacCormac, afterwards Sir William MacCormac, is an excellent example of the Hippocratic view that "war is the only proper school for the surgeon," for he served in no less than three wars — the Franco-German War of 1870, the Turko-Serbian War of 1876, and the South African War of 1899. MacCormac was born in Belfast on January 17, 1836, the son of Dr. Henry MacCormac, the pioneer of the open-air treatment of tuberculosis. He was educated at the Royal Belfast Academical Institution, and at Queen's College, Belfast, where he graduated M.A., and later M.D. with gold medal. As a student he appears to have taken a leading part in undergraduate activities, and he was elected president of the Literary and Scientific Society for the session 1857-8. For a few years MacCormac practised as a surgeon in the old General Hospital, Belfast, and in the middle of his year of office the call for adventure carried him away to serve with the French Army during the war of 1870. He spent a short time serving at Metz, and meeting the American surgeon, James M. Sims, he joined and helped to organize the Anglo-American Ambulance, with Sims at its head. Sims soon retired from this position, and MacCormac was left in command of the complete unit, which included sixteen qualified surgeons. The experience obtained during this time was later of invaluable service to him when he settled in London, where he was soon recognized as a surgeon of great ability, and he was elected to the staff of St. Thomas's Hospital as assistant surgeon. Three years later he was raised to the rank of full surgeon and lecturer in surgery. But again the call for adventure seized him, and in 1876 he accepted an appointment with the National Aid Society as surgeon-in-chief to the Ambulance Corps which was being sent for service to the Turko-Serbian War.

On MacCormac's return to London from this war, he addressed a meeting of the British Medical Society on "Antiseptic Surgery," a subject of violent dispute at that time. His address, together with the views expressed by surgeons who took part in the discussion which followed, were published by MacCormac in 1880. This book represents a landmark in the introduction of the Listerian principles from which modern aseptic surgery emerged. It was translated into French and Italian, and published.

An International Medical Congress was to be held in London in 1881, and MacCormac was entrusted with the task of its organization. This he did successfully, and at the conclusion of the Congress he edited and published its proceedings, in three languages. A knighthood was conferred upon him for this work.

MacCormac published many papers and books, but his claim to fame rests on his pioneer efforts in the operative treatment for rupture of the urinary bladder. He was the first surgeon to perform abdominal section for this condition, to wash out the

peritoneal cavity, and to stitch the ruptured viscus. A paper published by him in the "Lancet" of 1886 on this method of treatment may be read with advantage by surgeons even to-day.

MacCormac obtained the fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1871. He was elected to its council in 1883, and in 1896 he had the honour to be elected to its presidential chair, a position to which he was re-elected four times in succession. He was created a baronet in 1897, and in the following year he was appointed surgeon-in-ordinary to the Prince of Wales (afterwards Edward VII). His career would now seem to have settled into that of a successful surgeon. But the call for adventure once more claimed him, and on the outbreak of the South African War in 1899, he sailed with the South African Force as a consulting surgeon. In this capacity he served for only four months. Dysentery claimed him as a victim, and he died of its effects in Bath on December 4, 1901.

On February 18, 1871, the "Lancet" reports a special meeting of the Ulster Medical Society held in the library of the General Hospital, at which consideration was given to the "Lancet" Medical Act Amendment Bill. The Society approved in general terms of this Bill.

HENRY MURNEY, M.D., was elected president of the Society for 1871-2. He was born in 1825, and died August 25, 1907. A man of a retiring nature, Murney did not take a very prominent place in our profession, though his influence must have been considerable in his position as senior assistant to Professor Redfern in the Department of Anatomy in the old Queen's College. He was a surgeon on the staff of the General Hospital in Frederick Street, and had a large private surgical practice.

During Dr. Murney's year of office a discussion was raised as to the "propriety of asking the British Medical Association to hold its annual meeting in Belfast in 1873." The proposal was negated by a majority of one.

HENRY MARTIN JOHNSTON, L.R.C.S.I., was the Society's choice, for 1872-3. Dr. Johnston was born in 1827, the son of a Presbyterian minister in Tullylish. He died on March 3, 1878, leaving the reversion of his property for the benefit of the poor, suffering from cancer and consumption, in the district where he had chiefly practised. He was educated in Belfast and Dublin, and after taking his medical degree he spent some time in London, but soon returned to Belfast as a dispensary medical officer. He was afterwards appointed visiting surgeon to the Belfast Union Infirmary.

At the annual meeting of the Society held on November 9, 1872, in the library of the General Hospital, it was agreed in future to meet on every alternate Saturday during the session, instead of every Saturday as heretofore.

JOHN MOORE, M.D., was elected president for session 1873-4. Dr. Moore had long been an active member of the Society, and had served it for many years as its honorary secretary. He is chiefly remembered as the founder of the North of Ireland

Branch of the British Medical Association. He was one of the surgeons attending the Royal Hospital, and at the time of his death, on May 2, 1887, he also held the post of surgeon to the Belfast Jail. He was a man of the loftiest ideals in everything pertaining to the honour and dignity of the profession and the conduct of human affairs. Indeed, herein lay the strength and the weakness of his character. His ideals were so sublime that they were often impossible, and failure fretted his sensitive spirit and helped to wear out his active mind. At the time of his death he had gone to Crieff for a much-needed mental rest.

During Dr. Moore's year of office the Society published its transactions for the first time. These were printed in the Quarterly (Dublin) Journal of Medical Science. They include four papers by Dr. Moore and one by Dr. Fagan.

Dr. Moore's papers were:—(1) A patient whose elbow had been excised six months previously, and who was following his occupation of an attendant to a machine in a paper factory. (2) A case of amputation and use of Esmarch's means of restraining hæmorrhage. (3) A case of labour complicated with abnormal presentation. (4) A case of dislocation of the hip-joint, reduced by flexion and rotation.

Dr. Fagan's paper was entitled, "A Case of Noma Pudendi."

The meetings which follow are all of the same nature: The exhibition of patients following treatment, the exhibition of pathological specimens, and the reading of notes of unusual cases.

These communications, if one may judge from the published Transactions, usually resulted in well-informed criticism and in wide discussions. The principle of one person reading a paper, with a few friends complimenting him on it, had not then been evolved in the Society.

The meeting reported in the Transactions as occurring on February 26, 1874, had before it an interesting paper by Dr. Henry MacCormac, entitled, "Exercise of the Heart." This is the first formal paper on a specific subject ever read before the Society.

Dr. MacCormac in this paper begins with the thesis that exercise develops and strengthens the cardiac muscle fibres, aerates the blood, and at the same time cardiac fat is only sparingly developed. The heart's action as a result "becomes reliable, and equal to all life's exigencies."

MacCormac advocated walking and light garden work as the best treatment for irregular or "excessive" action of the heart, which he held to be really a "functional disorder attendant on our civilization."

CHARLES DE LA CHEROIS PURDON, M.D., was elected to the presidential chair for session 1874-5, and during his term of office the Society probably had more papers and reports placed before it than at any time in its previous existence. Dr. Purdon was born in Belfast in 1819; he was educated in the Royal Academical Institution, Belfast, and at Trinity College, Dublin, where he graduated M.A., M.B., in 1840. He practised in Belfast, but spent much of his time in the study of archæology.

He was a man of unblemished character, and he did much for the amelioration of the condition of the working classes. He died on January 8, 1882.

THOMAS KENNEDY WHEELER, M.D., was president in 1875-6. He was one of the most popular medical practitioners of his time, and it is doubtful if the death of any medical man ever produced such universal sorrow as did that of Dr. Wheeler. His presidential address was entitled "Puerperal Eclampsia." He was born in 1825, and died on January 13, 1888.

RICHARD ROSS, M.D., elected president for 1876-7, was known to all his hospital patients as "the good physician." His obituary notice in the "British Medical Journal," written by one of his former colleagues, states: "Dr. Ross was one of the purest, kindest, most unselfish, and most faithful men who have ever adorned the profession of medicine. His nature had no flaw of meanness or pettiness. He was absolutely devoid of jealousy, or greed, or unworthy ambition. He lived for his profession and his patients, and he received in return an enthusiastic affection and a profound esteem such as few men have ever evoked. No word of bitterness, or censure, or discontent, or repining ever passed his lips. His presence brought help and comfort and benediction wherever he went. If ever man 'wore the white flower of a blameless life,' it was Richard Ross. Indefatigable in labours, unwearied in well-doing, careless of self, prodigal of professional aid, of wise counsel, and of kind sympathy, he passed to his rest amidst the deepest and most unaffected mourning." He died November 13, 1895, aged sixty-eight years.

The minutes of the Society are particularly full for this session, possibly due to the enthusiasm and earnestness of its new honorary secretary, young Dr. William Whitla, afterwards Sir William, whose name adorns the present Medical Institute.

GEORGE F. WALES, M.D., was the president elected for 1877-8. The changes inaugurated by Dr. Whitla now begin to show themselves, and instead of meetings devoted to a number of clinical cases, formal papers and discussions begin to appear. Dr. Wales seems to have been infected with these new ideas, and at the first meeting of his session of office opened a discussion: "Alcohol: Is its moderate use beneficial or injurious?"

"The subject proved to be of nearly as much interest to the members," the entry in the minute book reads, "as it is of profit to its vendors." The discussion seems to have been a lively one, and only at the end of the fourth night was the president able to put the findings in the form of four resolutions to the meeting. Briefly these findings are: "That in health alcoholic stimulants are unnecessary, and that they are generally harmful."

During this session Dr. Robert Esler read a paper entitled, "On the Disposal of the Dead." An animated discussion followed this paper, on the practice of wearing funeral emblems (shoulder-scarves, etc.). It was resolved, at the end of the discussion: "That believing the custom of wearing shoulder-scarves at funerals by medical men to be objectionable, we resolve, as far as we can, to discountenance the practice."

At this time it was customary for the doctor who had attended the deceased to be requested to attend the funeral, and he and the clergyman wore, in the case of a young person, white linen shoulder-scarves; in the case of middle-aged persons, white linen scarves bordered with black; and if an old person, the scarves were usually of black silk or black crepe.

The practice of wearing shoulder-scarves at funerals probably originated in the practice followed early in the nineteenth century, of lending out cloaks on hire to funerals by the Church authorities. The prices charged ranged from one shilling to a pound, according to quality. The number of cloaks worn indicated the social position of the deceased.

ALEXANDER HARKIN, M.D., was president for 1878-9. Dr. Harkin was born in 1817, and died at the age of seventy-seven years on January 4, 1894. He was a great supporter of the Ulster Medical Society, and one of its most regular attenders. He read many papers on clinical cases before it, and his publications cover a wide range of subjects. He had a fertile imagination, and he was never at a loss for theories to account for his clinical observations. His name deserves to be mentioned in the history of medicine, for he was the first observer who systematically tested the effects of a large blister applied over the heart in uncomplicated cases of acute rheumatism. He held that this practice reduced temperature, and rapidly removed most of the symptoms in a very remarkable manner. Not content with these observations, he insisted upon a new pathology for *rheumatism*, which *he defined as endocarditis*.

Dr. Harkin had a highly-cultivated literary taste, and some of his unpublished lyrics are said to "give evidence of touching pathos and profound religious feeling."

His presidential address, following the example of Dr. Wales, took the form of opening a discussion on "The Milk Feeding of Infants at Nurse." He began by saying: "The proposition which I hope to establish is, that in the unreasonable and excessive dilution of cow's milk practised by mothers and nurses in the feeding of infants, sanctioned and taught by many members of our profession, serious injury is done to the nursing child."

He agreed that cow's milk was stronger than human milk, and he would therefore dilute it with a little water, but at the same time add a small quantity of sugar, in which it was deficient.

This seems to have been rank heresy to the teachings of the time, for it raised a storm of protest and differences of opinion. So strong were these differences that the discussion ended only after three evenings had been devoted to it, and even then no resolution was passed on the matter, either for or against.

This year is also interesting for the fact that, apparently for the first time, the use of hot water was advocated in the treatment of cases of post-partum hæmorrhage.

PROFESSOR ROBERT F. DILL, M.D., was elected president for 1879-80. Born in 1811, Professor Dill died July 20, 1893. Esler writes of him: "He was at once

professor, coroner, gynæcologist, and consultant. He was an ardent friend, an honest enemy, an able debater, and a popular president."

He was appointed to the Chair of Midwifery at Queen's College, Belfast, in 1868, a post which he occupied up to the time of his death.

He was the author of many papers read before the Society, but none which raised more discussion than his advocacy for "An Alternative Operation for Cæsarean Section."

The operation proposed was performed as follows:—(1) The incision was made from the anterior superior iliac spine to the symphysis pubis, through the abdominal wall down to the peritoneum. (2) The peritoneum, instead of being incised, was raised and turned back so that a "free entrance to the vagina" was made, and the os uteri exposed. (3) The os uteri was then brought into the open wound on the abdomen. (4) The hand was next introduced into the uterus through the os, and the child removed by forceps.

The advantages urged for this operation are: —

- (1) The peritoneal cavity is not penetrated.
- (2) The uterus is not excised.
- (3) It can be performed with a fair chance of success, whereas cæsarean section "had an alarmingly high death-rate."

This paper also proposes "ablation of the uterus," an operation advocated in Germany, and introduced to the attention of the Ulster Medical Society for the first time by Dr. Dill.

JOHN WALTON BROWNE, D.L., M.D., M.R.C.S.Eng., was president in 1880-1. Dr. Browne, afterwards Sir John, was born in 1845, the son of Dr. Samuel Browne, R.N., J.P., mayor of the city of Belfast in 1870. He died on December 19, 1923. He was one of the great personalities of his day, a picturesque figure, with a ready tongue at repartee, with strong, almost violent, views on every matter affecting the profession. He was appointed an honorary ophthalmic surgeon to the Belfast Ophthalmic Hospital, Belfast, in 1875. Browne was a candidate for the Chair of Surgery at Queen's College in 1881, and although unsuccessful, his candidature was endorsed by a memorial signed by 237 graduates and former students of the Belfast Queen's College, and by sixty-three senior students of the Belfast Medical College. The memorial read: "That owing to Dr. Browne's great popularity as a teacher in surgery, and his success as one of the most brilliant and dexterous operators in the North of Ireland, his appointment to the Chair of Surgery would be of the greatest benefit to the Belfast Medical School."

Browne was knighted in 1922 for his public services during the Great War. He had an extensive practice, and following the Armagh railway disaster, he acted as surgeon for the Great Northern Railway (I.) in conjunction with Dr. Palmar of Armagh. He was medical referee in Belfast for most of the insurance companies, and his opinion was always looked upon as being of great value. As a witness in



the court of law he appeared thousands of times, and his evidence was always listened to with great respect.

His presidential address was entitled, "Chloroform and Ether: Their Advantages and Disadvantages." He held a firm and unshaken faith in chloroform as the most satisfactory anæsthetic then in existence. He said: "By proper care, chloroform is a sufficiently manageable and safe agent for use, and that it is not the chloroform which is to blame (for fatalities), but the mode of administration." A characteristic remark of this strong-willed man.

During his year of office a lengthy discussion was raised on "Abuses of the Medical Charities of Belfast." Resolutions were drawn up, and sent to the various hospitals. The wording of these resolutions is unfortunately lost.

PROFESSOR JAMES CUMING, M.A., M.D., F.R.C.P.I., was elected president for the second time, in 1881. His presidential address reviewed the changes in practice during a period of thirty years. It is characterized by shrewd guesses on possible further changes, which in later years actually occurred.

*(To be concluded in the July issue of this Journal.)*