

# A History of the Ulster Medical Society

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## PART II

WILLIAM MCKEOWN, M.D., was elected president for session 1882-3. He was born in 1845, and died on July 9, 1904. McKeown was a man of great originality, and his work as an ophthalmic surgeon earned for him an international reputation. He was the first surgeon to use the magnet for the removal of metal from the *interior* of the eye (1873), after making a surgical incision into the sclera, through which the metal passed.\* This fact is recorded in the American Encyclopædia of Ophthalmology, vol. 10, p. 7679. He also devised a new method for removal of cataract. Until his time patients suffering from this condition were allowed to become totally blind before removal of the opaque lens. McKeown devised a technique to inject a few drops of water below the capsule of the lens, and by this means produce a rapid ripening of the cataract. The operation could then be performed in a few weeks time, without the patient having to pass through the unhappy period of waiting for months before the removal of the lens was possible. His book, describing the technique of the operation, gained for him a wide reputation both in Europe and America. He also devised a method of "irrigation" of the anterior chamber after removal of the lens.\*\* These facts are recorded in both the American and the French Encyclopædias of Ophthalmology.

At an early period Dr. McKeown opened a small dispensary for the free treatment of diseases of the eye among the poor. Mr. Edward Benn, Belfast's great philanthropist, was deeply impressed with the value of this work McKeown was doing, and in 1871 built a small hospital in which McKeown could work. This building was situated in Great Patrick Street. So successful was the work done here that Mr. Benn built and equipped a new hospital in Clifton Street for Dr. McKeown. This building was opened in 1874 at a cost of £3,180. It is now known as the Benn Ulster Eye, Ear, and Throat Hospital.

Dr. McKeown had an active concern in all matters pertaining to the interests of the medical profession and the advancement of the Belfast Medical School. In 1880 he suggested the equipment of "paying wards" in public hospitals, a policy which is only now receiving serious attention; and in 1882 he delivered a report before the annual meeting of the Benn Hospital, in which he drew attention to certain gaps in the teaching facilities at the Belfast Medical School. Dr. McKeown was the first

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\* The magnet had been used for the removal of metal from the superficial parts of the eye from earliest times, but McKeown was the first to make a surgical incision in the eyeball and then use the magnet. The electro-magnet was not used for this purpose until Julius Hirschberg did so in 1875.

\*\* A paper by McKeown describing his methods was published in "The Lancet," 1889, p. 783.

surgeon to practise ophthalmology exclusively in Belfast, and he was the first lecturer in ophthalmology in Queen's College.

PROFESSOR DILL was elected president for a second period in 1883-4. The medical event of this year was the British Medical Association Annual Meeting in Belfast, when six hundred members from various countries attended. Professor James Cuming was president of the British Medical Association that year, with Dr. Moore, Dr. Dempster, and Dr. Byer's as local secretaries, and Dr. William Whitla honorary treasurer.

On this occasion Professor Dill took as the subject of his presidential address, medical education in general, and the question of women in medicine in particular. He said: "I believe it was one of the errors of the age to open our colleges, our schools of medicine, and our universities to women, whereby enabling them to compete with our young men while pursuing their medical studies, and in obtaining degrees and other medical distinctions.

"Indeed, I should have hoped that the culture and refinement of the age would have forbidden such a consummation, as that the two sexes should be found receiving united medical education. Which of you would like to see his sister, his daughter, or other young female friend, in the dissecting-room at work in common with the youths of the opposite sex? Which of us would willingly join in consultation in *certain cases* with Dr. Elizabeth\_\_\_\_\_, or be found investigating *certain diseases* with Dr. Mary\_\_\_\_\_; I believe the properly constituted mind of either sex would revolt at the very thought of such a practice."

Strange reading, when to-day women are admitted to consultations of all kinds, to the staffs of our hospitals, and to membership in our medical societies.

SIR JOHN FAGAN, L.R.C.S.I., F.R.C.S.I., D.L., was elected to the chair for 1884-5. In this year the Ulster Medical Society changed its meeting-place from the Royal Hospital to rooms in the Museum, College Square North. The pathological room was, however, retained in the Royal Hospital, the specimens being considered unsuitable for exhibition in such a public building as the Museum. The day of meeting was also changed from Saturday to Thursday, and the meetings began to take on a more social character.

Sir John was elected president for a second session, 1885-6. The meetings were largely clinical in nature, except one formal paper read by Dr. (afterwards Professor) Lindsay on "The Physiological Action of Tea, and the Effects of Its Excessive Use."

The president showed a patient on one occasion from whom he had removed "almost all the lower jaw." On another occasion he showed a patient from whom he had removed the tongue. These go to show that major operations were at this time attempted and successfully performed.

This period marks the beginning of interest in bacteriology, and the members of the Society had the opportunity of seeing a demonstration by Dr. Workman of "Disease Germs," with "a variety of specimens under the microscope."

Sir John Fagan was born in 1844, and died in 1930. He was educated at St. Vincent's College and the Catholic University, Dublin. He qualified L.R.C.S.I, in 1865, and after studying in London, Paris, and Vienna, obtained the F.R.C.S.I, in 1874. He was an honorary surgeon to the Royal Hospital, Belfast, for twenty-five years, and he was one of the leading spirits which succeeded in establishing the Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. In 1897 he was appointed Inspector of Reformatories and Industrial Schools in Ireland, and completely changed the methods of education and training in them. He was appointed a medical member of the General Prison Board in 1906, and was knighted for his public services in 1910.

SIR WILLIAM WHITLA, M.A., M.D., D.Sc., LL.D., was elected president of the Ulster Medical Society for the first time in 1886. His presidential address was typical of the man. It was "The Present Position and Prospects of Therapeutics with Its Relation to Other Departments of Medical Science."

Sir William was born in Monaghan in 1851, and his death in 1933 was mourned by the members of the Ulster Medical Society, not only as a great benefactor in the gift of the Whitla Medical Institute, but as one who, until growing infirmity compelled him to retire to the seclusion of his home, was an active member in its deliberations.

On leaving school young Whitla was apprenticed to Wheeler & Whitaker of Belfast, then the leading firm of dispensing chemists in town. But soon he decided to study for a medical degree, and succeeded in obtaining his M.D. with first-class honours and a gold medal of the old Queen's University of Ireland.

Soon after graduation he was appointed resident medical officer and superintendent of the Royal Hospital, Belfast. His exceptional ability both as a physician and an administrator soon became evident, and he quietly revolutionized the working of the whole institution.

He began private practice in Belfast, and quickly gained a large number of patients. He was soon afterwards appointed a visiting physician to the Royal Hospital, and few of his former students will readily forget his clinical lectures or the original methods he employed in imparting knowledge.

In the midst of his hospital work and his extensive and exacting practice, he found time to write his "Materia Medica and Therapeutics," which was at once a pronounced success. This work was the first textbook to reproduce woodcuts of pestle and mortar, measure-glasses, and other apparatus used by dispensers. The book had an enormous sale. The twelfth edition, revised and edited by Dr. Gunn of Oxford, was published just two months before Sir William's death.

Sir William was appointed to the Chair of Materia Medica and Therapeutics in Queen's College, Belfast, in 1890, in succession to Professor Seaton Read, a position which he occupied with dignity until his retirement in 1920.

An indefatigable worker, he produced that remarkable book, "The Dictionary of Treatment." His versatility and the extent of his reading may be gauged from the fact that every article in the first edition was written by himself. The success

of his work was universal. It was published simultaneously in England and America. The English edition of eight thousand copies was sold within nine months; two thousand of the American edition were imported into this country to meet the immediate demand. The book met a definite want, and was soon found on the bookshelf of almost every general practitioner. A specially-bound volume of the Chinese edition was amongst Sir William's most treasured possessions.

Appreciation of his merits by those best qualified to judge is indicated by the number of honorary degrees conferred upon him. They include M.A., R.U.I.; LL.D., Glasgow; M.D., Dublin; D.Sc., Belfast. King Edward VII included his name for a knighthood in his list of birthday honours in 1911. He was a Pro-Chancellor of Queen's University of Belfast, which further honoured him by electing him as its first representative in the Imperial Parliament. He was also elected president of the British Medical Association on the occasion of the annual meeting in Belfast in 1909.

ROBERT ESLER, M.D., was elected president for the session 1887-8. He was born in 1836, and died in London in 1919. He is known as the first historian of the Society. His first paper on this subject was published in 1885, entitled "The Early History of Medicine in Belfast." This paper was followed by "A Sketch of the Ulster Medical Society." He also was the author of the "Guide to Belfast," published for the use of the members of the British Medical Association when they held their annual meeting in Belfast in 1883. Dr. Esler practised in Belfast for nearly fifteen years after graduation, but at the end of that time went to London, where he built up a large general practice. In Belfast he was one of the founders of the Ulster Hospital for Children and Women, which was at first housed in Chichester Street. He was a man of wide interests and varied attainments, and his passing left behind him many happy memories amongst his former colleagues.

Dr. Esler's presidential address took the form of a discussion on the changes in medical and surgical science for the previous thirty years. He mentions that chloroform was unknown and antiseptics had no place in surgical technique in 1837. During this period hot water was substituted as "injections" for cold water in the treatment of hæmorrhages. In gynæcology he mentions that "the simple record of successfully performed abdominal sections speaks of progress with trumpet tongue." He also mentions that during the year 1886 five members of the Society had performed ovariectomy "with perfect success in every case."

He discusses the then controversial subject of women in medicine. He says: "A subject of present importance to a Society like this is the membership of women. They are entering the ranks of the profession; they will soon knock at the door of our medical societies. The time is past for discussing the capacity and adaptability of women for medical studies. It is said that women are fascinated by gold and men by beauty. The latter assertion is admitted, but regarding the former, I think there are other attractions than gain for women in the medical calling. Women make patient nurses; they will be quick observers and safe prescribers."

HENRY BURDEN, M.A., M.D., was president for 1888-9. He was born in 1835, and died on February 19, 1893. He was a man of purely scientific cast of mind,

and could hardly be said to belong to the ranks of the practising physician, as he devoted himself mainly to the study and teaching of chemistry and pathology. He was a first-class microscopist, within the limits of the knowledge of the time, and he became the first pathologist to the Royal Hospital, Belfast. He read a number of papers before the Society, but undoubtedly his best effort was his presidential address, entitled "The Progress of Bacteriology in Recent Years."

A meeting was held on May 29, 1889, at which the business was "to consider a report for the Council relative to a proposal to establish a medical journal for Ulster." This report favoured the establishment of such a journal, and suggested that the North of Ireland Branch of the British Medical Association should be asked to co-operate and make a grant of fifteen pounds towards the cost of publication, and that the proposed journal be placed under the control of a committee composed of four members each of the Ulster Medical Society and the North of Ireland Branch of the British Medical Association.

No conclusion was reached on the subject that evening; the discussion was adjourned, and nothing more was heard of it until 1894.

ANDREW MCCONNELL, L.R.C.P.&S.Edin., was president for 1889-90. Dr. McConnell differed from most of his predecessors in office, inasmuch as he was a general practitioner pure and simple. He was, however, on the visiting staff of the Belfast Union Infirmary. He took as the subject of his presidential address the work of his daily routine, with special reference to drunkenness and impurity. He had, in the previous year, out of eight thousand patients in the Infirmary, *treated* four hundred lock cases, and a hundred cases of delirium tremens, so that his remarks were based on his direct observations on a wide series of cases.

During Dr. McConnell's year of office a sum of fifty pounds was allocated for the purchasing of "new and standard works" for the Society's library.

The Notification of Infectious Diseases Bill was before Parliament at this time, and the Society, at a meeting held on November 6, 1889, passed the following resolutions unanimously: "That this Society approves of the application of the Notification of Infectious Diseases Bill to Belfast, but is of opinion that before this is done, suitable accommodation should be provided for the reception of patients. They are also of the opinion that the carrying out of the Act should rest solely with the Superintendent Medical Officer of Health for the city."\*

At a further meeting a resolution was passed "that the Ulster Medical Society should memorialize the Lord Lieutenant to change the Bill so that the Notification of Infectious Diseases Act should be carried out by the Superintendent Medical Officer of Health for the city."

SIR ALEXANDER DEMPSEY, M.D., was president during the session 1890-1. Sir Alexander was born in 1852 at Coldagh, near Ballymoney. He was educated at St. Malachy's College, Belfast; Queen's College, Galway; and the Catholic Univer-

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\* The Act as first framed made notification to the dispensary doctors by the private practitioners, and it was held that this would be a fruitful source of friction.

sity Medical School, Dublin. He graduated M.D. in the old Queen's University of Ireland in 1874, and began practice in Belfast soon afterwards. He was knighted for his many public services, including his work on the Royal Commission which investigated the 1886 riots in Belfast; for his work as a member of visiting committee of the Belfast Prison; for his active part in the settlement of the university question in Ireland, and for his public services as a physician and gynaecologist in the Mater Infirmorum Hospital, Belfast. He died on July 18, 1920.

The inauguration of post-graduate courses of instruction was proposed by Dr. Burdon during Sir Alexander Dempsey's year of office. It was thought that the scheme as proposed was not sufficiently mature, and a decision was deferred. At a later date the subject was again raised, and Dr. Burdon proposed: "That the Society approves of a movement having in view the institution of post-graduate courses of lectures under its auspices, and pledges itself to promote their success in every reasonable way, more especially by granting the use of its room free of rent to lecturers and their classes." This resolution was considered too wide in its bearing, and a small committee was appointed to "inquire into the subject, and, if it is found feasible, to formulate a scheme and present it to the Society." It was also during Sir Alexander's session that a report came from the Council "that it would be to the advantage of this Society if, during the session, we invited some distinguished member of the profession to address us on some important subject." This recommendation was approved, and Dr. Lindsay moved "that Professor Gairdner of Glasgow be invited to deliver an address to this Society during the session." This was passed unanimously.

At the same meeting the report from the committee regarding post-graduate teaching was considered. It stated:—

- (1) That the project is highly commendable.
- (2) That if aided by the support and co-operation of the members of the Society it is not only feasible, but also likely to prove eminently useful.
- (3) That the method of instruction should include provision for a considerable amount of clinical demonstration.
- (4) That the most suitable time of year for the course of instruction would be from the middle of May until middle of July.
- (5) That with a view of enlisting the interest of the profession in the scheme, a committee should be appointed by the Ulster Medical Society, with instructions to arrange for a few extra meetings of the Society during the above-named period, and to select lecturers competent to supply their audiences at those meetings with accurate information as to the latest advances in theory and practice of some important branch of medicine.

The report was passed. From this period onward the practice of reading formal papers, rather than merely discussing clinical cases, became common; pathological specimens continued to be shown.

Dr. Gairdner of Glasgow gave the first visiting lecture before the Society on April 22, 1891, taking as his subject "Some Fallacies and Errors in the Estimate of New Drugs." This lecture, the minutes read, was "treated in a masterly manner, and was listened to throughout with evident interest by all present." No other details of this lecture have been preserved.

Dr. Whitla gave a reception in honour of Dr. Gairdner, at which sixty-three members and guests attended.

HENRY O'NEILL, M.D., was president during session 1891-2. He was born in 1853, and died on May 16, 1914. Dr. O'Neill was one of the most striking personalities of his day. He was born at Crosnacreevy, Castlereagh, County Down, and was a lineal descendant of the O'Neill family of Dungannon. He became an apprentice to the well-known chemists, Wheeler & Whitaker, Belfast, but soon entered the old Queen's College, Belfast, and Queen's University of Ireland, where he obtained the degrees of M.D. and M.Ch. in 1877.

While still a student, O'Neill showed himself as a leader of his fellow-men by founding in 1886 the Belfast Medical Students' Association, and was elected its first president.

In 1879 Dr. O'Neill was appointed assistant surgeon to the Royal Hospital, and in 1884 he undertook the work of pathologist. He founded the now defunct Belfast Health Society in 1892, and at his own expense published the "Belfast Health Journal." His interest in public health problems brought him into contact with many grades of society, and as a direct result of these contacts he was elected a councillor of the city as representative of St. George's Ward, and he continued to represent this ward for twenty-five years without a break until the time of his death. Problems of public health continued to interest him, and he presented many reports to the Corporation on the city meat supply, the city milk supply, and the housing of the working classes. So interested was he in these questions that in 1900 he resigned his post of visiting surgeon to the Royal Victoria Hospital. He then attended law terms, and was called to the Irish Bar in 1902, and to the English Bar in 1909. He devoted himself to the service of the working people, and soon had an extensive practice in workmen's compensation cases, and won the famous heat-wave case, the decision of which was confirmed on appeal to the House of Lords. Dr. O'Neill was instrumental in obtaining the erection of a modern and well-equipped public mortuary in Belfast, the old mortuary being a scandal and disgrace. He was also instrumental in having passed new by-laws regarding the laying of sewers and several other matters of public hygiene.

Such a record of work shows the man. No sooner had he reached one goal and gained a prize, when most men would have considered they were entering on their life-work, than he tossed it aside, to see new fields to conquer. He had many openings, first as a successful surgeon, then as a gynæcologist, and later as a pathologist, when he abandoned his advantages and turned to public health, which he made his life-work. But even here he blunted the edge of his force by turning aside to law and then to the Workmen's Compensation Act. However, for twenty-five years he insisted, in season and out of season, on the necessity, on the right of

every individual, to a pure food supply, to a pure milk supply, and to good housing accommodation.

Dr. O'Neill was a voluminous writer, chiefly on sanitary and professional matters; he was a ready and, at times, an eloquent speaker, and while surgeon at the Royal Hospital a clear, emphatic, and definite teacher. He was at his best when sore pressed by opponents and apparently hemmed on all sides without chance of escape; his smiling face would show that he was not disconcerted, and at the psychological moment he would, by a string of statistics, by apt and humorous ridicule, and by a worthy appeal to all the higher feelings of the audience, turn the tables and escape from the net that had been drawn around him. Although he had many opponents, in his varied career, he had few, if any, enemies, but hosts of friends. It is a difficult, if not a hopeless and useless task, to estimate the "what might have been"; but it is surely not an exaggeration to say that if Dr. O'Neill had had more of the judicial and quiet, painstaking faculty, had chosen wisely and well one of the departments of human activity, and had concentrated all his indefatigable energy into his undertaking, he would, with his great physical strength, his rapid and subtle mind, his shrewdness and faculty of reading character, his general capacity, have made himself a power not merely in the town of his adoption, but in the nation itself.

HENRY WHITAKER, M.D., M.R.C.S.Eng., was president in 1892-3. Dr. Whitaker was a general practitioner in Belfast for some years, and a member of the firm of Wheeler & Whitaker, the apothecaries and chemists with which Sir William Whitla and Dr. Henry O'Neill served their apprenticeships as pharmacists. He was for some time a member of the Belfast City Council, and was Medical Officer of Health for Belfast from January 3, 1891, till July 1, 1906. He died on June 4, 1912.

During Dr. Whitaker's year of office it was proposed that a deputation be sent to the City Council, to urge them to adopt the Notification of Infectious Diseases Act, as it had been ascertained that it would be legal to notify the Superintendent Medical Officer of Health instead of the dispensary doctors. The motion was lost. This motion was down in Dr. Henry O'Neill's name.

SIR JOHN WILLIAM BYERS, M.A., M.D., M.A.O., M.Ch., was president for session 1893-4. He was born in Shanghai, China, in 1853, where his father was a missionary, and brought to Belfast by his widowed mother, where she founded Victoria College. His medical education was received at Queen's College, Belfast, where he had a distinguished career, and in the London Hospital. He graduated M.D. in 1878 in the old Queen's University of Ireland. He was appointed to the Chair of Midwifery in his Alma Mater in 1893, and filled many important positions throughout Ulster as a skilful physician and an authority on diseases of women. He was surgeon in charge of the department of gynæcology in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, and for many years senior surgeon to the Belfast Maternity Hospital. He was knighted by Lord Aberdeen in 1906. Sir John's interests were wide and catholic. His leisure hours were devoted to literary pursuits, and he was a recognized authority on the dialects and folk-lore of Ulster. He died after a short illness on September 20, 1920.

Sir John's presidential address was concerned with problems of medical education. He taught that medical men should obtain a sound knowledge of general practice before adopting any speciality. By following this course he thought that the doctor would be less likely to take too narrow a view of a case, a fault often laid at the door of specialists. "We must never forget how closely the different organs of the body are correlated," he said, "and he who from his special training allows himself to think that the only organ to be looked after is the eye, a joint, a uterus, or a liver, will often neither be correct in his diagnosis nor effective in his treatment."

During Sir John Byers's term of office the Society considered, for the second time, the possibility of publishing a local medical journal, and a committee was set up to consider the matter. The committee reported to the Council on February 15, 1894, that "they are favourable to this project of establishing a medical journal for the North of Ireland, and that in order to secure its financial position they recommend that a joint stock company be formed with a small capital."

Apparently this was not considered a financial possibility, for no further reference is made to it in the minutes of the Society.

Another important matter which arose this session was the question of the Society changing its rooms from the Belfast Museum, owing to some difficulties experienced in keeping the Society's medical library private and free from the interference of non-medical persons visiting the museum. New rooms were obtained, where the annual general meeting of the Society was held on July 20, 1894. They were situated on the top flat of 13 Lombard Street.

At this meeting new rules of procedure at the meetings were passed. These were:—

1. Chair to be taken by the president, or in his absence by one of the vice-presidents; and in their absence, a chairman shall be chosen by the meeting.
2. Reading and confirmation of the minutes of previous meeting; reports from Council; balloting for members; proposing new members; notices of motion.
3. The business of the meeting shall, as far as possible, be conducted in the order in which the subjects appear upon the circular (the clinical cases being taken first).
4. Members reading papers or introducing any subject to the Society shall not occupy more than twenty minutes. Speakers other than those whose names appear upon the circular shall be limited to ten minutes.
5. Members addressing the meeting shall do so standing.
  6. Members who have taken part in any discussion shall, if they desire to have their remarks included in the transactions, furnish a written statement to the Society.
7. Pathological, microscopical, and other objects to be exhibited shall be required to be in readiness previous to the time of meeting, in a place set apart for that purpose; and attached to each exhibit shall be a card on which the exhibitor shall

note the points of interest in the case to which he wishes to direct the attention of the members.

BRIGADE-SURGEON F. E. MCFARLAND, L.R.C.P.&S.I., was president during the session 1894-5. Little is known of him except that he had been twenty years in the Army Medical Department, and on settling in Belfast was appointed consulting physician to the Ulster Hospital for Children and Women. Dr. McFarland's year of office was a noteworthy one, for in it the first volume of the Transactions of the Society was published as a separate volume.\* Rules for the library were passed during this session. These were:—

1. The library shall be for the exclusive use of members of the Ulster Medical Society.
2. Every member using the Society's rooms shall enter his name at each visit in a book kept by the caretaker.
3. Each member shall have the privilege of taking two volumes out at the same time.
4. All books taken from the library shall be entered by the borrower in the book kept on the library table for that purpose, and a fine of 2s. 6d. will be imposed for each infraction of this rule.
5. No member shall retain a volume longer than one month, and on its return he may not borrow the same volume till a month be elapsed.
6. Any member retaining a book more than a month shall be fined sixpence per week for such detention, after he has received a notice to the effect that it shall be returned.
7. Periodicals and journals shall be placed on the table when they are published, and none shall be borrowed till the succeeding number is on the table.
8. A suggestion book shall be kept, in which any member may enter the name of any book which he desires to have added to the library.
9. Any member losing or injuring a book shall be required to replace the same.
10. The library shall be under the direction of a committee of five, of which the hon. librarian shall be convener.

PROFESSOR THOMAS SINCLAIR, C.B., M.D., M.Ch., F.R.C.S.Eng., was president in session 1895-6. Although no longer in practice, Professor Sinclair is still with us. He was appointed to the Chair of Surgery in Queen's College, Belfast, in 1886, a position which he held until his retirement in 1923. During the Great War he obtained the rank of colonel in the R.A.M.C., and for his service was awarded the C.B. No man has ever stood in higher regard with his professional brethren than Professor Sinclair, and it is a matter of great joy that he has been able to continue to serve the profession, even in advanced years, as University Representative to the General Medical Council, and as University Representative in the Imperial Parliament since 1923. During the session presided over by Professor Sinclair the hour of meeting was changed to 8.30 p.m., on the motion of Dr. H. L. McKisack.

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\* The Transactions of the Society had been published in the "Quarterly Journal of Medical Science" (Dublin) since 1873 until this date.

During this session an attempt was made to form a closer relationship with the Northern Ireland Branch of the British Medical Association, by the issue of a yearly volume of the combined transactions of the two societies. This arrangement was ratified at a meeting of the Ulster Medical Society held February 6, 1896. The minute reads:—

"The following report from the Council of the Society was adopted:

" The Council report that a joint meeting of the Committees representing the North of Ireland Branch of the British Medical Association with the Ulster Medical Society was held on January 17, 1896, and it was agreed to submit the following recommendation to the members of the two societies: "That the Northern Ireland Branch of the British Medical Association and the Ulster Medical Society pay equal proportions of the expense of printing the Transactions, estimated at twenty-five pounds; that a small Journals Committee be appointed by the two societies; that the title be 'Transactions of the Ulster Medical Society and North of Ireland Branch of the British Medical Association,' and that the Transactions be issued yearly as soon as possible after the annual meetings of the societies."

The first volume of this series was published for the session 1895-6, but the arrangement does not appear to have been a success, for only three further volumes were issued, one for 1896-7, one for 1897-8, and one for 1898-9. The Transactions of the Ulster Medical Society were published alone for the session 1900-1 until session 1931-2, when they were replaced by a quarterly periodical known as the *ULSTER MEDICAL JOURNAL*.

JOHNSON SYMINGTON, M.D., F.R.C.S.Eng., F.R.S., was president in session 1896-7. Born in 1851, he died February 23, 1924. He graduated in the University of Edinburgh, M.B. with first-class honours, in 1877. He was demonstrator of anatomy at Edinburgh University for two years, and in 1879 became lecturer in anatomy at Minto House, Edinburgh. He was called to the Chair of Anatomy in Queen's College, Belfast, in 1893, a post which he filled until his retirement in 1918.

In Belfast he was in his time the greatest power in the Medical School. He was elected a member of the Senate of the College soon after his appointment, and in 1901 became registrar, while under the Irish University Act of 1908 he was appointed one of the commissioners to frame its statutes. He was one of the honorary secretaries of the Better Equipment Fund, and the new buildings of the University erected at that time were very much under his care. The University has indeed cause to revere the memory of the man who never spared himself in its interests.

Symington was a man of action; he was full of enthusiasm for his work, and what was most characteristic of him was his capacity for working far into the night, and appearing first in his department the following morning as fresh and full of enthusiasm as he had been the previous day. He was the greatest topographical anatomist probably of all time. During his life he published nearly sixty articles, the most important of which were concerned with cranio-cerebral topography and the abdominal viscera. His larger works were "The Anatomy of the Child," which will remain for all time one of the classics of anatomy; "An Atlas

of Skiagrams of the Teeth," volumes in Quain's Anatomy on "Splanchnology" and the "Nervous System." During the Great War he published a "Cross-Section Atlas of Human Anatomy," which was used extensively in all the great military hospitals of that time as an aid to the localization of foreign bodies, in the wounded.

Symington was the first teacher of anatomy in the British Isles to have installed in his department an X-ray apparatus exclusively for the study and teaching of anatomy, a lead which is now, after some twenty years, being followed by all anatomists to-day.

He was one of the most forceful personalities ever on the staff at Queen's, and no student who passed through his classes will ever forget him, with his direct straightforwardness to praise or to condemn, and all look back with pride at that happy period spent under his stimulating direction.

The Symington Prize of Queen's University, Belfast, awarded on the recommendation of the Council of the Anatomical Society of Great Britain and Ireland, perpetuates his memory among those who carry on the work which he loved so much.

At the beginning of the session 1896-7 the Society vacated the Lombard Street premises. These had been situated on the top flat of a high building, and as there was no elevator installed, the climb up some six flights of stairs involved too great exertion on the part of the more elderly members of the Society. It was decided, therefore, to make a change in the Society's house, and a new agreement having been reached with the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society, rooms were opened once more in the Museum, College Square North.

The terms of the agreement are given in a minute dated July 9, 1896. They are as follows: "The Council accept the offer of the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society for the use of their premises from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. from October 1 to June 30, and from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the remaining months of the year for the library, and the use of a room for six meetings in the year (with 7s. 6d. for any additional meetings), at a yearly rent of £25. The Natural History and Philosophical Society to supply light and heat. The library to be kept locked, and the names of members using it to be registered."

At the first meeting of the session held on November 5, 1896, a resolution was passed urging the City Council to adopt the Notification of Infectious Diseases Act in Belfast, as the notification to Poor Law officers had been changed to the Public Health Department of the City Council, and as a fever hospital was about to be built at Purdysburn.

The following statement was forwarded to the City Council: "The Ulster Medical Society consider the present time opportune for renewing the efforts they have made from time to time to support the sanitary authorities in their endeavours to effect various improvements in the public health of the city.

"The members of this Society have always heartily approved of the principle of notification of infectious diseases (for example, on December 4, 1889, they passed

a resolution approving of notification under suitable conditions). They had, however, always foreseen insuperable difficulties in the practical working of the Act under the conditions hitherto existing, which were, firstly, infectious diseases to be notified to officials of the Poor Law Board, whilst the executive sanitary authority was the Public Health Department of the City Council. In view of this fact, our Society memorialized the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in January, 1890, to have the notification placed in the hands of the Medical Superintendent of Health for the city. The second unfavourable circumstance was the absence of suitable accommodation for the treatment and isolation of cases of fever after notification. On these two grounds the members of this Society had objected to the immediate adoption in Belfast of the Notification of Infectious Diseases Act. The removal of these difficulties by, firstly, the change in the authority to whom notification should be made, and secondly, the proposed erection of a fever hospital, enabled the Society to heartily recommend to the City Council the adoption of the Notification of Infectious Diseases Act in Belfast as soon as possible."

PROFESSOR JAMES ALEXANDER LINDSAY, M.A., M.D., F.R.C.P.Lond., was elected president for session 1897-8. He was born in 1856 in Fintona, County Tyrone, a descendant of the physician, Alexander Lindsay, who was killed during the defence of Derry in 1688. He died on December 15, 1931. Distinguished as a physician, teacher, author, and scholar, he probably had a greater influence on the Belfast Medical School than any other figure of his time. He was a man of wide culture far beyond the confines of his profession, and he contributed in a material degree to the fame of his university, adding lustre to its history as one who always strove for the highest ideals of his profession. In his earlier days he was an enthusiastic golfer, and he presented the first golf trophy to the Society, the Lindsay Cup. He was a former secretary to the Society, and shortly before his death he was elected an Honorary Fellow. Many of the philanthropic and educational institutions of Belfast had the benefit of his energy and advice. In the Royal Victoria Hospital he served as a physician as well as chairman of its Board of Management, and he was also chairman of the Maternity Hospital. His influence had much to do with the amalgamation which resulted in the new Royal Maternity Hospital, while his services in the foundation of the Dental School at the Royal Victoria Hospital were outstanding. He was also a member of the Board of Governors of the Methodist College, Belfast, and of the Belfast Society for Promoting Knowledge. He lived a full life, sacrificing himself in the interests of the community, and his name will ever remain green so long as the Belfast School of Medicine and the Ulster Medical Society remain in being.

JOSEPH NELSON, M.D., L.R.C.S.I., was elected to serve as president for the session 1898-9. He was born in Downpatrick in 1840, and died in Belfast on August 31, 1910. Nelson was a great personality, bordering almost on the eccentric; even as a boy he showed his originality and strength of character, and on one occasion shocked his master at school by submitting an essay entitled "A Defence of Cock-fighting." He entered Queen's College, Belfast, as a medical student, but as soon as he had successfully passed his second professional examination he sailed

for Italy, where he obtained a commission in Garibaldi's "Regimento Inglese" to fight for Italy's freedom. Garibaldi afterwards presented Nelson with a sword, and the King of Italy decorated him with two medals. On his return to Belfast, Nelson recommenced his studies and graduated M.D. of the old Royal University of Ireland in 1863. But the spirit of adventure surged within him, and he sailed for India, where he obtained an appointment as surgeon on a tea plantation, and later, it is said, he became a tea-planter on his own account. The life in India began to pall, and in 1878 he made up his mind to return to Belfast; and as he had obtained a large experience in diseases of the eye while surgeon on the tea plantation, he decided to specialize as an ophthalmic surgeon. But before settling in Belfast he visited Vienna, where he worked as assistant to Professor Fuchs, and later with Professor F. R. von Arlt. In 1889 he came to Belfast, and two years later was appointed the first ophthalmic surgeon to the Royal Hospital, where he held classes for students at 8 a.m. daily. Dr. Nelson was a man of great personal charm and generous to a degree. As president of the Ulster Medical Society he entertained the members to dinner in his own house in Wellington Place, in sections, week by week, during his term of office.

JAMES GRAHAM, M.D., M.Ch., was president for session 1899-1900. He was born in Boardmills, County Down, in 1852, and died June 15, 1932. Dr. Graham was for many years in general practice in Belfast, where he was an outstanding figure both in professional and civic life. His first entry into public affairs was in 1885, when he was appointed to the Lagan Pollution Committee, and in 1888 he became an alderman of the Belfast City Council. He was soon after elected chairman of the Public Health Committee of the Council, when he took an active part in the establishment of a municipal hospital for infectious diseases, which was built at Purdysburn. In 1905 he was appointed coroner for the city, and during the years in which he filled that office he conducted innumerable inquiries with dignity and tact. He brought to bear an intimate knowledge of medical science on many a knotty problem, and his urbanity, *savoir faire*, and good sense successfully surmounted many difficulties. He could make allowances for the frailties of human nature and, where some would have administered reproof and punishment, often met the case with a few words of kindly and helpful advice. At the time of his death he was a link between the pre-antiseptic and aseptic periods of surgery, and often recounted his experiences as the first medical man in Belfast to use carbolic acid as an antiseptic. This substance was unobtainable in Belfast when he first began practice, and he had to write to Edinburgh to obtain supplies.

SIR WILLIAM HENRY THOMPSON, M.D., F.R.C.S.Eng., M.R.C.P.I., was president for the session 1900-1. Sir William was the first Professor of Physiology at Queen's University, Belfast. He was the author of many original papers on physiological subjects, but he will be best remembered for his translation of Pawlow's work on the Digestive Glands. He left Belfast to become King's Professor of Medicine in Trinity College, Dublin. He was drowned in the Irish Sea when the R.M.S. "Leinster" was torpedoed in 1917 during the Great War.

SIR WILLIAM WHITLA, M.A., M.D., D.Sc, LL.D., was elected to serve a second period as president of the Society for 1901-2.

This is possibly the most important year in the history of the Society, for it was during it that the first steps were taken to build a medical institute for its special use.

Trouble had again arisen with the Philosophical Society members, the latter interfering with the medical books and periodicals, and the Council decided once more to seek a new abode. A sub-committee for this purpose was appointed on October 14, 1901, and whatever happened at its meetings is unknown, as no reference is made to it in the minutes either of the Society or of its Council. But at a meeting held on November 5, 1901, the first reference to the new building is made. The minute reads: "The changes in the rules of membership of the Society which will be necessary in order that the generous offer of Professor Whitla to erect and equip a building for the sole use of the members, were under consideration, and also the question of the site of the proposed building."

A site for this building is mentioned in the Council minute book of December 13, 1901. It reads as follows: "Professor Whitla reported that a site with fifty feet of frontage towards College Square North could be obtained from the Governors of the Royal Academical Institution for the erection of the proposed Medical Institute at an annual rental of sixty pounds. The Council were unanimously of the opinion that the offer should be accepted, and the secretary was instructed to draw up a report of Council to that effect to be presented to the next ordinary meeting of the Society."

The next ordinary meeting was held on January 10, 1902, and Professor Redfern proposed the following resolution: "That we, the members of the Ulster Medical Society, accept the very generous offer of the president (Professor Whitla) to build and equip a Medical Institute for the Society." This resolution was seconded by Colonel MacFarland, and passed with acclamation.

Dr. Dempsey then proposed: "That we, the members of the Ulster Medical Society, accept the offer of the Governors of the Royal Academical Institution of a site for the proposed Medical Institution in College Square North at an annual rental of fifty pounds." This was seconded by Professor Lindsay and passed.

The birth of a new era in the history of the Society thus took place. Work was at once begun, and Professor Redfern laid the foundation stone in April, 1902. Rapid progress was made in the building of the Institute, and His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Dudley, formally declared it open on November 26 following, in the presence of a large assembly, with Sir John Campbell, the president for session 1902-3, presiding over the proceedings.

In the afternoon, after the formal opening, the Countess of Dudley unveiled, within the Institute, a stained glass window erected to the memory of Dr. William Smyth, of Burtonport, County Donegal.

The cause of Dr. Smyth's death was as follows: "In October, 1901, an outbreak of typhus fever occurred on the island of Arranmore, County Donegal. Dr. Smyth,

though suffering from a poisoned wound, rowed daily alone from the mainland to the cabins on the island, carrying with him suitable food and medicine for the fever-stricken victims. So great was the terror of infection that he could procure no assistance, till Dr. Brendan McCarthy nobly came to his aid, and these two heroic men carried the poor patients into the only procurable boat and rowed them to Burtonport. The boat had not been in the water for a couple of years, and it sank a short time after landing. Dr. Smyth was smitten with typhus a few days afterwards, and died on November 19, 1901. His death, under the circumstances, aroused a great deal of sympathy, and a fund was opened and liberally subscribed to for the support of his widow and orphans. Though he never had a personal acquaintance with Dr. Smyth, Sir William Whitla, ever an admirer of noble deeds, as he was ever the sympathizer with every good cause, recognized that the action of his colleague, although performed from a sense of duty, was nevertheless heroic, and so regarding it, he erected the memorial window, placing it above the fireplace in the reading-room that it must always be in view, ever preaching the solemn and eloquent, though silent, sermon of the Institute, of love to our fellow-men, of devotion to duty, and of self-sacrifice."

Sir William said at the opening: "When I saw it possible that I could erect this building, and so carry out a day-dream of years, I set about planning how I might in it symbolize in art, some noble precept or example to our profession, and leave it here as a help and encouragement to those coming after—something that a weary brother seeing may take heart again. My first thought was to erect a tablet bearing a record of the life-work of the four immortals of our Society—Andrews, Gordon, Henry MacCormac, and Redfern—whose portraits are now cut in the stone bosses on the outside of the building. After much thought I decided on a subject which you are about to see, and which has been so successfully treated and carried out by the great artist, Swainê Bowne. It is placed in its odd position on the chimney-piece, with the building so planned that it must be always on view, ever preaching the solemn and eloquent, though silent, sermon of the Institute, of love to our fellow-men, of devotion to duty, and of self-sacrifice."

A beautiful bronze tablet in the entrance hall bears the following inscription:

"This building was erected, equipped, and presented to the Ulster Medical Society by Sir William Whitla, M.D. The foundation stone was laid by Professor Peter Redfern, M.D., on April 12, 1902, and the building was declared open by His Excellency the Earl of Dudley, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, on November 26 following."

The first meeting of the Society in the New Medical Institute was held on December 11, 1903, at 8.30 p.m., and since that date the meetings have been held regularly from October to April on alternate Thursdays.

SIR JOHN CAMPBELL, M.A., M.D., M.Ch., LL.D., F.R.C.S.Eng., who was president during this important session of 1902-3, was born in Templepatrick in 1862, and died on August 31, 1929. Sir John was educated at the Royal Belfast Academical Institution, and afterwards the Belfast Queen's College. He graduated

B.A. and later M.A. in the Royal University of Ireland with first-class honours and exhibition in both degrees. His undergraduate studies were marked with the same high distinctions, gaining scholarships in pathology, therapeutics, medicine, etc. He graduated M.D., M.Ch., M.A.O. in 1887; became M.R.C.S.Eng. in 1888, and F.R.C.S.Eng. in 1891. Then, after a period of study in Paris, Vienna, Munich, Heidelberg, and Bonn, he settled in Belfast, where his interests were early shown to be associated with the speciality which he afterwards made his own: midwifery and gynaecology. He was appointed a general surgeon to the Belfast Hospital for Sick Children in 1891, but at the close of 1892 he retired from this position on his appointment as surgeon to the Samaritan Hospital for Women, Belfast.

During the Great War he acted for a time as chief surgeon to No. 5 British Red Cross Hospital, Wimereux, France, and he was knighted in 1925.

Sir John was one of the outstanding personalities of his day. He was a man of great ability, even shown as a student, when he acted as locum tenens for the Professor of Natural History in Queen's College, Belfast. He commanded the admiration and respect of a wide circle of friends, and was elected president of the Royal University Graduates' Association, and a member of Senate of the old Royal University. He was also elected chairman of Convocation of Queen's University of Belfast. He was the author of many articles on surgery and gynaecology, as well as two textbooks: "Obstetrics and Gynaecology" and "Clinical Gynaecology."

To the general public Sir John was a man of few words, downright in his manner and reserved. But to his friends he was a man of great charm and kindness.

Many distinguished physicians and surgeons have occupied the presidential chair since Sir William Whitla presented the Society with its present home. Most of them, happily, are still with us, but a few have passed over that brook from which no traveller returns: J. Lorrain-Smith, M.D., who afterwards became Professor of Pathology in the University of Edinburgh, was president in 1904-5; he died on April 18, 1931, aged 63 years. John McCaw, M.D., the first physician in Belfast to specialize in diseases of children, and the author of two books on this subject, one of which passed into five editions, was president in 1907-8; he died February 22, 1924, aged 76 years. Sir Peter Reilly O'Connell, M.D., D.L., who was the moving spirit in the inauguration and the building of the Mater Infirmorum Hospital, Belfast, was president in 1910-1; he died in 1927, aged 44 years. H. L. McKisack, M.D., F.R.C.P.Lond., one of the leading consultant physicians of his day, was president in 1911-2; he died on March 12, 1928, aged 69 years. R. W. Leslie, M.D., for many years physician to the Ulster Hospital for Children and Women, was president in 1912-3; he died September 22, 1931, aged 69 years. Robert Campbell, M.B., F.R.C.S.Eng., whose memory the Campbell Oration keeps green, was president 1916-7; he died 1925, aged 66 years. James Colville, M.D., for many years one of the leading general practitioners in Belfast, president in 1918-9; he died in 1933. Andrew Fullerton, M.D., M.Ch., F.R.C.S.I., F.A.C.S.(Hon.), Professor of Surgery at Queen's University, Belfast, and an urological surgeon with an international reputation, was president in 1919-20; he died May 22, 1934,

aged 66 years. J. S. Darling, M.D., for many years the leading provincial general practitioner, was president in 1924-5; he died November 8, 1927, aged 71 years. These have passed from us, but their names are still fresh in our memory, as ornaments to our profession, leaders in our discussions, and originators of new and better methods in our campaign against disease, infirmity, and pain.

The Society has become a great force in the community, its membership is slowly but steadily increasing, the meetings are better attended, and for the last five years, instead of yearly transactions, the Society boasts of a quarterly journal of its own, the ULSTER MEDICAL JOURNAL, controlled by an editorial board of its own members, and with a circulation which extends far beyond the confines of Belfast and Northern Ireland.

This History of the Ulster Medical Society is based on a study of the following:—

The Minute Book of the Belfast Medical Society.

The Minute Book of the Belfast Clinical and Pathological Society.

The Minute Books of the Ulster Medical Society.

The published Transactions of the Ulster Medical Society.

Reports and Obituary Notices published in the "Quarterly Journal of Medical Science" (Dublin),

"The Lancet," and "The British Medical Journal."

Reports and Obituary Notices published in "The Belfast News-Letter."

Private letters and documents kindly lent by relatives of deceased presidents of the Society.