

Provost, Colleagues, Ladies & Gentlemen,

The Stokes family is one of the most remarkable Irish intellectual dynasties and it has a long association with this College. William Stokes, one of the most distinguished members of the family, was regius professor of physic in the middle of the nineteenth century. He was one of the founders of the internationally famous Irish School of Medicine and his name is remembered in eponyms still used in hospitals all over the world.

The first Stokes whom I have been able to associate with this institution was also named William. His name appears in an extract from the minutes of a meeting of the Dublin City Assembly, held in January 1576, when it was decided that the garden in the former All Hallows Monastery occupied by William Stouks together with a house belonging to Edward Peppard should be requisitioned to provide accommodation for victims of the plague which was raging in Dublin at that time. It was ordered, and I quote:

“That the great gardinge in Allhallowes nowe in the occupacion of William Stouks shoemaker, is appointed to buylde lodgings in for the reliefe of the infected; also, that Mr Edward Peppard his house ther, and the steapell bee in lycke sorte taken for lycke use as aforesaide....”

The references to the steeple and gate-house indicate that these were the former monastic buildings, which were granted by Dublin Corporation in 1592 for the new Trinity College. I have been unable to establish a link between this William Stokes, shoemaker, and William Stokes the regius professor of medicine, but I like to believe that the

man who cultivated his garden here in 1576 was an ancestor of the distinguished members of the Stokes family who have cultivated art, literature and science within the walls of this University over many years.

Gabriel Stokes

William Stokes, the physician, was descended from Gabriel Stokes, who was an instrument maker and an engineer. He was born in Dublin in 1682 and he was baptised in the Church of St Nicholas Within where it was recorded in the parish register that he was the son of 'John Stokes, a taylor within the White Lyon'.

Gabriel Stokes wrote several works on engineering including a book on hydrostatics and another on a scheme to supply the city of Dublin with piped water using hydrostatic principles. He played an important role in the development of the port of Dublin and he was appointed deputy surveyor-general. He was also an instrument maker and there is a sundial which was made by him in the garden of the Provost's house. He had two sons John and Gabriel both of whom were scholars and fellows of Trinity College. John became regius professor of Greek and the famous mathematician Sir George Gabriel Stokes was his grandson. The second son, Gabriel, became Professor of Mathematics at Trinity and later in his career he was appointed chancellor of Waterford cathedral. His eldest son Whitley was the father of William Stokes.

Whitley Stokes

Whitley Stokes was born in Waterford in 1763 and he entered Trinity when he was sixteen years old. He was elected a fellow in 1788 and five years later he was awarded the degrees of M.B. and M.D. His

ability can be judged from the positions which he held at different times during his life time. These included Donegall lecturer in mathematics, King's professor of the practice of medicine, professor of natural history and regius professor of physic in Trinity. He also held the chair of medicine in the Royal College of Surgeons for ten years and he worked as a physician in the Meath Hospital. Whitley Stokes was a founder member of the Society of the United Irishmen in 1791. He withdrew from the movement before it became a secret society in 1794 because he disapproved of the use of physical force to achieve political objectives. However, this did not save him from censure during the famous visitation of Lord Clare to the college in 1798. Wolfe Tone described Whitley Stokes "as the very best man I have ever known", but he thought that he displayed "an extravagant anxiety for the lives of others".

Early Education

Whitley Stokes married Mary Anne Picknell, the daughter of a wealthy landowner with estates in County Armagh and County Dublin, and they lived at 16 Harcourt Street. William was their second son and he was born in July 1804. He was educated at home in Harcourt Street and at his father's country house in Ballinteer at the foot of the Dublin mountains. As a child he developed an interest in poetry and he read and enjoyed the works of Walter Scott. As he grew older he joined his father on rambles through the Dublin and Wicklow mountains studying geology and botany. It was probably during this period that the close bond between father and son was formed, a bond which would last throughout their lives. At Harcourt Street William began to meet some of the most brilliant men of the time, such as Henry Grattan, Charles Kendal Bushe, John Philpot Curran and the painters James Arthur

O'Connor and James Petrie. The Rev. John Walker, a fellow of Trinity College, was another regular visitor at 16 Harcourt Street. In 1804 Walker had founded the "Walkerites", a Calvinistic sect and Whitley Stokes became one of his followers. Members of the sect followed the advice of St Paul to "salute one another with a holy kiss". Walker disapproved of the religious ethos in Trinity, which, according to him, was not biblical enough. As a consequence, Whitley Stokes did not allow his son William to take an arts degree in the University, a decision which had a life long affect on the latter. Instead, William was tutored at home in classics and mathematics by the Rev. Walker.

Medical Studies

In 1822 William enrolled at the College of Surgeons where his father was professor of medicine and he also studied chemistry in the medical school at Trinity. He attended the Meath hospital, where, shortly before, Robert Graves had returned from his period of study on the continent and had joined the staff. William Stokes became one of his first students. From the Meath Stokes went to Glasgow where he studied chemistry for two years before proceeding to Edinburgh to complete his medical studies. There he published, while still a student, a treatise on the use of the stethoscope which had been invented some years earlier by the French physician René Laennec. At the time the stethoscope was ridiculed by many established physicians and surgeons but Stokes immediately saw its potential. In August 1825 Stokes graduated M.D. from the University of Edinburgh, and in the autumn of the same year he returned to Dublin where he was admitted a licentiate of the College of Physicians.

Meath Hospital

Robert Graves had been impressed by Stokes as a student and he was also anxious to promote the use of the stethoscope in Dublin. Whitley Stokes was prepared to resign his position in the Meath in favour of his son. A strategy was devised which resulted in the appointment of William Stokes as physician to the Meath Hospital in 1826.

Stokes was twenty-two when he was appointed to this onerous position and his "senior" colleague Robert Graves was twenty-nine! Graves had introduced bedside clinical teaching at the Meath and he now had an enthusiastic collaborator in Stokes. Together they would bring about a revolution in the teaching and practise of medicine. Their system of clinical instruction became so well known that students attended their clinics from Britain, the Continent and North America. They were not the first to introduce the practise of bedside teaching but they did it so consistently and so well that it was gradually adopted by teachers elsewhere.

Epidemic of Typhus

In the autumn and winter of 1826 the physicians and surgeons at the Meath had to cope with the victims of an epidemic of typhus in Dublin. An extract from one of Stokes' letters at the time describes the appalling impact of the epidemic on the city.

"Were you in Dublin just now you would be shocked at the distress, aggravated by disease, under which the lower classes are labouring. They are literally lying in the streets under fever, turned by force out of their wretched lodgings, their bed the cold ground and the sky their only roof. We have now 240 cases in the Meath Hospital of fever, and

yet we are daily obliged to refuse admittance to crowds of miserable objects labouring under the severest form of the disease. God help the poor! I often wonder why any of them who can afford it should remain in this land of poverty and misrule.”

Whole families were often brought to the hospital and such was the fear of contagion that people were frequently brought in wheelbarrows which were over-turned at the entrance, the patient being unceremoniously dumped on the ground while the bearer fled as quickly as possible. The lives of the doctors caring for these patients were at considerable risk.

Marriage

In 1827 Graves and Stokes wrote a short book on the interesting clinical cases on their wards primarily for the benefit of their students. It was entitled *Clinical Reports of the Medical Cases in the Meath Hospital* and it was dedicated to the physician John Cheyne. In 1828 Stokes married Mary Black, the daughter of a prominent Glasgow merchant. Stokes took his bride to live in his father's home at Harcourt Street . After three years they moved to York Street and finally to 5 Merrion Square. Stokes first met Mary when he was a student in Glasgow. The relationship was a very loving one and Stokes drew great strength from it over the years. The manuscript library here has a number of love poems which Stokes wrote to Mary. “Yet do not harshly judge” he pleads in one of these poems as he asks her to forgive his apparent indifference during the bouts of depression which afflicted him from time to time.

At this period Stokes was publishing his lectures in the *London Medical and Surgical Journal*. These were lectures which he delivered at the Meath Hospital and the Park Street School. They were subsequently edited by a Dr. John Bell and published in Philadelphia in 1840 under the title *Clinical Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Medicine*. It remained for many years a student textbook in the American schools of medicine.

Diseases of the Chest

In 1834 he became editor of the Dublin Journal of Medical Science and a year later he began working on his book *Diseases of the Chest*. Within a short time his health began to break down and he suffered from severe headaches and depression. He was persuaded to take a complete break and he left with four friends on a month long continental tour. They travelled through Holland and Belgium where Stokes enjoyed the works of John of Bruges, Van Eyck and Rubens and then they followed the Rhine to its source in the Alps. He benefited enormously from this journey and throughout his life he would travel regularly to the continent, to Germany, Austria, France and Spain, whenever he needed a break from his gruelling work schedule.

On returning to Dublin he completed the work on his book which was published in 1837. This work was very influential in its time and it is still admired particularly for its descriptions of emphysema and bronchiectasis. It was translated into German within a year by Dr. Gerhard Von den Busch and published in Bremen.

Cultural Interests

Merrion Square was at the heart of fashionable Dublin society in the nineteenth century. At the time when Stokes lived there it provided the residences of the leading barristers, bankers and doctors and of members of the aristocracy. Several of Stokes's friends and peers lived on the square, including Robert Graves, Dominic Corrigan and William Wilde - the latter living only a few doors away from Stokes. The home of the Stokes family at no 5 became a centre for all those interested in art and literature and Saturday evenings were generally devoted to music and conversation. His children were encouraged to develop intellectual and artistic skills. One of William's sons, Whitley, became an influential Celtic scholar and a daughter, Margaret, became an accomplished artist and antiquarian. There is an amusing short play in the manuscript library here by the former Provost J H Jellet, which pokes fun at the intellectual reputation of the Stokes family. It is entitled *The Sisters-in-law* and it describes the efforts of Whitley's wife to impress the Stokes family when she first meets them. Given the reputation of the family, one can empathise with her as she stood in the hallway of 5 Merrion Square for the first time and pleaded with her husband to stay by her side:

“O Whitley, don't leave me. I am so frightened. I can't meet them without you - indeed I can't. I know they are so learned and they will despise me utterly. I don't know any long words except about half a dozen, and they won't do for everything. But if you were here, I should not have to talk at all.”

Stokes went to the theatre regularly often going more than once to see a play which he liked. He was an active member of a Shakespearean group which met regularly to read the works of the playwright to each other. The group was started by the Rev. Robert Perceval Graves and it included among the readers John Kells Ingram, John Pentland Mahaffy, George Salmon, Edward Dowden and Sir Samuel and Lady Ferguson. Stokes also numbered several artists among his friends including George Petrie and Frederic William Burton. According to Mahaffy,

“On the topics which he touched, he made all those around him rise above themselves, and do greater and better work. Thus the remarkable researches of George Petrie both on the antiquities and the music of Ireland would never have seen the light but for the constant pressure and encouragement of William Stokes, who, though he was neither a musician nor an artist, felt the beauty of artistic work with a keenness and a tenderness beyond the depth of ordinary men.”

He loved both classical music and folk music. He had been introduced to the Irish melodies by his friend George Petrie but he was also charmed by the folk music of other countries. On one occasion he was on holiday with his son in the Austrian Tyrol when they halted at a village. After dinner a band of Bohemian Gypsies commenced to play national melodies outside the inn. Stokes was delighted and he rushed out and sat among the musicians. He ordered a generous supply of refreshments for everyone with the result that the concert went on into the early hours of the morning.

The mathematician, Sir George Gabriel Stokes has left us an account of a musical event at 5 Merrion Square when William Stokes again got rather carried away!

“I went with Lizzie to Dr Stokes’s on Saturday night. Dr Stokes had a small party, not indeed small in all, but about half of it was made up of his own large family. There were there Madame Morosini, an Italian, who sings and plays beautifully, and Mlle C. Madame Morosini played, but did not sing as she had a cold. Mlle C., who does not speak English, sings most beautifully. Dr Stokes was in great spirits, and once when Mlle C. was singing some Neapolitan ballads, accompanying herself on the piano, he got so charmed that, beginning with moving his hands in time he ended by taking hold of Mr Otway, a barrister, no chicken in years, and skipping about the room,....”

Stokes was in general a very tolerant individual but he was not very impressed by the philosopher Thomas Carlyle when he met him during his visit to Dublin in 1849. The feeling appears to have been reciprocated to judge by Carlyle’s account of a dinner which he attended at Stokes’ home in Merrion Square. Petrie and Burton were among the other guests. According to Carlyle:

“Talk, in spite of my endeavours took on an Irish-versus-English character; wherein, as I really have no respect for Ireland as it now is and has been, it was impossible for me to be popular! Good humour in general, tho’ not without effort always, did maintain itself. But Stokes,

“the son of a United Irishman” as I heard, grew more and more gloomy.”

Stokes, on the other hand, thought Carlyle was a bore and he resented his arrogance and his “unconcealed contempt for everything and everyone in the country in which he was an honoured guest.”

Stokes, Mahaffy and Oscar Wilde

When John Pentland Mahaffy was a young student in Dublin he came to the attention of Stokes who often invited him to his country home in Howth. Mahaffy later recalled that Stokes did not sit at the head of the table and carve like the traditional Victorian father; rather he devoted himself fully to the brilliant conversation of his family circle. Stokes, according to one of his sons, was a gifted conversationalist and a very able story teller whose descriptions were: “examples of word-painting such as are seldom met with.”

On one occasion when Mahaffy was dining with Stokes at his country home in Howth an expert at the table was boring his audience on his subject, Stokes turned to Mahaffy and said with emphasis, “There is one golden rule of conversation - know nothing accurately”

Mahaffy quoted Stokes and elaborated on his advice in his book *Principles of the Art of Conversation*, but he went further claiming that it was justifiable to lie for the sake of a good story. Oscar Wilde agreed with this in his review of Mahaffy’s work which he entitled *Aristotle at Afternoon Tea*. In his own famous essay, *The Decay of Lying*, which was written shortly afterwards, Wilde outpaced both Stokes and

Mahaffy by a considerable distance when he boldly declared: "Lying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of art".

Oscar Wilde was greatly influenced by the Stokes family. Stokes was a close friend of Wilde's father and an enthusiast for conversation, theatre, literature and art. Stokes wrote a number of articles on art for the *Dublin University Magazine* over several years. In these he condemned the neglect of contemporary artists and he appealed for a greater emphasis on aesthetics in society. This was a cause which Oscar Wilde would champion with great enthusiasm later in the century. Stokes pleaded for the establishment of art galleries which would introduce the public to aesthetic concepts and he supported the initiatives to found the National Art Gallery. He believed strongly that all art should have a moral purpose.

"We are not to worship art", he wrote "but to use it as a means to some great end."

This was a philosophy which Oscar Wilde would reject.

Graves & Stokes

Stokes was now recognised as one of the leading physicians in Dublin but he found himself in the embarrassing position of not being eligible for ordinary fellowship of the College of Physicians because he had not graduated in Arts and his M.D. was from Edinburgh rather than Dublin, Oxford or Cambridge. There were some other eminent physicians in a similar position and so Trinity came to the rescue by offering to confer an honorary M.D. on any six licentiates nominated by the College of Physicians. Stokes was one of those honoured in 1839 and he was admitted a fellow of the College of Physicians immediately afterwards.

The relationship between Graves and Stokes has been consistently described as one of the most remarkable in the history of medicine. "Never did any disagreement arise between them" wrote one of Stokes's biographers. "In such natures envy and jealousy had no place, and the lapse of time only strengthened and cemented the bonds between them of friendship, loyalty and affection."

However, despite such eulogies I have recently found evidence to suggest that the relationship between the two men was far more complex than has been presented in the various biographies and medical histories which have appeared over the last hundred years. In the Dublin Medical Press of 28 October 1840 there is a short paragraph under the heading Election of Regius Professor of Physic in Trinity College. There follows an account which relates what are described as "the very singular circumstances" surrounding the recent appointment to the chair. It is a rather complicated story but, in essence, Whitley Stokes the regius professor resigned his chair over a point of principle and without competition his son William was elected to fill the post "during the life time" of his father. The account ends with the observation "such is a simple, but we have every reason to believe, a correct account of the manner of disposing of a situation, which has been hitherto considered as a distinction to which gentlemen educated in the university might be fairly supposed to have a prior claim." One of the potential candidates referred to here would, of course, have been Robert Graves, who was professor of the institutes of medicine in the School of Physic and a graduate of the University. Four months after this episode, Graves resigned his professorship in the School of Physic and appears to have focused his energies on the College of

Physicians being elected President in 1843 for two years. Whitley Stokes died in 1845 and Robert Graves now competed with William Stokes for the regius professorship. Stokes was appointed by a narrow margin, four out of seven of the senior fellows voting for him.

Four years later both men competed again, this time for the Presidency of the College of Physicians. On this occasion Stokes won by a very revealing margin - 18 votes to 1. The list of the fellows who supported William Stokes reads like a roll call of the great names of the Irish School of Medicine. Graves did not attend any of the 72 College meetings held during Stokes's busy presidency, and he only attended one other meeting of the College before his death in 1853. Following his death, Stokes delivered a most moving discourse at the Royal College of Physicians in which he generously praised the achievements of his former teacher and colleague. It would appear from this that both men were able to come to terms with the difficulties that had arisen between them. These difficulties must be placed within the total context of a relationship that led to one of the most remarkable collaborations in the history of medicine.

Politics

Stokes stayed aloof from the political turmoil of his time. This did not mean of course that he had no political opinions. Like his father, he sympathised with the demand for Catholic Emancipation which was eventually granted in 1829. He had no sympathy however with the subsequent endeavours of Daniel O'Connell to promote the Repeal of the Union. He was friendly with several of the leaders of the Young Ireland Movement but he did not share their revolutionary ideals. Years later he was alarmed by the growing enthusiasm in Ireland for

“Home Rule”. He tried his utmost to dissuade his friend Isaac Butt from promoting the policy arguing that it was bound to end in failure and to be followed by increased disturbance and disaffection throughout the country. He believed that the true patriot worked for the welfare of his country and he exhorted his students to do this when he addressed them during the famine years. “Let me implore of you” he said “to labour for Ireland, its character and its honour”.

Fever and Famine

There was another severe epidemic of typhus fever in Ireland during the years 1842 - 3. Stokes watched in dismay as many of his former students working in Poor Law dispensaries around the country died when carrying out their duties. In 1843 he travelled to London with a colleague Mr. Cusack to give evidence on the subject before a committee of the House of Commons. They demanded better remuneration for dispensary doctors who put their lives at risk and they argued that provision ought to be made for the widows and children of those doctors who lost their lives. They produced statistics to show that the mortality among the country doctors was over twice that among army officers in active combat. “Such a number of my pupils”, Stokes told the committee, “have been cut off by typhus fever as to make me feel very uneasy when any of them take a dispensary office in Ireland. I look upon it almost as going into battle.”

The death of personal friends whom he had cared for medically also weighed heavily on him. Among these were his colleague George Greene who was King’s professor of medicine in the School of Physic, and Oliver Curran, one of his favourite pupils both of whom died from typhus. They also included the Trinity mathematician James McCullagh

and the poet Thomas Davis who died at the age of thirty-one. Stokes agonised over whether the outcome would have been better if he had adopted a different mode of treatment. "We fret", he wrote, "for not having done that of which we had no knowledge we ought to have done, and if we do our best, why should we be dissatisfied? But still the feeling is irresistible and comes over one like a winter cloud."

The Great Famine was a particularly stressful time in the life of Stokes. He found it difficult to watch the harrowing scenes in the overcrowded hospital wards day after day as patients died from fever and starvation. "They all had a dreadful similarity", he recalled, "weak, cold and shrivelled, they lay uncomplaining, more like cadavers than living human beings. They seldom asked for food or even drink." In 1849 the country experienced an epidemic of cholera which placed further pressure on the hospitals. It was during this epidemic that the poet James Clarence Mangan came to the door of the Meath in a moribund state and begged admission. Thomas O'Reilly, a student who was working with Stokes at the time, recalled the incident in a letter to Stokes' son many years later:

"His miserable condition did not impress me, as the applicants for hospital admission at that time were almost all destitute, but what did impress me was the amazement of your father on seeing him.... With his characteristic humanity and sympathy, he turned to me and directed that Mangan should be placed in a private room, clothed with flannels, and supplied with every necessary comforts at his expense."

Mangan died a few days later and Stokes asked his friend the artist Frederic Burton to come to the hospital and sketch the head of the dead poet. This sketch is now in the National Gallery of Ireland.

Pathological Society of Dublin

It was Stokes who was largely responsible for the establishment of the Pathological Society of Dublin in 1838. He was assisted by his brother-in-law R.W. Smith who subsequently became professor of surgery at Trinity and who is remembered in the eponym Smith's fracture. The object of this society was to give surgeons and physicians an opportunity to present cases to their peers. During these presentations every effort was made to link the presenting symptoms and signs to the pathology found if the patient had an autopsy. It was the first society of its kind in the world. The meetings were held every Saturday afternoon during the winter session in the theatre of the School of Medicine at Trinity. Students attended the sessions in large numbers and the society was the forerunner of the clinico-pathological meetings now held in teaching hospitals all over the world. The 150th Anniversary of its foundation was marked by the holding of a major international conference on pathology in Trinity in 1988.

Medical Education

In 1854 Stokes was invited by the Provost and Senior Fellows to open the medical session with an address at Trinity. Stokes, having been deprived of a university education himself advocated that all medical students should be educated in classics. He also argued strongly that the education of the physician and surgeon should be identical at undergraduate level. Many of his views on medical education resonate with the changes being advocated by those currently seeking

reform. He did not believe in a rigid division between the pre-clinical and clinical years and he was a firm believer in introducing students to the clinical world early in their studies. In this way they would be trained to develop observational skills and they would also be motivated to care for people during their formative years.

Stokes was very proud of the teaching in the Meath Hospital which promoted self reliance by giving the student responsibility for the care of individual patients. Students were also encouraged to develop an interest in original investigation. Stokes was very critical of teachers who merely crammed their students with facts:

“One word as to the duty of teachers, and this applies to those of other sciences as well as medicine. It is not to convey all the facts of a subject to their hearers, but it is, by precept and example, to teach them how to teach and guide themselves. ”

Stokes credited John Cheyne and Robert Graves with the foundation of the movement which led to the Irish School of Medicine. The former was the editor of the Dublin Hospital Reports which appeared for the first time in 1817 and Graves introduced bedside clinical teaching at the Meath Hospital four years later. The papers published by Cheyne, Graves and Colles and others in the Dublin Hospital Reports set the standards of clinical reporting and observation at a very high level. Stokes also gives credit to Bartholomew Lloyd, later provost of Trinity, for introducing educational reforms, the first fruits of which was the work of the mathematicians James McCullagh and William Rowan Hamilton and which heralded an upsurge in activity in the Royal Irish Academy. These factors enumerated by Stokes were important,

however there was another element which I believe was of crucial significance and this was the rise of Protestant evangelism in Ireland.

The evangelical revival which began in the Church of England during the last quarter of the eighteenth century had a strong influence on the Church of Ireland in the first half of the nineteenth century. In his essay entitled *Evangelical Revival in the Church of Ireland* which he delivered at Maynooth College in 1979, Vivian Mercer argued that the impetus which drove the Irish Literary Revival came from a generation of men and women from evangelical backgrounds, such as W B Yeats, J M Synge, Douglas Hyde, Standish O'Grady and Lady Gregory. It could be argued that this thesis is equally valid for the development of the Irish School of Medicine. Many of the doctors who were at the centre of this movement came from evangelical backgrounds and some, such as John Cheyne and Robert Graves, were strong supporters of the evangelical movement. The Rev. Benjamin Williams Mathias and the Rev. Walter Stephens were two of the most influential leaders of Irish evangelism. In 1818 both these men in conjunction with Whitley Stokes established the Irish Society and its purpose was to teach Irish-speaking peasants to read the scriptures in Irish to their neighbours. Whitley Stokes was a committed evangelist and he was deeply involved in a number of projects to translate the scriptures into Irish between 1799 and 1815.

Robert Graves, was the son of the Rev. Richard Graves, a well known evangelist, and professor of Divinity at Trinity. I believe that William Stokes and Robert Graves derived their motivation and drive from this shared evangelical background. They frequently used scriptural references in their published work and the style of many of their lectures is exhortational. They saw life as God's greatest gift to man

and therefore the doctor had a divine imperative to protect and preserve it. Such was the missionary zeal of Graves and Stokes to fulfil this imperative that they produced an internationally famous school of medicine in Ireland during a period of great national poverty and deprivation.

Diseases of the Heart

In 1854 Stokes published what most regard as his magnum opus *Diseases of the Heart and the Aorta*. It was based on years of astute clinical observation and on papers which he had published in the Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medical Science. It also drew on the work of several other members of the Irish School of Medicine including Robert Graves, Dominic Corrigan and Robert Adams.

Snellen in his history of cardiology which was published in 1984 states that Stokes anticipated the work of many other writers on heart disease of a much later period. Stokes highlighted the importance of assessing the functional ability of the heart rather than merely stressing the presence or absence of physical signs as was the practice of the time. Under this latter regime many healthy individuals were treated as invalids simply because their doctor heard a murmur with his stethoscope.

The book contained a number of original observations including the descriptions of the respiratory pattern still known as Cheyne-Stokes breathing, and of the syncope which follows from sudden reduction of cardiac output, known as Stokes-Adams syndrome.

Within a short period of its publication it was hailed internationally. A German translation appeared in 1855 followed by an Italian edition in 1858 and a French one six years later. The book laid the foundations of clinical cardiology as we know it today.

Medical Ethics

As he grew older he became increasingly convinced of the importance of medical ethics and he planned to publish a book on the subject. Failing health prevented him from completing the work. He did however make it the subject of a discourse which he delivered to his students at the Meath Hospital in 1869. During this lecture he exhorted his students to practice high standards throughout their professional careers, and to treat rich and poor patients alike. He told them that they should always be in the vanguard of social progress.

“You must labour to remain uninfluenced by pride, passion, or self-seeking, or by any narrow sectarian feeling which would divide you from your fellow-men of any denomination. This precept is of general application; yet, if there be a country in the world where it more requires to be followed than another, it is our own loved and still divided Ireland.”

Preventive Medicine

It was primarily as a consequence of Stokes's endeavours that Trinity College established a diploma in Preventive Medicine in 1871. It was the first of its kind in these islands. In a discourse on preventive medicine delivered before the University of Dublin in 1872 Stokes stressed the importance of distinguishing preventive from curative

medicine and he told his audience that a greater value should be attached to the former.

“The time may come”, he told his academic colleagues, in a remarkably prophetic passage “when no man for his own ends or for his profit will be permitted to damage the health or the well-being of his neighbour

The gifts to man from Heaven - pure air, pure water, bright light, and wholesome food, will be more freely shared in, and the moral and physical evils of over-crowding, and the consequent guilt, the shame, the pestilence, will disappear. The artisan will be taught the dangers of his particular calling, and so far as law and public opinion go, be protected from them, whether he labours ..., amid the roar of machinery, or deep in the earth inhaling particles of silex till his working life comes to an untimely and miserable end.”

British Medical Association

Stokes was president of the British Medical Association when it held a very successful meeting in Trinity in 1867 - , the first occasion that the society met in a university. After this meeting Stokes left for the West of Ireland with his friend the Earl of Dunraven on an archaeological tour. They visited Galway, Mayo and Sligo and the islands along the coast. They spent nine days on the Aran islands, where they measured and photographed almost every object of interest.

In the following year Stokes and Dunraven explored the antiquities of Kerry. The results of their work can be studied in the latter's magnificent book *Irish Ecclesiastical Architecture*. The book was

published in 1875 after Dunraven's death having been completed by Margaret Stokes. In his later years Stokes wrote a biography of his life long friend George Petrie which was published in 1868. This was for Stokes a labour of love. Petrie's own masterpiece on *The Round Towers of Ireland* was dedicated to William Stokes and Lord Dunraven. According to the Celtic scholar Richard Henebry it would not be possible to estimate the influence which William Stokes had on the movement which inspired the Celtic Revival.

Stokes was conferred with the degree of L.L.D. by Edinburgh University in 1861, the D.C.L. of Oxford in 1865 and the LL.D. of the University of Cambridge in 1874. He was appointed physician in ordinary to the Queen in Ireland in 1862 and in the following year he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society. In 1874 Stokes was elected to the Presidency of the Royal Irish Academy.

Stokes continued to practise medicine despite all his other commitments. When over 70 years he was injured in a fall from his carriage whilst on a professional visit to a patient in County Wicklow. He retired to his home in Carrig Breacc where he was cared for by his daughter Margaret. There he received regular visits from his medical colleagues and other friends including J H Jellett, Provost of Trinity; Dr. Russell, President of Maynooth; John Pentland Mahaffy and Sir Samuel and Lady Ferguson. In November 1877 he suffered a stroke from which he never recovered. He died on 6th January, 1878.

It is an honour to deliver a Trinity Monday Discourse, but it becomes an even greater honour when one is asked to speak about a man such as William Stokes - an outstanding figure in his own time, whose

influence can still be felt today. I would like to finish by quoting the words of Dr John Walter Moore, who walked the wards of the Meath Hospital with Stokes and who was his last house physician:

Dr Stokes was "a painstaking and successful teacher - the sympathising friend, the prudent counsellor, and the ardent well-wisher of every one of his "fellow-students," for so he called his pupils. But he was more than this. Those who have seen Dr Stokes at the bedside of the sick know how gentle, how refined, how kindly was his bearing towards the patient. Amid all the ardour of clinical observation and research he never for one moment forgot the sufferer before him - no thoughtless word from his lips, no rough or unkind action ever ruffled the calm confidence reposed in him by those who sought his skill and care."

Thank you