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President of the Ulster Medical Society

1967–68

Presidential Opening Address

Ulster Medical Society

19th October 1967

FATHER AND SON - A TALE OF TWO CITIES

I WOULD like to interest you for a short time tonight in the lives of two men - father and son. Their combined lives spanned last century - the father was born in 1800 and the son died in 1901. The father's work was for the most part done in Belfast whilst the most fruitful period of the son's life was spent in London - so in some ways it is a 'Tale of Two Cities'.

The father was a physician, the son a surgeon, and both held high office in this society and both were on the staff of the Belfast General Hospital - later the Belfast Royal Hospital - and now the Royal Victoria Hospital. Both were eccentric, or at least unusual, with their genes perhaps leading them in slightly different directions.

The son's portrait you have all studied many times in the great hall of the University, as sitting at an examination you chewed your pen and hoped for inspiration from it. The father's and son's busts on the other hand you should have seen as they have been on view for forty years in a public place not often visited. I wonder how many have seen them?

Henry MacCormac was born in 1800. It has never been possible to trace the exact record of his birth in the parish register. It has been said that the page was torn out for a very interesting reason that I cannot mention here. Another reason, possibly more likely, is that his birth was probably in the register of Clonfaele Parish Church, Co. Armagh, and it is known that this register was destroyed in Dublin during the "troubles" of 1922. Henry's grandfather was a certain Cornelius MacCormac. He was a high ranking naval officer and he fell overboard and was drowned when straining after his "gold laced hat" which had been tossed overboard by the spanker boom; although the hat was retrieved Cornelius' body was never recovered. His grandmother also died at sea in perhaps a less exotic fashion as she was travelling from England to Ireland in a packet boat.

Henry was born in Carnan in the County of Armagh. He describes his grandfather's house with a mill nearby, and seeing the bags of corn being carried



away. His grandfather, Colonel Hall, was an extensive distiller whose daughter, Mary, Henry's father had married. They had a large family consisting of six boys and two girls. The father began business as a linen merchant with some £15,000, but his commercial "aptitudes were most unsufficing" - for he rode to hounds and kept open house. His free-handed generosity however came to a natural close, and he left his wife saddled with the maintenance of a large family on a life annuity of £40 - fortunately this had not been alienated. Henry saw his father seized with an apoplectic seizure, and remain to the end unaware of its terrible nature and its disastrous sequences. His mother's marriage allowance had already been swallowed up, and her near relatives occupied with their own family problems were unable to help, so his valiant mother began business herself, but, ignorant of its stem requirements and reared in affluence, she found the "proceeds unequal to her needs".

In those days linen merchants rode to market with pockets stuffed with guineas and bank notes. The buyers stood on steps or benches while the websters, a large crowd, tendered their wares below.

Ian James Fraser

Once the price had been agreed the seller was paid in cash at the merchant's office, usually a room in a local inn, after which he hied home. Henry remembers seeing one of these men coming home with a pistol in his holster and a sword slung by his side. Often the gentlemen of the cloth would dally too long at the inn and they were very dependent upon the sagacity of their horse to keep them in the saddle and bring them safely home. On one occasion Henry's father gave one of these humble sellers a seat home sitting behind him on his horse - however, he found later that his pocket book and the £80 that it contained had disappeared. It is interesting that Henry as a doctor many years later came upon the thief, then a very old man. Henry's mother and family moved to a large country house called Fairlawn, which was in the hands of caretakers since the owners were in England. They probably got it cheaply but the intrusion was greatly resented by the caretakers, who had to move out. He describes the house and its garden; the river, the small islands and the bridge still exist to this day. They lived here for a short time but Mrs. MacCormac had to move back to Armagh to start a school with the help of the two daughters. Although faced with innumerable difficulties they realised a hard earned competence as well as general goodwill and respect.

From here Henry moved to a large school, probably Armagh Royal School. He has few grateful memories of school life, and those who ran the school knew nothing of "vital culture". The stick, the scourge, the ready cuff with vituperation more or less gross were the all too common retort. It was an endowed school and one of his teachers - afterwards a Fellow of a well known college - would have made a perfect figure for a "portrait of the Inquisition". Not content with the ordinary cane, the master used an iron rod! The headmaster, a pompous shortsighted Englishman, and his yet more pompous son allowed all this to go on. Henry did four years toil of the Eton Latin Grammar. If it was not from his school then it must have been from his mother that he got such a wonderful education and such a love of languages.

Having decided to become a doctor he undertook the necessary studies in Dublin, Paris, and Edinburgh. He often mentions his time in Paris and his work at L'Hôtel Dieu and the famous surgeon Dupuytren. In addition in Paris he attended some lectures in chemistry. It was finally in 1824 that he obtained his M.D. with a thesis entitled "De Clabo Secalino" from Edinburgh University and became at the same time a Licentiate of the old Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. Having been born in 1800, his age is the

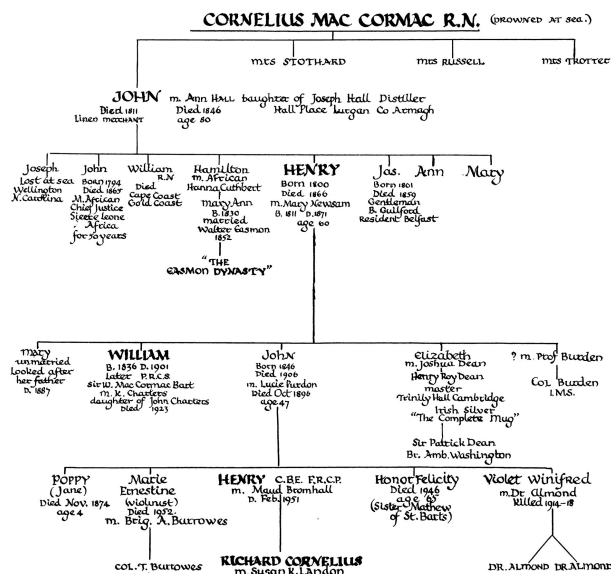
same as the year, which makes it easy for us to correlate his progress with his age (Table I)

Early on we see his roving spirit developing, as immediately after qualifying he at once went off to Africa. It is said that he undertook from the Cape of Good Hope a long, tedious and dangerous overland journey up the West Coast of Africa as far as Sierra Leone. This journey has been described as even more dangerous and difficult than that undertaken by Livingstone. During this time it is said he nearly died from a severe attack of yellow fever, a disease which may have a death rate as high as 60 per cent.

HENRY (Father)	Year		WILLIAM (Son)
Born	1800		
	1810		
Qualified 1824	1820		
Appointed Professor 1837	1830	1836	Born
Retired Professor 1848	1840		
	1850		
		1857	Qualified
Retired from Active Consultant Practice 1866	1860		
		1864	Surgeon, Belfast General Hospital
Writer and Doctor to Asylum	1870	1870	Franco Prussian War
	1880		
Died 1886		1871	Consultant Surgeon St. Thomas Hospital
	1890		
	1900	1893	
	1901	1893	Royal College of Surgeons South African War
		1901	Died

His object in getting to Sierra Leone was to see his older brother - John - who was a stipendiary magistrate there, and ultimately became chief magistrate or Lord Chief Justice. (Fig. 1). He was stationed there for 50 years but returned to England, died in Liverpool, and is buried in Lurgan. This brother's career was an interesting one. It would appear that there was another brother, Hamilton, who

Ian James Fraser



married a West African girl from Sierra Leone or the Gold Coast and had quite an extensive family. These dark skinned children on many occasions visited Belfast to stay with their Uncle Henry. One of the daughters of this marriage married an African called Easmon and arising from that there has been, and still is, a small dynasty of brilliant African doctors. One of them at the moment is the Chief Medical Officer in Ghana and a brilliant surgeon. This Easmon-MacCormac marriage has done much for West Africa. We would like to think that it was at least partly due to the MacCormac genes.

Henry had a great affection for his brother John and dedicated one or more of his many books to him. A great feature of Henry MacCormac was his close affection for his relatives. Many of his books are dedicated to his daughters, to his son William or other relatives. In reading a small handwritten book of 80 pages written by Henry himself which he calls his "Life" he describes the sea voyage to West Africa, the life on a windjammer - and the terror and excitement when they were overtaken and hailed by another vessel which they thought was a pirate vessel. I am rather inclined to think that this is the true story of his visit to West Africa. The other one, describing the overland trip from South Africa as given in the Dictionary of National Biography, is probably fictitious - as indeed are some of the statements made about him and his father.

He stayed in West Africa for almost one year, obviously enjoying the country and its problems, and it is not surprising to see him writing in 1874, nearly fifty years later, an article on health in the Gold Coast. The reason for this at that time was obviously that

preparations were being made then for General Garnet Wolsey's famous march into Ashanti. In his twelve months in West Africa he had malaria six times. This is not surprising as he seemed to defy all the rules laid down, and to visit mangrove swamps after dark was courting disaster.

Before settling down in Belfast in practice he made two further trips overseas - to the United States of America and Canada - and when one realises that these were made by windjammer we can realise the courage of this young man.

Before going on to Henry's career we should mention in passing the other members of his family. There were in all six brothers and two sisters. One brother

- Joseph - was a fine young man. He perished at sea and was last heard of when his boat put into Wellington, North Carolina, with four feet of water in her hold. Another brother - William - was an officer in the Navy, and he spent, among other things, four years in the Baltic and finally died at Cape Coast Castle in the Gold Coast. It is said that William and John once met on the broad Atlantic- William was on the poop of his man-o-war and John was on his vessel en route to Sierra Leone. They waved to each other but never met again. The other brother, Hamilton, also died in West Africa; the youngest brother, James, was born in Gilford and lived in Belfast as a linen merchant, where he died in 1859.

Dr. Henry married on 8th October, 1833, a distant relative, a Miss Mary Newsam. She was a descendant of a very old English family that had come to Ireland in 1640. Their first home in Belfast in 1835 was at 17 Wellington Place and by 1839 they had moved to 8 Wellington Place. The Belfast Directories show that they lived later at 7 Chichester Street, and then came back to 3 Wellington Place from 1846, and finally from 1870-1886 his home was 7 Fisherwick Place, the present site of the A.B.C. Cinema.

At the early age of 28 he was appointed physician to the General Hospital. This was an exciting and expanding time in the history of Belfast. It was two years later, in 1830, that rumours kept reaching Belfast that the dreaded disease of Asiatic cholera was on the march. It was supposed to have started on the banks of the Ganges in India. Rumour had it that it had crossed the Russian border and was slowly moving westward. Regular reports were given and how much accurate progress reports were available I do not know: but as maps show its progress could be plotted out. It was easily understood that in Belfast the cry could constantly be heard "It comes - it comes". The management of the Belfast Hospital with

Ian James Fraser

considerable forethought, built a temporary cholera hospital behind the main hospital and Dr. MacCormac was put in charge. He also wisely organised in addition another building to isolate the contacts—a quarantine house in Lancaster Street. The disease finally reached Belfast on 29th February, 1832.

Fig 2—Presentation to Henry MacCormac

This service of plate of which this forms a part was Presented
(Pursuant to Resolutions unanimously agreed to at a Public Meeting held for the purpose)
to
HENRY McCORMACK MD by
A number of his fellow citizens
In testimony of
Their high estimation of his unwearied judicious and efficient services as Physician to the Belfast Cholera Hospital during the year
1832
Richard Sawyer (Dublin)

The first patient was Bernard Murtagh. With MacCormac's excellent isolation arrangements the epidemic was kept from spreading and the disease was virtually over in December of the same year and the cholera hospital was able to close down.

MacCormac got great praise for his isolation arrangements and his method of treating the disease with dilute mineral acids - chiefly dilute sulphuric acid. For his work he was given a very handsome public testimonial. (Fig. 2). This was a delightful silver tea service - teapot, sugar basin, etc., all of Dublin Georgian silver (maker: Richard Sawyer) - a valuable gift in those days, but priceless today. It is now carefully kept by Mrs. Henry MacCormac. It is interesting to see that many years before James McDonnell, the founder of the Belfast Medical School, had been given a rather similar tribute. Henry's testimonial was well deserved as in this epidemic 2,870 people were attacked and there were only 480 deaths, one in six, a much lower rate than in many of the other cities across the water.

It was in this same year, 1832, that at the Belfast Medical Society - the forerunner of this Society - the idea of starting a medical school was suggested, but it was finally in 1835 that a medical faculty was added to The Belfast Academical Institution (Inst.), which already had a faculty of Arts.

Some buildings bought out of a Government grant were erected, and Inst, bought in addition a building called the Old Barrack (an old disused military hospital) for £1,750, a sum which exhausted its funds. This was intended to supply the clinical

needs of the new medical faculty. Prior to this time 300 students left Belfast every year for schools elsewhere.

1806	Belfast Medical Society formed
1814	Dissolved due to "Demon of Discord"
1822	Restarted - active ever since
1832	Suggestion made to start Medical School
1835	Professors appointed
1836	Dr. Henry MacCormac elected Professor to Medical School at Inst. Dean of the Faculty
1848	Queen's College built, but Dr. Henry MacCormac <i>not</i> re-appointed
1849	Queen's College opened to students
1851	Belfast Medical Society becomes Ulster [sic] Medical Society

Some professors were at once appointed, but for the chair of medicine there was a certain degree of rivalry between Henry MacCormac and Thomas Andrews, which caused this appointment to be postponed for one year. It is interesting to see that both men were destined to become great in different ways. Andrews' work in chemistry and the liquefying of gases, with the many high academic honours that came his way, does not need to be mentioned to many here. Andrews was given the chair of chemistry and MacCormac was appointed to the chair of the Theory and Practice of Medicine. He held this chair until 1848 when the new Queen's College took over, and during that time, from 1840-1845, he had been Dean of the Faculty.

It was in 1848 that Sir Robert Peel decided that a new University should appear in Ireland as, up to then, everything had been centred in Dublin - Trinity College and the Royal College of Surgeons - and so to bring Cork, Galway and Belfast into the picture the Queen's University in Ireland was inaugurated in 1850, with a separate Queen's College in each of these three places. The Queen's College, Belfast, opened its doors in December, 1849, and Inst, no longer was required for higher education. However, by an oversight no arrangements had been made for anatomical studies or a dissecting room in the new College; they were carried on at Inst, until 1862. During this time at Inst, the medical faculty turned out more than 600 graduates. All of the existing

Ian James Fraser

professors relinquished their chairs in the Institution, and three of these were re-appointed. The Chair of Medicine was given to Dr. John Creery Ferguson, an Ulsterman from Tandragee, who had held the King's Professorship of Practice of Medicine, Dublin, from 1845. He held the Queen's chair until he died in 1865. This same Dr. Ferguson was the first President of this Society in 1851 [sic], which was the year when this present Ulster Medical Society was formed, by the fusion of two older bodies, and changed its name from the narrow one of Belfast Medical Society to Ulster Medical Society, to embrace the entire province.

In 1849, although MacCormac had failed to be appointed to the Chair of Medicine in the new Queen's College, he was given another appointment which he held almost until he died, and which he greatly prized - that of physician to the Lunatic Asylum. Many of his writings centre round the improvements that he carried out for the mentally ill. He instituted regular exercise and better food and sanitation. It is to be noted that in this same year Belfast had another visitation of Asiatic cholera, and although in the three kingdoms the overall death rate was higher than in 1832 yet thanks to MacCormac's methods there were no deaths at all among his asylum patients. In 1849 the cholera deaths in England were 53,000 with 14,000 in London alone.

The years before that had been very unsettled years for Ireland as a whole, with always recurring epidemics of small-pox, dysentery, Irish Fever (as typhus was called), with perhaps the famine year and the Great Hunger being the culmination of all that was horrible, when crops, trees, animals and human beings suffered such horrors. In 1847 three million were fed by the state. Those able to emigrate were fortunate. Help came from England, from the Society of Friends and the British Association. Thousands of tons of flour came from New Orleans. The death rate was high; one in four among dispensary doctors alone. The population fell from 8,000,000 to 4,000,000 where it has remained ever since. I wonder how many people as they go along our famous coast road from Larne to Cushendall realise that this was the Famine Road and its creation was one of the many works given at that time to create labour and money and food.

Half way through the century a new MacCormac is beginning to appear. Henry's elder son, William, was born in 1836 in 17 Wellington Place. He was educated at the Academical Institution, and from there he went to Queen's College. In 1855 there is a note to say that Dr. Henry MacCormac was an applicant for the Chair

of Medicine in Edinburgh, and in the same year we see that his son William, still an undergraduate, now aged 19, was reading a paper before the Queen's College Literary and Scientific Society on the "Unity of Science". He was made President of the same society in 1857-58.

But I must go back to his father as there is much still to be said about him. Henry, although unsuccessful in his application for the Chair in Edinburgh in 1855, did apply two years later in 1857, for the Chair of Materia Medica in his own Queen's College, Belfast, but again was unsuccessful. This chair was filled by a well known character called Professor James Seaton Reid. It may perhaps be that MacCormac's eccentricities, or rather unusual views, made him *not* the most acceptable choice for a professional chair. This might be no bar in this modern age - possibly the reverse.

Little has been said of the man himself. He was very happily married and had a family of two boys and three girls. (Fig. 1). One son became famous and we have already touched upon him and will give more details about him later on. Another son, John, became a linen merchant, lived in Malone Avenue, and died in 1906. He also was a very original character, and was said to have many novel views about the spinning of flax. He also was somewhat unusual; it is said that on one occasion he had been missing for a long time and eventually was found by some friends in a travelling circus. When they caught up with him he was with others at the end of a long rope with the circus elephant at the other end. He was known to be gay, and many stories, not all suitable for repetition, are told about him; possibly he inherited this trait from his grandfather. John's son, another Henry, however, became one of London's leading dermatologists. After a gallant record in the 1914-18 war he settled in London with a large and influential practice and with his attachment to the Middlesex Hospital we see him carrying on the MacCormac traditions. His son, Richard Cornelius, with a double first at Cambridge, is carrying on the record of a great family tradition.

Two of Henry's daughters married. One, Mrs. Burden (her husband, Professor Burden, was the first Professor of Midwifery in Queen's College), had a son who achieved high honour in the Indian Medical Service. The other daughter, Mrs. Dean, had a son who was Master of Trinity Hall, and her grandson is at present the British Ambassador in Washington. The third daughter, Mary, remained unmarried and was a great solace to her father in the last fifteen years of his life after his wife's death. This daughter died one year after her father, and is buried in the family vault

Ian James Fraser

in the Belfast City Cemetery.

For many years Henry carried on an extensive consulting medical practice although we can see he was gradually getting more and more interested in literature. He was able to combine both as he was a very early riser, often getting up at 4 a.m. or 5 a.m. and working for four hours without a break with a small fire or no fire at all. "He was a tall man with a rather colourless complexion, and with the head of a philosopher he was certainly not practical but looked the sage." This description was given to me by Mrs. Duffin, aged 100, one of the few people actually to remember him. She remembers Dr. MacCormac once asking her father in for a curry lunch. This turned out to be rice only. Dr. William Drennan (her father) was half amused but also somewhat indignant.

Henry MacCormac is, of course, most noted for his fresh air campaign. Many stories are told of him having to appear in court for having broken the window panes of a house with his walking stick or umbrella to let fresh air in when the patient refused to open it, and he obviously had the police co-operating on his behalf when one morning at breakfast a constable called to say, "Miss Mary's window was not open last night." This was one of his patients.

"At one time he lived in a red brick house with a rounded window which looked out on Inst., but later he moved to 7 Fisherwick Place." Mrs. Duffin remembers this as it was the "house with the fig tree growing up it." This house, in which he died, was in a row facing the Presbyterian Assembly Buildings, on land now occupied by the A.B.C. Cinema. His neighbours included the Ulster Hospital for Children, Dr. H. S. Ferguson, M.D., Dr. R. F. Dill, M.D., and Miss Pirrie.

About twenty years before he died Henry gave up his general consultant practice, except for the asylum, to take up writing exclusively. This may not sound so unusual today when it is realised that he was then 66 years of age. His many subjects included medicine, tuberculosis, insanity, philanthropic works, stammering, religion, etc.

Table III
MacCormac's writings include:

1. "A Treatise on the Cause of Cure of Hesitation of Speech or Stammering". 8 vo. Lond. 1828.
2. "On the Best Means of Improving the Condition of the Working Classes". 8 vo. Lond. 1830.
3. "An Exposition of the Nature, Treatment and Prevention of Continued Fever". 8 vo. Lond. 1837.

4. "The Philosophy of Human Nature in its Physical, Intellectual and Moral Relations". 8 vo. Lond. 1837.
5. "Methodus Medendi, or The Description and Treatment of the Principal Diseases Incident to the Human Frame". 8 vo. Lond. 1842.
6. "On the Connection of Atmospheric Impurity with Disease". 8 vo. 1852, contributed to the Belfast Social Inquiry Society.
7. "Moral Sanatory Economy". 8 vo. Belfast, 1835 (2 editions).
8. "On the Nature, Treatment and Prevention of Pulmonary Consumption". 8 vo. Lond. 1855; 2nd edition 1865. Translations appeared in German and Dutch.
9. "On Tubercle". 8 vo. Belfast, 1856, read before the Edinburgh Medico-Chirurgical Society.
10. "Twenty Aphorisms in Respect to Health". 24 mo. Lond. 1857.
11. "Aspirations from the Inner, the Spiritual Life". 8 vo. Lond. 1860.
12. "Metanoia, A Plea for the Insane". 8 vo. Lond. 1861.
13. "The Painless Extinction of Life in Animals designed for Human Food". 8 vo. Lond. 1864.
14. "On Synthesis as taking Precedence of Analysis in Education". 8 vo. Lond. 1867.
15. "Consumption and the Air re-breathed ... A Sequel to the Treatise on Consumption". 8 vo. Lond. 1872.
16. "How to Preserve Health on the Gold Coast". 8 vo. Lond. 1874.
17. "The Conversation of a Soul with God, a Theodicy". 8 vo. Lond. 1877.
18. "Moral Secular Education for the Irish People versus Ultramontanist Instilment". 8 vo. Lond. 1879.
19. "Etiology of Tubercle", which Comments on Dr. R. Koch's Bacilli. 8 vo. Lond. 1883.
21. "Cholera and its Arrest by Dilute Acids".
22. "The Open-Air Treatment of Fever".
23. "The Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus".
24. "The Manual of Epictetus". 12 mo. 1844.

He was, in fact, producing a dictionary of philology at the age of 86, which was never completed, when he died. He was deeply versed in foreign languages, possessing a knowledge of 20. He translated from the originals "Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antonius", and also the "Manual of Epictetus" in 1844. Later in life he translated articles from the German, often dedicating the books to his daughters.

Ian James Fraser

He was a most kindly benevolent type of man, and a lover of children. His daily walk of two miles to the asylum when over 70 years of age, in all weathers, surrounded by small children, was a well known sight, as he distributed to them pocketfuls of good things that he purchased for them on the way. He was socially delightful and a good conversationist. He was much sought after in cultural society and much admired for his benevolence and humility. His kindness not only involved thoughtfulness for his patients and mankind, but he wrote a strong article on the humane killing of animals for human food. All through his life he had a great sympathy for suffering.

He had a great scientific imagination and the zeal with which to pursue it. He had the power of concentration given to few, as well as the physical endurance necessary. He felt that as a man kept his body muscles fit by exercise so the only way to keep the heart muscle fit was also by exercise and each day the heart must be given some extra work to do. He was a deeply religious man with a strong faith in God and God's creatures, and yet he was trammelled by no creed. He did not acknowledge any sect, yet one of his papers was a bitter condemnation of another sect, which was not in keeping with a man who held such views.

Although I have extolled the virtues of this man, he nullified much that he did by the obstinate stubborn way in which he put forward his ideas and refused to see reason in any of those who opposed him. When he sent his son to school at Queenswood College, Hampshire, he had great trouble with the school authorities to have the window kept open all night, and when William went later to Germany he insisted that the windows remained fully open although the occupants of the room had to break the ice on the water jugs in the morning. His views on fresh air are well seen in the following from one of his books: "I would speak, in especial, of a chamber which I once visited as I had often before entered it, early one winter's morn. It was the sleeping closet of my son. His low trestle bed stood betwixt the severally widely open window and door while the keen but exquisitely fresh sweet atmosphere from wind-swept hills career through the apartment ceaselessly. The hue of exuberant health mantled over the boy's every feature while, bordering the coverlet, there extended a finger of pure white snow which the genius of the fragrant night had wafted in all harmlessly during the hours of my child's repose." When he sent his daughters to Paris he thinks the only windows open in that town were in his daughter's apartment - in fact he had to rent a room for their exclusive use to

ensure that this took place. After a long walk one morning he brought a tramp in for breakfast and when remonstrated with he pointed out that this man needed the breakfast much more than his daughter!

It is interesting to see how little Malcolm, in his history of the Belfast General Hospital, mentions MacCormac. It would appear as if his persistent and irrational claims perhaps made him an uneasy colleague and the fact that he was not appointed to the new college when it moved to Malone Road, and that he was unsuccessful later in obtaining other chairs, rather suggests that his views were not acceptable. Often, however, a man may not be recognised in his own country and yet be accepted abroad. There is a street in Copenhagen named after him, and in France, Belgium and Germany his works and his views on fresh air were accepted. Some would go so far as to suggest that the vogue of the open air treatment of tuberculosis in Germany and Switzerland was influenced very much by him and his writings. Although not fully appreciated at the time it is interesting to see that Sir William Whitla, when generously donating to the Ulster Medical Society in 1902 the building that we have occupied until recently, should have chosen to adorn the building with four figure heads. Two of these were chosen by him as the most illustrious of the medical faculty at Inst., i.e., Andrews and MacCormac, and the others - Redfern and Gordon, from the new medical faculty in Queen's College.

He was made a corresponding member of the National Institution in Washington, and also of the Belgian Medical Academy. When the British Medical Association met in Dublin in 1867 he read his paper - his hobby horse - on the rebreathed air being the cause of tuberculosis, and when the same association met the following year, 1868, in Oxford, he again gave the same paper. I have no information of how well it was received, but we do know of the hostile reception when he gave the paper with its ever repeated - but never proven theory - in London, at a meeting of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society of London. Dr. Chambers said the reading of this paper was a waste of time, and Mr. Ashton concluded by saying that the society should refuse to pass a vote of thanks - and someone else suggested that all papers should be scrutinized before being accepted. His son was present and was so annoyed that he resigned from this society at once. This meeting and the adverse criticism were never forgotten by him, and 20 years later he published still another letter to the same society on "The Cure of Tuberculosis as conducted at Davos and the Engadine". He reminded them of their

Ian James Fraser

previous verdict and now asked them to reconsider their accusation. He was not to be discouraged, although his theory of the cause of tuberculosis could not be supported. He said, "If I had a stentor's voice or an angel's pen I should employ them to enlarge my views." He had been impressed by the foul air in L'Hôtel Dieu when he was a pupil there working with Baron Dupuytren. This may have given him his profound sympathy for the sick and the indignation that he had for the appalling conditions of the lower classes.

He set aside two hours daily for free consultation at his home, only insisting that the patient should be poor and ill. It should be remembered that his first book on this theory of the "rebreathed air" being the cause of consumption was published in 1855, and his treatment was the open window. The title of his first book was "On the Natural Treatment and Prevention of Pulmonary Consumption and Scrophula." The second edition appeared in 1865 - ten years later. His thesis was that consumption is engendered by rebreathed air leading to the retention of unconsumed carbonaceous wastes in the lungs. This second edition was followed by a more extensive one still in 1872. His campaign was being vigorously carried out by himself - a sole warrior I am afraid - when suddenly in 1882 the real cause of tuberculosis was proclaimed by the discovery by Robert Koch of the tubercle bacillus. This acted as a stimulus for him, now aged 82, to go back to the fray to ridicule Robert Koch. His paper was entitled "The Etiology of Tubercle with Comments on Doctor Robert Koch's Bacillus."

What is consumption?	The bacillus.
What is the bacillus ?	Consumption.
What causes consumption ?	Why, the bacillus.
What causes the bacillus ?	Consumption, to be sure.

Q.E.D.

"Bacilli do not constitute the effective agency - Dr. Koch's Bacilli do not cause Phthisis. It is the patient that causes the disease - Dr. Koch is putting the cart before the horse."

His entire book is a denial of Koch's work. It should be pointed out that this year, 1882, was the turning point in the diagnosis of tuberculosis, and Koch's postulates were soon accepted by the whole world but MacCormac would never accept them. His inability to see any other point of view except his own was unfortunately one of his weaknesses and this stubbornness and arrogance must have certainly

prevented him from being a much greater man. How fortunate that his son faced with the new antiseptic technique of Lister accepted it at once, and this readiness to see new methods made him a pioneer in surgery at that time.

Although MacCormac's views on the cause of tuberculosis were never accepted yet his treatment by open air was followed up and many people throughout Ulster have seen the tuberculosis patient housed in a chalet in the garden. Sir Humphrey Rolleston, speaking in Canada in 1933, placed George Roddington first and Henry MacCormac second as among the pioneers and protagonists of the open air treatment of tuberculosis. Unlike Roddington MacCormac refused to be discouraged.

It is impossible to give in detail the many subjects touched on by MacCormac in the thirty or more books and papers published by him, some during the busy period of his active medical life and the others in the last twenty years when he was chiefly engaged in writing. In 1828 he wrote an article on stammering. He had been interested in this during his visit to the U.S.A. when he met someone in Washington. In 1832 he published his work on the treatment of Asiatic cholera. Although he had treated some patients with tincture of opium which he gave in plain water or peppermint water, he found this too expensive and was able to get equally good results with dilute acids - ½ drachm of dilute sulphuric acid. This was so cheap that he advocated that some should be put at the end of every street in the event of or in the presence of an epidemic. He claimed that "1 lb. of strong sulphuric acid can deal with 2,000 cases and costs only 1d per person." He later refers to cholera, and there are other papers by him on the subject. In all he personally had 3,000 cases of Asiatic cholera through his hands. He found that the poor did better than the rich.

II

On the 17th January 1836 Henry and Mary MacCormac had their first son, William, born some 2½ years after their marriage. Dr. Henry MacCormac was living at that time in 17 Wellington Place, the Harley Street of Belfast.

With a father competent to speak so many foreign languages, it is obvious that the young William early on became proficient especially in French and German, and, as his father when a student in Paris had studied chemistry, the son soon became interested in science also. The Royal Belfast Academical Institution (Inst.) was the obvious choice for the boy's education as, firstly it was almost in full

Ian James Fraser

view of his home - his parents had recently moved to 3 Wellington Place, only a few houses away, and secondly, this was the year that his father was applying -successfully as it turned out - for the Chair of Medicine in the Institution. Unfortunately the records of the Institution from 1836-1859 are unavailable for some unknown reason (except in a few cases - there is a record that John MacCormac - William's younger brother - entered Inst, in 1856), so we know little of William's work, his play or his interests at school.

He left school in 1851 at the age of 15 and entered Queen's College, Belfast, where he was enrolled in the Faculty of Arts which at that time included a science division. He also took a course in Civil Engineering and Philosophy, and finally he graduated B.A. in 1855 and then transferred to the Faculty of Medicine, graduating M.D. in 1857. The doctorate was the primary medical degree at that time. He had already obtained the licence in midwifery in 1856.

In the same year as he obtained the M.D. of the Queen's University in Ireland MacCormac became a member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, so probably even then his sights were levelled on London. In that year also he was President of the "Literific". Many years later he wrote to the then President saying how sorry he was that he did not speak more often or take part in more debates but he always felt somewhat shy. It is interesting to see how often the most successful people have had the courage to change their way of life. William MacCormac would probably have reached the top in any discipline. As a student in engineering he obtained scholarships in the first two years and later a senior scholarship in natural philosophy; and when finally he qualified in medicine he obtained first place with a gold medal.

While still a student William, although only eighteen years of age, acted as medical officer at Glenarm for a short time during an epidemic of Asiatic cholera; we can see his father's influence behind this. After qualification he took further post-graduate training in Dublin, Paris and Germany. In Berlin he made particularly close and lasting friendships with men such as Bilroth, Von Esmarck and Langenbeck. Little did he then realise that in the Franco-Prussian war he would again meet them and later, in London, that they would form such valuable links for international conferences. William, with his striking appearance, easy manner and bonhomie, had the ability of making friends, but he was able with his fluency in foreign languages to continue friendships

which others would have failed to maintain.

On his return to Belfast we see that in 1859 he was a resident in the Belfast General Hospital. It might be mentioned here that in 1854 the funds of the hospital were at such a low ebb that the house surgeon's salary was reduced from £100 to £10 per year, and probably this was William's salary when he was appointed. After more post-graduate surgical study in England and Dublin he obtained the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland in April 1864. There seems to have been even then keen competition for a consultant appointment on the surgical staff of the hospital, as a printed booklet of his testimonials shows. In fact this only ceased with the arrival of the National Health Service in 1948. His testimonials, some thirty or more, were from surgeons in all parts of the three kingdoms as well as from his continental friends. He had thus, at the age of 28, when he was appointed visiting surgeon to the hospital in July 1864, already an international reputation, or at least international recognition.

For the next six years we see this active, hard working, ambitious man, flamboyant and gay, steadily making progress, but probably too slowly to satisfy himself. He was appointed to be a surgical lecturer and was recognised then to be a good teacher. He was living in 4 Howard Street and was steadily building up a consultant practice. He collected a large number of appointments. He was at first a member of the Belfast Medical Society and honorary secretary of the Belfast Clinical and Pathological Society, and when they fused he became a member of the council of the new Ulster Medical Society. He was medical officer to the Malone Protestant Reformatory, a member of the Surgical Society of Ireland, and at the age of 34 we find he was made a member of the senate of the Queen's University in Ireland.

A man of great size, probably 6 ft. 3ins. or 6 ft. 4 ins. in height and flamboyant in his way of life, he naturally chose to get married in a manner in keeping with his reputation, by eloping with Katherine Maria - said to be an heiress - the daughter of a rich and well known Belfast linen merchant - John Charters. Charters, like all flax merchants in Belfast at that time, had made a vast amount of money as a result of the American Civil War which had made cotton almost unobtainable. This marriage would appear, at the time, to have been disapproved of by both families. The Charters family felt that their daughter was throwing herself away on a penniless surgeon and the MacCormacs - proud of a rather distinguished and aristocratic background - felt that William was

Ian James Fraser

marrying a tradesman's daughter - in fact they thought she was somewhat "common". No matter how it started, it was a great success and to the end in his letters he always refers to his "Dear" or "Darling Kate." The misunderstanding must have been very short-lived judging by the very generous donations made by John Charters to medical and other charities. We see a new wing - the Charters Wing - added to the General Hospital in 1865, as well as additions to the operating theatre - which was originally planned by Sir Charles Lanyon. Both of these were given at the suggestion of William. A professorial unit in the present Royal Victoria Hospital is called the Charters Ward with a bust of John Charters on the wall. Other scholarships went to Inst, and the Belfast Royal Academy, as well as a further wing to the "Old Charitable". An interesting scholarship was given to medical students whilst this faculty was still at Inst., but it had only ten years span of life and is no longer available. William MacCormac was one of the trustees. The financial help from the Charters family as well as his wife's large dowry must have been of great help in his struggling days in Belfast, but they were of even greater value when William, later in 1871, without any backing, broke into the ruthless cut-throat competition of Harley Street. For this he had to borrow from Katherine's brother Washington Charters, £4,700. This allowed them to settle in 13 Harley Street which was to be their permanent house for life. This loan was paid off in full - the final receipt appears in his diary of 1884. This year was probably the financial pinnacle of his career; he was then an active man of 48, with the ball at his feet.

During his struggling period in Belfast he wrote and delivered many papers in Belfast, Dublin and London, covering various topics: "Hernia"; "Amputation of the thigh compared with excision of the knee joint"; "The antiseptic treatment of wounds as advocated by Lister". Many of these papers appeared in the *Dublin Quarterly Journal* or the *Dublin Medical Press*. Like his father his interests went beyond medicine into history and archaeology and for this he was elected a member of the Royal Irish Academy. He was a medical referee for many insurance companies, including the London & European Assurance Society, and he was a divisional surgeon for the Belfast Constabulary. He was a Fellow of the Royal Medical Chirurgical Society of London.

It is interesting to note that in the hospital annual report of 1864 - the year that he was appointed to the staff - there is a statement that the management deplore the large number of gun shot wounds caused by civil riots - our Board of Management might say

the same 100 years later! I wonder did this give William his first interest in bullet wounds which was to be for him a consuming interest all his life.

In 1869 William is getting restless, and in that year he applied for the post of surgeon to the Metropolitan Constabulary in Dublin. He was not appointed which, as it turned out, was for him and for British surgery, a most fortunate affair. In the spring of 1870 he was elected President of the Ulster Medical Society, but he never really took office. He departed in August of that year before the session started and was destined never to return to Belfast.

As mentioned previously, one of William's early articles was on "Antiseptic Surgery". Lister's methods were more readily accepted in some provincial centres than they were in certain parts of the metropolis - in fact in London the general opposition persisted for a long time. It was, however, a great feature of William's character that he was willing to accept and adopt a new idea. Probably one of his father's greatest weaknesses was that he would never accept any ideas except his own.

Although Listerian principles started with Lister's first paper in 1867 - 100 years ago this year - they were not yet universally accepted nor indeed was his spray invented till 1871. Yet it did mean that for the wounded of the Franco- Prussian war of 1870 a new surgical technique with revolutionary results was available. This MacCormac tried to apply during this war, but writing later he complained bitterly of lack of supplies of carbolic acid which prevented him giving the new method as good a clinical trial as he would have liked. During the Turco- Serbian war of 1875 the method in all details was available with excellent results. The Franco-Prussian war, although it did not involve Britain directly, had a greater impact on British medical and para-medical organisations than any previous war. This is not often realised. The British Army Medical Services were reorganised as a result of it; medical officers now came under the medical department with abolition of the regimental system. The ambulance system was modernised, garrison establishments and general hospitals were suggested for the first time, the Red Cross and St. John organisations took their place in society and were becoming organised bodies. The Battle of Solferino (1859) said to have been the greatest slaughter in the history of mankind, so impressed the young Swiss banker (Dunant) that he devoted his life to organise a body called the International Red Cross Society with its sign the flag of Switzerland in reverse, and although he died in poverty he at least lived to see his ideas accepted by many nations. Before that in

Ian James Fraser

a battle there was no rallying point to which to carry the wounded - a mass of bunting or a black flag marked the site where some very inadequate medical attention might be obtained. These fundamental changes all arose from the well organised and scientifically trained units of Bismarck's army and not from the hopeless rabble of the disorganised French forces.

William had an irresistible urge to get to the war and with difficulty and with many obstructions he reached Paris and reported to Sir John Furley, representative of the newly formed Red Cross Society. It was Sir John who went forward to reconnoitre and suggested Sedan as a suitable spot. Kate accompanied William to Paris but returned home at once. The British Red Cross - a subdivision of the International Red Cross - was not yet in existence and an organisation called "The British National Society for Aid of the Sick and Wounded in War", was the body through which he had to work. On arrival in Paris William was taken to the French National Society for Aid to the Wounded in the Palais de L'Industrie in the Champs-Élysées, and here he was told that no foreign surgeons would be allowed to serve. However, some days later Nélaton, an old friend of his, came back from the French H.Q. at Metz with the Emperor's personal permission for Englishmen and Americans to offer their aid, and so some days later with an introduction to the chief surgeon - Dr. Isnard - he set off for Metz. This was in August 1870. Metz with great fortifications and two deep ditches around it was the most strongly fortified town in France. "It will be a hard nut to crack" was the universal remark. How false in fact this turned out to be; yet the French said the same of the Maginot line some seventy years later, and Sedan was fought over again for the second time.

MacCormac was given a pavilion for operating next to the surgeon in chief in a hospital ready for 2,000 casualties, a wonderful opportunity and wonderful responsibility for a young and eager surgeon of 34 years of age. However, this was not to be. He was given the necessary permission by the Mayor to live in Metz but he was able to work only two days. There was a general hysteria as there were Prussian spies everywhere, and after he had been seen speaking to an American he was reported to the Prefet's office and asked to leave at once. He just got away in time as the gates of the town were closed next day and he would otherwise have been a prisoner. He was glad to get away as he had received such a scant welcome. His return journey to Paris was an interesting one of 26 hours. On the way he was

intrigued that people would constantly come into the carriage from the outside when the guards had passed - spies seemed to be everywhere. On reaching Paris he was unwilling to give in and so he joined up with Dr. Marion Sims who had been invited by the Americans in Paris to come over from New York and organise an American Ambulance for Service in the Field. Marion Sims - a gynaecologist - had learned his military surgery in the American Civil War, and was a trained and hardened campaigner. It is interesting to see how easy it is to convert a gynaecologist to war surgery. Spencer Wells made his reputation for military surgery in the Crimea.

The Ambulance was made into a combined affair - with eight British and eight American surgeons. Difficulties arose very soon as the ambulance teams themselves wanted to go to the forward area, but the organisers in Paris, thinking of themselves, wished it to remain in Paris, realising that a long siege in the near future was inevitable (as indeed it was). The combined ambulance however won the day and went forward. It left Paris on August 28, and on the fateful night of August 30 - remembered by all Frenchmen - it was at Sedan. It was here in the early hours of the morning - whilst pacing along the deserted railway platform, with the rest of the team bivouacked in the station - that William MacCormac saw at 2 a.m. an engine with a single cattle truck drawing in, and out of it stepped the Emperor of France - Napoleon III - with two attendants. MacCormac followed the Emperor who had great difficulty getting into the town proper as the drawbridge was up and those inside were loath to let it down. Although Napoleon's entry into the town was ignominious, it was worse still when he left it a prisoner of war some few days later. On that day he lost his freedom and his Empire. Sedan was the greatest and most humiliating surrender in history, 173,000 men with 3,000 cannon. It was a flagrant act of treason.

MacCormac had a hospital of 384 beds in an old disused infantry barracks on the ramparts - The Caserne D'Asfeld. In his diary he gives great details of the of the day to day work. At the beginning it was only a giant with tremendous physique who could have stood up to the strain, with 1,000 casualties the first day. The work went on continuously for ten days with everyone overworked and at breaking point. It is interesting to see that in the last war many of his findings were rediscovered. Surgeons, he said, if constantly overworked, fail to give of their best. It is sound judgment and clear intelligence that begins to fail before the actual physical fatigue. There were in all 12,000 wounded at Sedan - excluding the dead -

Ian James Fraser

about the same number as at Arromanches on the invasion of France in the last war. Deaths as one would expect were chiefly from hospital gangrene, pyaemia, and erysipelas. There were no such things as antibiotics, and chloroform was the regular anaesthetic. A tourniquet was not used and the blood vessels were mostly twisted and not tied. Wounds were dressed with dilute carbolic acid in some form or another as suggested by Lister. Lister was most precise in his directions. This certainly allowed much more bone and joint surgery to be attempted than had been done before. In a letter on his return to Col. Lloyd-Lindsay, V.C., M.P., to whom he was reporting the results of his work, he very much regretted that, due to shortage of carbolic acid and the inability to get any more, all the wounded could not be treated in the Listerian way. It is interesting to see the impact that Lister and MacCormac both made in surgery. Lister provided the ideas and technique and MacCormac carried out the field trials. They were close friends, Lister being older by nine years. Although MacCormac may have had difficulty getting established in London when the time came he did not face the hostile reception that poor Lister, born in Essex in 1827, did when he arrived at King's College from Edinburgh having been 25 years north of the border. When Lister succeeded Fergusson in 1877 the disappointed local candidate put every obstruction in his way. Lister and MacCormac had other things in common, neither had any children and both had wonderful wives who acted as secretary for them; much of MacCormac's writings were typed by his wife, an expert typist, and one can see much of Lister's work handwritten by Mrs. Lister.

At Sedan in the heat of the battle MacCormac slept with the men and on one occasion his team dealt with 240 cases in 24 hours. He mentions with great annoyance that finally when he did get a chance to sleep he was unable to do so due to bugs! His hospital naturally was in no man's land with shells passing over it from both sides and on one occasion he had a near miss by a stray shell. Although carbolic acid was in short supply he does mention with some annoyance that there was available for the wounded "Liebeg's meat extract" - I wonder if this still carries with the expert dietitian the reputation that it had then!

On many occasions MacCormac repeats the well known dictum that a living man with three limbs is better than a dead one with four. He also pointed out, as so many since have recognised, that the only instrument with which to seek for a retained bullet is the finger. With immediate amputation he had a small

mortality, but delayed or secondary amputation, e.g., after an ambulance journey, carried a heavy death rate. His book on the medical aspects of this campaign is almost a classic. It was translated into seven European languages as well as Japanese. It was fortunate for MacCormac that he had associated with him a war correspondent from one of the London papers who supervised his writing. At regular intervals reports on the progress of the surgery of this war were sent to the *Lancet*; all of which gave him a reputation which was to stand him in good stead when he was to apply later for a consultant post at St. Thomas' Hospital in London. It was these and the day to day diary that he kept that made his book "Notes and Recollections of an Ambulance Surgeon" so readable and so valuable as a book of reference. It contained many touching incidents. He describes his tour through the battlefields. On one occasion he found a dog beside the body of his dead master which it refused to leave. He was also much touched by the sight of so many dead horses - anything to do with dogs or horses appealed greatly to MacCormac. Probably the most touching incident was when he went out with Langenbeck - the German surgeon and an old-standing friend - who was going out to search for his son who was missing. Eventually they found the young Langenbeck mortally wounded. He described how he got his boots off for the first time after fifteen days - and how worried and alarmed he was when he himself got a septic finger with signs of extension of the poison up his arm. For some time he thought that the drinking water had a rather unusual flavour, but it was only when they got to the bottom of the cistern that the reason was found. The tank contained the bodies of two dead Zouaves who had fallen in while trying to hide to avoid being caught. This put him off water, he said, for some time! He did not mind eating horse flesh, he said, but he did object to this type of infusion with which to wash it down. In some circles it was called "Eau de Zouave".

His book contains many illustrations and technical details of individual injuries with a comparison of the wounds inflicted by the different missiles. It was perhaps his early training in engineering that gave him such an interest in ballistics and the different injuries inflicted by hard and soft bullets. This interest remained with him all his life. A lecture he gave a few months before he died was called "Gun Shot Wounds, Old and New". Serving as he did in two further campaigns he was a recognised expert in a speciality not very useful for peace-time surgery, but it was said that if there was a serious shooting accident in the Highlands during the

Ian James Fraser

season he was always brought along as the expert. He got the name of always being more interested in military than in civil surgery. To read his book we realise that this man was in his element, and we are not surprised that five years later, when most people would have been consolidating their position in London, we find him off again to another European war; nor indeed should we be surprised when we see the same man at the age of 65 taking part in his third war - this time in South Africa. It is interesting that often a man who goes to one war wants to go to another - it is a psychological fact sometimes hard to explain.

On Marion Sims returning to the United States, William MacCormac took over full charge of the ambulance unit and when finally he returned to England he handed over control to Marion Sims' son-in-law; but by then the main problems of this short tragic war were virtually over.

MacCormac and his wife were regular visitors to the Continent. Some four years before the Franco-Prussian war while travelling by train in Northern France, they had the thrill of being involved in a railway accident. William, as in keeping with his way of life, took charge of the medical problems. His work was so much appreciated that he and his wife were given by Baron Rothschild a free ticket for life on the Chemin de Fer du Nord - a present that most of us would accept with pleasure.

William, now back from the war, has become a civilian again and is an applicant for a consultant post in a London hospital. When he spoke to one senior physician in Brook Street and told him that he thought of applying for St Thomas', the latter said, "You have not a chance, they would not take you in as a bottle washer." Little did he know William MacCormac. The latter had personality, a sound surgical background, and a reputation and a social status enhanced by the Franco-Prussian war. More important still, he had the backing of a very influential group of people who represented what was later called the Red Cross, but who, in addition, at the same time, had great influence on the Board of Management of St. Thomas' Hospital, and so he applied with some confidence, with the usual booklet of testimonials, and with masses of referees both local and international. The records of the hospital say it was a close and bitter contest, but the actual voting shows that MacCormac got 42 votes, James F. West 10 votes, and the third candidate, Richard Barwell, withdrew. His application gave his address as 29 Grosvenor Street, but once appointed and ever afterwards 13 Harley Street is to be his address, and

so on March 9, 1871, he became assistant surgeon in St. Thomas' with later the duties of lecturing on practical manipulative surgery with Mr. Croft. It was in this same year that Queen Victoria had her only surgical experience when Mr. Lister opened a deep axillary abscess; he put in gauze soaked in carbolic but the wound would not discharge and so he replaced this plug with a rubber tube, and this was one of the first occasions that such a wound was so drained. This was in 1871 but Lister did not report it in the *Lancet* until 1908.

Although MacCormac was very proud of his London appointment, in all his books and papers he puts after his name that he is consultant surgeon to the Belfast General Hospital (from 1875 the Belfast Royal Hospital, and from 1899 The Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast). His pride and love for his old city was one of his finest features, and like Lister he had a very warm and close relationship with his father. One may wonder why he chose St. Thomas' Hospital. This hospital had had over the last few years a troublesome time; originally, when in Southwark, it was cheek by jowl with Guy's Hospital. For a time for teaching purposes there existed a *mariage de convenance* between the two hospitals. However, finally, following a tremendous fight among the students, a permanent coldness existed. The final straw came when the Charing Cross Railway Act was passed through Parliament, and the hospital was asked to vacate its site to allow extension to the railway proper and to enlarge London Bridge Station. A short delay was granted, but finally in January 1862 they were forced to go at once, and given £296,000 compensation - but they had no place to which to go. There was a feverish hunt, 44 sites were considered and finally a short list of 14 places inspected. During all this as a temporary expedient the hospital took over the Surrey Garden Music Hall and pleasure ground at Newington about a quarter of a mile from Kennington Underground. It was far from being a satisfactory solution to the problem. The main building was a glass structure like the Crystal Palace - roofless as the result of fire - and the rest of the accommodation was in buildings which had previously housed a small zoo. The giraffe house became a cholera ward, and the elephant house became the dissecting room. The main building was repaired and adapted for 200 patients and opened in September 15, 1862. The huge glass building was divided into four sections but operating and lavatory facilities were virtually nonexistent. This move was particularly sad as the old St. Thomas' had been on the original site for over 600 years.

Ian James Fraser

The wrangling to choose a new site continued and finally Standgate site on the river opposite the Houses of Parliament was chosen. There was much opposition to this; the river was sluggish, the smells so great that in a hot summer even Parliament could not sit. This changed naturally with the building of the Albert Embankment. In 1864 a team of experts went to Paris, and decided to copy the Hospital Lariboisière, the latest hospital built on the pavilion plan. It was to contain 588 beds. Florence Nightingale agreed on the plan but not on the site. She opposed the river site on account of the fog, the smoke and the foul smells. It was sad that she refused to be present at the laying of the foundation stone by Queen Victoria when she came in May 1868 in deep mourning with Mr. and Mrs. Disraeli, or when the Queen came again on June 21, 1871, to open the new hospital. It is said that at the second visit Mr. Gladstone got lost in the crowd, detached from the Queen, as they did not realise that a change in Prime Minister had taken place recently.

Although the Surrey Garden site helped to fill in the hiatus between the old and the new hospital it could not contain all the patients and many other hospitals were kind enough to help out. It was in fact in the final stages of the Surrey Garden period that William MacCormac joined the staff and so was present when they moved into the new hospital, and made his personal entrance into the hurly burly of London surgery at the psychologically correct moment. His main surgical qualification at that time was the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. To make him acceptable to his London colleagues he was made F.R.C.S. England *ad eundem*. This *ad eundem* Fellowship had only been inaugurated in 1852 and he was one of the first to be appointed. It gave the holder all the rights and privileges of being a Fellow of the English College of Surgeons and no one made more use of the privilege or did more for his adopted college than William MacCormac.

Within two years his surgical chief, Mr. LeGros Clark, retired and MacCormac in 1873 at the age of 37 found himself a member of the full staff and joint teacher in surgery with Mr. Sydney Jones. The rule in St. Thomas' at that time, as indeed in many other London hospitals, was that a surgeon could remain on the full staff for 20 years or retire at the age of 60, whichever came first. The idea was that this period of service should be long enough to give him a good living and also allow him to save for his pension. It did mean that MacCormac must face the fact that in 1892 at the early age of 57 he must retire from his hospital. This arrangement actually persisted till the National

Health Service took over all appointments on 8th July, 1948, when the retiring age became 65 years for all.

The next 20 years were exciting and important years for him. At the end of that time when sending in his letter of resignation he said that he had not missed more than six clinical lectures with his students! This was hard to understand when we know that he disappeared off to a second war during this time and also during the organisation of the 7th International Conference in 1881 he was so busy that he asked to be relieved of his hospital work and had a *locum tenens* appointed in his stead!

During the twenty years he wrote many papers and published some very important books on general surgery, surgical technique, and orthopaedic surgery. They were well and clearly written without the verbiage so annoying in his father's works. The illustrations, beautifully drawn, always showed the surgeon's hands with a very well cut sleeve and stiff cuff and sleeve links protruding! He got some reputation for being the first man to close the ruptured urinary bladder, and in his book on plastic surgery he describes the formation of a new nose from the forehead flap - originally invented in India where removal of the female nose was a very common form of retaliation by a husband somewhat annoyed by his wife's discovered infidelity.

In 1875 MacCormac went off to his second war. It might have been said of him, as of the stage Irishman, "If there is a good war about I want to join in." This time it was the Turko-Serbian war in the Balkans. He was chief surgical adviser to the British Society for Aid to the Wounded and was again asked as a neutral to help. The atrocities in the Balkans created great horror in England. This was voiced by Gladstone in a famous political campaign. The Serbians were defeated at first by the Turks, but between the Russians and the Serbs there existed an unofficial treaty and so with the defeat of the Serbians the Russians entered to create the Russian-Turkish war of 1876 in which Turkey was soundly defeated.

With his reputation from the Franco-Prussian war William MacCormac was the recognised adviser to the Government in matters medical as far as the army was concerned and so he was asked at once by the Stafford Committee to furnish ambulances for the Turko-Serbian war. He went off next year with Lord Wantage to the Russo-Turkish war and was present at the Battle of Alexinatz, where he was able to use Listerian methods correctly with very gratifying results. He was a great success as an ambulance surgeon. In addition to his own personal operating he was able to distribute British surgeons and medical

Ian James Fraser

stores where they would be most useful. He was asked to go to Russia to give advice as a result of his success in this campaign. For this work he was made a Knight of Grace in the Order of St. John of Jerusalem - his proudest decoration. For many years he was chief surgeon to the St. John Ambulance Association.

Although not much Listerian surgery was used in the Franco-Prussian war and what there was, was done by the Germans, in the Russo-Turkish war it was much employed especially by Prof. von Bergmann. It is interesting to see that it was he who was to be one of those to advocate replacing antiseptic surgery by aseptic surgery a few years later.

MacCormac obviously had a disregard for the collecting of money as he went off to this war still deeply "in the red". He returned from this war, his second war, with enhanced reputation and loaded with exciting foreign decorations, some never seen in London before. He had already received the highest Prussian and French decorations for his services in the Franco-Prussian war. All this did not help much in any way the financial state of his struggling practice.

It is hard not to be impressed with his flamboyant personality. Perhaps his careless dress, his eccentricities, his red tie, and his tall walking stick were somewhat studied. But in himself, as trained by his father, he was an early riser and often a guest in his house was not impressed with a trot in the park at 6 a.m. or even 5 a.m. He always would drive up to hospital in a smart brougham with scarlet wheels and drawn by a fine matched pair of shining black horses. This love of display and his personal generosity endeared him to the students. By many he was called the "Irish Giant", but with the students as a whole he was always known as "Billy Mac". Although ostensibly careless in his dress he was meticulous in his diary and every month for twenty years his accounts were put out in detail. The upkeep of his stable was a large item and his cigar and wine bill was a regular expense. In 1866 we see he gave a ball to mark his silver wedding, and in the same year we see he has bought some very expensive diamonds for "dear Kate". In his diary we see he paid a bill of £2,319.12.8. It is sad that they never had any children.

He bought his first brougham in 1876. This is marked in red ink - a red letter day. Never a slave to convention, the story is told that a niece of his wife, a lady married to a distinguished German naval officer, once returned to the house in Harley Street more than upset because her host had attached - for the purpose of drying it - his pocket handkerchief to his stick and with the flag fluttering from his open carriage - like a lancer - had driven round the park in

the afternoon saluting and receiving salutes from his many acquaintances. He became a keen fisherman and it was said he could be seen in Cavendish Square teaching himself how to cast a fly. He played at golf; he was a late starter but a great enthusiast although a moderate performer, and he was a regular player on the links at Mitcham always accompanied by his dog. It is interesting to read in one of his letters of 1900 of how much he enjoyed Portrush and Rosapenna, which seems to bring him almost up to date with modern times.

On one occasion a new surgeon, a Mr. Cullingworth, was appointed to St. Thomas' - he had come from Manchester and was coldly received by the staff - probably appointed by the Board of Management. A meeting was held as the new surgeon's abilities were somewhat suspect. It was suggested that his operating should be supervised by a member of the staff, and Sir William was given the invidious task of conveying this rather unpleasant decision to the new surgeon. Sir William called on him one evening and explained that he felt rather ashamed of this decision. Cullingworth, having seen the famous surgeon to his carriage, came back to the hall to find waiting for him a parcel with a freshly killed salmon. Mr. Cullingworth's supervision by the surgeons was very short lived indeed.

Sir William was a lover of all animals, but especially dogs. In fact he was rarely to be seen without one. His most famous was Baron Bruno, a black curly haired Newfoundland retriever. This had originally been a gift to him from Mr. Farquarson, M.P. It was his daily companion on his early walks at 5 a.m. or 6 a.m. in the park. It was said to accompany him on his ward rounds and to hurdle over the patients' beds - perhaps with the National Health Service there might have been objections. In his diary he says that it did not attend his lectures but was always at his consulting room in Harley Street, in fact was part of the equipment, and it knew the difference between his old and new patients. It saw him off on his trip to South Africa; it was said to mope all the time that he was away. Although it went daily to get the paper, it did so with the tail down, and yet when the day came for the carriage to go to the station to meet the great man on his return from the Boer War, and Bruno was asked to get into the carriage, he seemed to know whom he was going to meet. In later years it was a touching sight to see Sir William, then aged 65, having to carry in his arms Bruno, who was no light weight, but was then getting blind and deaf, and no longer safe in the London traffic. He died, as quoted in the diary 23rd September, 1901, and was obviously one of

Ian James Fraser

Sir William's closest friends. It is nice to see in his collection of medals and decorations that Bruno's dog collar takes pride of place. He died just a few months before his master and was laid to rest after ten years of closest companionship and devoted service - "a splendid dog physically and mentally and in every way."

There were other dogs mentioned in his diary but Bruno was known to all - even mentioned in the daily press. Sir William on one occasion bought himself a bicycle and had a misunderstanding with a London cabby; the latter, having knocked Sir William down, whipped up his horse and made off but was "apprehended" and appeared in Bow Street next day, and, as a result of Sir William's account of the accident, was duly fined. We also see in the diary that in October 1901 Sir William sold back to the wine company his champagne - a sure sign of his failing interest in life.

Many references have been made to his striking appearance, and it is not unexpected therefore to find that he was one of those chosen by Sir Luke Fildes, K.C.V.O., in 1891 to portray the part of the physician in the painting "The Doctor", now in the Tate Gallery. Another one chosen was Sir Farquhar Buzzard's father, Dr. Thomas Buzzard.

In 1881 an enormous medical International Conference met in London. It was the seventh of these conferences to be held and for this meeting Sir James Paget was elected to be President, and William MacCormac was the general secretary. He was for such a conference the perfect person, a man with an international reputation, a fluency in many languages, and, with his foreign travel from his student days, as well as his two wars, he had many personal friends. With his visits to America he had many friends in the New World also. His friendliness, his meticulous care, which we see in his diary, made him the perfect choice for this difficult job.

With 2,500 delegates, to arrange the necessary scientific sections, their work, their play, their accommodation, was indeed a full time job. Not only did MacCormac devote himself wholeheartedly to the project at the time but as reporter and editor he had six months of work before the records and reports of the proceedings could be published in the various foreign languages. For all this he had to ask for temporary leave of absence from his hospital. The meeting was an outstanding success for British surgery. It had broken down barriers and much of this was due to MacCormac's personal charm. Although for the country it was a great success it certainly in no way helped his own personal bank balance, with

his family debt not yet paid off. An immediate request was made to the Queen through Lord Salisbury and in December 1881 William was given the accolade of Knight Bachelor at the age of 45.

Belfast showed their pride in Sir William as twice during his term of office at St. Thomas' he was given an honorary degree. The first was in 1879 when he was given the M.Ch. of the Queen's University in Ireland, and again in 1882 he received the D.Sc. Hon. Causa with a gold medal from the Royal University of Ireland, as it was now known. It is given to very few to be given two honorary degrees by one's *alma mater*, but I suppose when Trinity College, Dublin, gave him two honorary degrees, an M.D. and an M.Ch. on the same day, it was an even more unique occasion.

A very close relationship existed between Sir William and his father, and among his letters of congratulation the one from his father is carefully preserved. His father died in 1886 - he saw a great deal of his son's success but was not there to enjoy his final triumphs.

In his diary he kept a meticulous account of his income, his intakings and his spendings. A careful note was made when he paid for his many paintings and etchings, as well as the day to day running of his house. His professional income was never great - a few thousand pounds per year - small compared with many others of that period, but he preferred to be an ambassador for British surgery, and every important appointment that he filled must have cost him money. It is clear he was never greedy to make money and his will when he died showed that he left some £23,000.

On being retired voluntarily or involuntarily from his hospital staff appointment he was at first distressed and disappointed not to be given an extension even for teaching purposes. The medical staff felt that the rule must not be broken, and this same problem in relation to another St. Thomas' surgeon arose at the time of the inception of the National Health Service. Sir William automatically became a member of the consultant staff as an emeritus lecturer, and he was given the "Green Staff", which was the sign of becoming a member of the Board of Management. This was discontinued some years ago. However, as it happened, a more important work lay ahead for him and a bigger field. Instead of working for one hospital he was to direct British surgery through the medium of the Royal College of Surgeons of England. He had taken the first step in this direction when he was put on the council of the college in 1883 - the same year that Lister was made a Baronet. It was in this year that he went to the U.S.A. and at the Centenary of the Medical School at

Ian James Fraser

Harvard he met and made great friends with Oliver Wendell Holmes. It is always said that for the first period of eight years on the council of the college a councillor is learning his job and is not entrusted with serious or important committees, and so when he retired in 1893 MacCormac is already in his second period and now with time on his hands is able to throw his interest into the welfare of the college. We find him on the Court of Examiners in 1887 and in 1893 he gives the Bradshaw Lecture and 1899 the Hunterian Oration. In 1896 having served the college for 13 years he is elected President. This post is usually held for three years but there was actually no fixed period. However, as 1900 was the centenary year of the foundation of the Royal College of Surgeons, the occasion was to be celebrated with great festivities, honorary degrees, letters of welcome from foreign delegates and so on, and it was obvious that only one man in England could do this well. Sir William's term of office was extended to cover that great occasion. In 1897 he was made a Baronet by Her Majesty to mark her golden jubilee, although this honour later became the privilege of the President, both of this college as well as of the Royal College of Physicians. Sir William MacCormac was at this stage carrying great influence both inside and outside his profession. He was co-operating with Florence Nightingale, as we can see by the letters from her in his diary, on the training of nurses - and he was one of the important figures behind the scenes responsible in 1898 for the R.A.M.C. as we know it today. There had been difficulties and obstruction for a long time from the other units of the Army. It was actually finally, rather unexpectedly, at a Lord Mayor's banquet in London, with the Presidents of both colleges present, that the first intimation of the formation of the R.A.M.C. was announced by Lord Lansdowne.

As a close friend of the Royal Family, both socially and medically, he was called on to see the Prince of Wales, then 60 years of age, when the latter fell down the stairs when he was staying one week-end with Baron Rothschild in his English seat at Weddesdon, Berkshire, in 1898. It was said that H.R.H. had broken his kneecap. Sir William, possibly with the help of God, got a very fine result, and as a result was made Serjeant Surgeon to H.R.H. and was created K.C.V.O. by Queen Victoria. The Victorian Order had only been created 2-3 years before and Sir William was one of the first to be honoured. The Prince of Wales on one occasion pointed out to Sir William that his mother had paid for this decoration out of her own money! On the death of Queen Victoria in 1900 Sir William

became Serjeant Surgeon to the new monarch, King Edward VII, but he had died before the King's famous attack of appendicitis which delayed his coronation, and it was Sir William's friend, Sir Frederick Treves, who had to do the necessary operation.

In his years on the Council as President he did much to enhance British surgery. Broad, well built, and strikingly handsome, soft voiced, singularly courteous, he could at times be apparently (but only apparently) inattentive to what was being said to him, but nothing was further from the truth. His industry, his mastery of detail, and the rapidity of his work and his Irish bonhomie made him a first rate organiser. He was as widely known on the Continent as in England and Ireland, and he broke down the insularity of British surgery. He learned and taught what was being done both at home and abroad. He was the most decorated practising surgeon of his generation, and each medal was a landmark of an incident in a life filled with incidents. His Baronetcy was one of the highlights of his life. He has kept in a book the letters received at that time. It is interesting to see so many from members of the old Royal Victoria Hospital staff. Among the many paper cuttings there were some suggesting that it should have been a Peerage, but his senior, Lord Lister, had just been made a Baron. Lister was more academically and scientifically qualified, and was in addition President of the Royal Society.

In 1897 to mark his Baronetcy the students and friends in Belfast decided to present him with his portrait in oils, and so Mr. Harris Brown was selected, and the portrait we see tonight was presented to him. He is said to look pale, but he has just recovered from a very serious illness, including an empyema of the chest. He is wearing the insignia of a Knight of St. John, his favourite British decoration. This portrait was unveiled in the Library at Queen's before a large audience by the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava - "The Great Marquis". There are two other portraits, by Prince Troubetskoi, one hangs in the Council Room of the Royal College of Surgeons and the other, which was the private property of Lady MacCormac is now with many others of Sir William's more personal effects with Mrs. Henry MacCormac in Sussex. In his diary we see a bill of £42 was paid to Prince Troubetskoi, the painter - a great personal friend. I suppose this money only paid for the frames. Sir William's students had a bust prepared of him in 1897 by Alfred Drury, A.R.A. and this is kept in the main hall at St. Thomas' and a replica was given to the College of Surgeons in 1903 by Lady MacCormac and is in the main entrance hall of the college. There is another in bronze in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast. None of

Ian James Fraser

his portraits or his busts suggest that he had a sense of humour; they all make him too serious and severe. The bust of himself (Fig. 4), his father (Fig. 3) and his wife were given to the Museum in Belfast, also by Lady MacCormac in 1923, and I hope in the New Museum they will get a more prominent and worthy position. In 1897 M. Gambon the French Ambassador to the Court of St. James, informed him that the President of the French Republic wished to make him a Commandeur in the Legion of Honour. He had for many years held this honour in a lower category. This was to mark his retirement after twenty years from the French Hospital in London. He was given a similar tribute from the Italians for his long service to the Italian Hospital, when he retired from it at the same time. These hospitals and Queen Charlotte's were his only other appointments in London in addition to St. Thomas'.

In 1886 his father died, just too soon to see his son's greatest successes. In Sir William's diary we can see a regular cheque being sent to his father and certainly the obituary notice to his father and written by the son shows the great regard he had for him. This was a deep and mutual affection.

Although outwardly apparently careless in dress, in money matters he was meticulous. One month we might find that he had spent £130 for a trip to Norway and Sweden and Copenhagen, or on another £27.5.10. - his expenses to attend a B.M.A. annual meeting in Belfast in 1884. He gave an expensive house party in 1884, costing him £100, and he also had a trip to Wiesbaden in the same year. This must have been a vintage year, as in December he finally paid off his debt to his brother-in-law for the original loan of £4,700. An account with the vet. for the care of his dogs often appears and there were large bills in 1879-1894 when he obviously made vast structural changes to No. 13 Harley Street.

When he was no longer "in the red" we see him spending much money on pictures, etchings, etc., mostly for himself. None of these seemed very expensive although they did contain such well known names as W. L. Wylie, Corot, Whistler, Lawrence, Birket Foster, etc. Mixed up with his pictures he seemed to buy a lot of salsuma ware - plates and jars. It would appear that it was his wife who was the collector of Japanese china. His bill for this for the first year was £124. A new watch cost him £42, and in 1885 he bought a pair of new beds at £33.10.3. It is very rare for a man in his own handwriting to keep such detailed accounts - some rather trivial purchases.

He was very proud of his brougham and certainly

his stable; the repairs and the coachman's outfit seemed to cost him a lot of money. There is a bill for Kate's ticket in 1885 to Hamburg, but next week we find one for himself to Hamburg, Austria, the Tyrol, Italy, Switzerland, and Paris. It is not much wonder that he never had much money at the end of the year and we can understand the modest size of his estate when it was finally published.

On one page in his diary he gives the dates and causes of deaths of many of his relatives: his father, his mother, "Darling Sister May", "Beloved Sister Ann", and on the following page he keeps a list of his dogs - "Judy" born 27th June, 1878, "Mosphin" bought in 1879 from Mrs. Huffnell of Dalkey, and then a note, Poor dear little affectionate Mossy (Mosaphin) died May 4th 1893 - just short of 14 years old. But it was "Bruno" the black curly haired Newfoundland retriever which was a constant friend in his later years; in fact they were almost inseparable.

His general way of life was expensive. His clubs - The Athenaeum, The Reform, The Marlborough - were the most select in London at that time. The Marlborough was almost a private club for the personal friends of Prince Edward, in fact it was H.R.H. who proposed Sir William's name for membership. It was the Duke of Clarence who seconded his nomination. It was fortunate that when at the early age of 57 - no longer able to continue his hospital work - so many other important appointments came his way. Few people realise the influence that he had behind the scenes in military and medical matters.

It perhaps was somewhat surprising to many people that when very much occupied with the preparations for the centenary meeting of the Royal College of Surgeons which was only eight months away he should choose to absent himself for six months to go off to still another war! He was at that time in the fourth year of his Presidency, yet in November 1899 Sir William left to go as chief consulting surgeon to the British Forces in South Africa. It is difficult to understand how the chief actor in the centenary festival could go off to return only eight weeks or so before the meeting itself. During the voyage out he was able to write the address of welcome and keep in touch with those at home. He kept a daily diary of his trip. It was almost six months from beginning to end, although the latter part of a journey was a leisurely one by the East Coast, calling at Cairo and through the Mediterranean. The send-off that he and his younger colleague George Makins got from the St. Thomas' students who came to Waterloo Station to see the boat train off he obviously

Ian James Fraser

thoroughly enjoyed. George Makins was carried by the young men shoulder high up and down the platform, but they seemed to respect Sir William - it may have been his older age or his heavier weight. There were some 300 students there in all. It is interesting to see that George Makins, blooded in the South African war, was to become consultant surgeon in World War I in France, and as Sir George Makins to continue the military influence of St. Thomas' staff which was later seen in well known men like Max Page and Philip Mitchiner.

Bruno came down to the station and took a sad farewell, but Kate went on the boat train to see him off at Southampton. Other consultants followed later. Frederick Treves from the London Hospital followed in the next boat with a few nursing sisters. It was he who was to succeed Sir William as surgeon to the Royal Family. There was also Sir William Stokes from Dublin, nominated by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland - he actually died on active service. The Irish College of Surgeons in World War I was again asked to nominate a consultant surgeon and so Andrew Fullerton from Belfast - later Professor of Surgery - went to France to bring honour to this school and himself, with his pioneer work in genito-urinary injuries as well as blood transfusion and wound sepsis.

Sir William's day to day handwritten diary was kept in the form of letters to his wife who, being an adept typist, had them typed and now bound in one volume they form a very interesting record of his time there. He described in detail his various visits to the front line, his operating in the forward area as well as in the base hospitals. He describes seeing at Frere an ambulance convoy of ten waggons, each drawn by ten mules, and with three surgeons in charge. In addition there were 56 army hospital stretcher bearers and 300 volunteer stretcher bearers. He pointed out that the tracks were so bad that no wounded man could endure the bumping, and so most people were hand carried for, in some cases, several miles - a great contrast to our ambulance system of the last war and of today. He was fortunate to escape the shells at Colenso, but compensated for this by falling over a tent rope. Being a big and heavy man the fall was quite serious and he had a very painful knee for some considerable time. At Colenso he had the tragic experience of seeing young Lieutenant Roberts, the son of "Bobs" lying fatally wounded with through and through bullet wounds in his lower abdomen which had shattered his pelvis and his pelvic organs. There was nothing to be done; he left him to the care of Fred Treves who looked after him till he died. This,

the only son of Lord Roberts, was awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry in trying to save the guns, a decoration his father had also won many years before. Sir William, like most of the soldiers, was himself in hospital for a few days with dysentery. It would appear to have been a fairly mild attack and to have responded fairly quickly to a bismuth mixture. He certainly must have recovered from it fairly well as he was able to stand up to the rigours of the rest of the campaign, and to undertake the hard work of sight-seeing at the Pyramids in Egypt on the way back.

A pleasant outcome of his stay in hospital was that like all wounded and sick soldiers he was given the "Queen's Chocolate Box", a personal present from the Queen. "The Queen's Tin" he kept with his decorations as one of his treasured possessions. He celebrated his 65th birthday in South Africa with a champagne party and it was soon after this that Lord Roberts, the Commander in Chief, wrote to him a personal letter pointing out that he felt he had reached an age to no longer stand up to forced marches and suggesting that he should go home. This, I am sure, he was intending to do at any rate as the time was approaching for the London meeting.

He was very critical in his diary of the British generals, and particularly Buller for his handling of the Ladysmith affair, and being now himself a hardened campaigner - this being his third campaign - we must suppose he had a reasonable knowledge of military affairs. He had unbounded regard and respect for the Commander in Chief, Lord Roberts, and kept praising two other Irish men - one a young General called John French and the other a more seasoned soldier, Sir George White. The journey home from South Africa was much more strenuous than the pleasant easy sea voyage when outward bound on the s.s. Birton, when he was able to rest, to play deck games, and to prepare his address for the centenary meeting. He had many friends on board going out, among them Lord Basil Blackwood, son of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, who was going out to see Lord Ava who was later killed fighting. He always seemed delighted to meet people with Northern Ireland connections. He had a touching farewell at Southampton from "Dear Kate" and was delighted to have a telegram from her awaiting him at Madeira; it was here that he heard that Ladysmith was now cut off. His first stop was at Capetown, where he saw General Buller who said he was hoping soon to go to the aid of Sir George White at Ladysmith, at this time Buller was shortly going to be replaced by Lord Roberts who was now due to start from England. In

Ian James Fraser

his diary he was not an admirer of Kitchener; he thought he got the glory in the Sudan but it was Hunter who did the work. Perhaps he knew that Kitchener was never very much in favour of medical men. Kitchener's famous remark had never been forgotten: "You want pills, I want bullets, and bullets come first!"

He gave great details of his journey to the front mostly done by hospital train. He set up a hospital at Frere for General Buller. It was in a wonderful situation 12,000 feet up, with wonderful scenery. The rarified atmosphere meant that he was always thirsty and even with unlimited soda water and champagne he still remained thirsty. He kept stressing the fact that the ground was so rough that carts were no use for transporting the wounded; they had to be hand carried in some cases from 5-6 miles and for this a total of 2,400 stretcher-bearers had been enrolled. He was interested to pass the scene of the armoured train disaster where Winston Churchill had been taken prisoner. After the battle of Colenso he had a good deal of personal operating to do. He had two operating tents with two operating tables in each. It was in this battle that he found young Lieutenant Roberts mortally wounded, and it was here that he had the severe fall when he tripped over the guy rope of a tent. He said he was black and blue all over for several days.

Many wives were making the trip out to South Africa, and at this stage he wired to his wife not to come. He sent her home instead as a present some fruit, a set of antlers for the hall, and some ostrich feathers! To some who served in more recent wars this may all sound rather amusing. His house was quite a museum filled with various trophies that he had collected in various trips abroad - bullets, shell cases, etc. In addition he did not forget his own medical school, and there are still - although some have been lost - bullets, specimens and other relics which he sent home to the hospital museum.

Mrs. Makins came out as sister in charge of No. 1 General Hospital and Fred Treves had a small group of well trained London Hospital nurses with him. In his diary he described vividly the dust storms and a plague of locusts; so many of these lay dead on the railway line that the wheels of the engine could not get a catch on the lines. He mentions with great irritation getting his bag stolen with opera glasses, valuable papers and notes, and worst of all, his stock of cigars from England.

About this time and before coming home he paid a visit to Lord Roberts at the Modder River. On March 1st 1900 Ladysmith was relieved at last, thanks to

Lord Roberts attacking from the rear. This was a wonderful night in South Africa, as indeed it was in London - bands, fireworks, terrific enthusiasm with Rudyard Kipling making his famous speech at the dinner in the Mount Nelson Hotel at Capetown: "This victory has consolidated the Empire; the colonies are prouder of the Mother Country than they have ever been before." This was said 67 years ago! Certainly Lord Roberts, who arrived in South Africa in January to take over the Command from Buller, had made wonderful progress in a short time compared with the static operations of Buller. Ladysmith does not make such pleasant reading with the people who had to live on horse flesh and had only cart wheel grease with which to fry their biscuits. It could only have lasted three weeks more. General White himself was very ill, and Fred Treves, who took over control, would have described it as a modern Belsen.

By now Sir William, having travelled 6,500 miles, is ready for home, and in his diary is preserved a personal letter from Lord Roberts thanking him for the wonderful help and inspiration that he had given to all. He chose to do the journey home in what might be called the easy way with short stops at the various towns on the East Coast - Lorenzo, Marques, Beira, Mozambique, Dar-es-salaam, Aden, Suez, Cairo. This was obviously much more tiring than a simple sea voyage. He was sorry to return and leave the war not yet finished. He pointed out that the total number of troops sent to South Africa was 200,000 - ten times the number that went to the Crimea or to Waterloo. At Alexandria he got an Italian boat. He called at Naples to find Kate and some of her relatives waiting for him. With a call at Rome, Turin and Paris, where he stopped to have lunch with a very old friend, Professor Pozzi, he finally arrived in London on April 26th in time for dinner. Coming through Calais on the way back he was waylaid by reporters and had to give a press conference. He was always "news" wherever he went.

On his return to London Sir William had at once to get down to the serious business of the final preparations for the meeting in July. Although the barbers had actually separated from the surgeons in 1745 it was only in 1800 that King George III had given the surgeons the Charter and this meeting was to celebrate the centenary of the incorporation of the surgeons of England by a Royal Charter. The meeting was intended as a welcome to illustrious guests from many and distant countries as well as great surgeons and personal friends, and also to welcome guests from our own country from the Church, the Law, and the ancient seats of learning, as well as to report on

Ian James Fraser

the progress of surgery not only in Britain but in other countries. The most distinguished Fellow there was naturally Lord Lister, the President of the Royal Society, who always on such occasions with his usual humility insisted that his discovery and suggestions arose directly from the work of that famous French chemist Louis Pasteur.

When the barbers and surgeons separated it was the barbers who were left with their elegant hall, its livery and its plate, which meant that the new company of surgeons had no fixed abode till they finally settled in Lincoln's Inn Fields. This meeting was an opportunity to elect H.R.H. The Prince of Wales to be an Honorary Fellow, and as it happened he was the first Honorary Fellow to be elected. Three years before this the idea had been mooted of giving Honorary Fellowships but it was found that the Charter did not allow it and so a new Charter was drafted, and it was as a result of this that it was possible to honour the Prince of Wales. It is interesting that in doing so we were doing in reverse what Henry VII had done when he gave the freedom to the surgeons to practise surgery as seen in that well known picture by Holbein, and now it was the privilege of the surgeons to give Prince Edward the freedom to practise as a surgeon.

The Fellowship was actually given privately to H.R.H. two days before the meeting at Marlborough House and not at the college, although all subsequent members of the Royal Family have come to Lincoln's Inn Fields to receive the Honorary Fellowship.

Although Sir William had just come back to England only two months before this important event he was not allowed much time to himself. Two days after disembarking a very special dinner was given at the Reform Club by Lord Rosebery to honour both himself and Mr. Fred Treves. Both men charmed their hosts and the other guests by the stories of the South African Campaign, but Frederick Treves got into considerable trouble for one remark which for many weeks produced letters in the Press. He said that there were two main plagues in South Africa - one was flies and the other women. The flies were easily dealt with, they could be got rid of by sprays or smoking, but they did disappear at night. These ladies thought that they were a type of Florence Nightingale, but they came out dressed for a picnic. "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." It is interesting that the same comments were made by Marion Sims at the time of the American Civil War.

With the publications of the honours for the South African War in 1900 we find that Sir William has been made a K.C.B. - a Knight for the fourth time.

Some of the London Companies decided to honour him and in June the Salters made him a Freeman, presenting him with an elegant casket and scroll. Within the next few months three other London Livery Companies admitted him - The Leather Sellers, The Carpenters, The Barbers. To be made a Freeman of four companies is surely unique.

The centenary meeting was a great success. Two Honorary Fellowships were given to two great statesmen - Lord Salisbury and, representing Scotland, Lord Rosebery, and after that 35 distinguished graduates representing surgery in all parts of the world were presented - a few of the foreign guests made speeches of thanks, but for all it was a wonderful occasion. Sir William's address of welcome with H.R.H. the Prince of Wales present was published later in book form. This was the highlight of Sir William's career. Many said he looked tired and that he had never fully recovered from his dysentery in South Africa. Others said he looked fitter than ever. Whilst the papers were full of the success of the meeting Sir William was having to answer unpleasant letters in the press complaining of the bad medical arrangements in South Africa. This was started by a war correspondent of the Times, who was also a member of Parliament, and obviously a troublesome fellow. Heated letters followed with support for the R.A.M.C. coming from Lord Roberts, Dr. A. Conan Doyle, and Rudyard Kipling. The last being always somewhat outspoken perhaps did his cause more harm than good. It did mean, however, that a full scale enquiry was held and the correspondent, Mr. Burdett-Coutts, who had written on the "War Hospital Horrors", had to withdraw his remarks. Watson Cheyne and Lenthal Cheate, well known London surgeons who had also served in South Africa, were pulled into this controversy.

In his three wars Sir William had seen important medical progress. In the Franco-Prussian war although Listerian antiseptics had been invented yet it was not fully accepted, and carbolic acid was in very short supply. However, chloroform, which was missing in the Crimea, had been available for all. In the 1875 war antiseptic surgery was in full swing, accepted by all - with dramatic results, and in the Boer War for the first time at the base hospital the new toy of X-rays was being used.

In the autumn of 1900 after the meeting MacCormac had a well earned holiday, although he had to attend many dinners to celebrate his various successes. The Belfast Graduates formed a society of which he was the first President. They gave him a magnificent banquet. This society is still in existence.

Ian James Fraser

Lord Roberts, although asked, was unable to attend. The Queen asked Sir William to go down to dinner with her at the Isle of Wight, and the Prince of Wales had now fully recovered having had a convalescence in the Royal Yacht "Osborne" off Cowes. There was a dinner to celebrate the work done by Field-Marshal Sir George White, a very famous Ulsterman. Sir William had a very busy time and was glad to escape to Northern Ireland. We find that on 8th September 1900 he played golf at Portrush followed by two weeks at Rosapenna - a game he enjoyed although only a moderate performer.

Sir William was described by some as the male counterpart of Florence Nightingale, and it is interesting to see that they both served the same hospital. After Lister he was the best known surgeon in England and whilst Sir William was covered with foreign and political decorations Lister got the highest academic rewards that scientific bodies could give. To be made President of the Royal Society is the highest honour possible and to be recognised by 80 honorary degrees from all the old universities - British and foreign - stamped the character of the man.

In October of the same year we see a letter to the editor of the Northern Whig Belfast, suggesting that Sir William be made a Freeman of the city. The Lord Mayor, however, was not in favour as arrangements had been made to honour Lord Roberts, and to do both at the same time would have been impossible.

With so much work to do one might think that Sir William over the years might have neglected his home, but this was far from the case. He had a very happy home life; he had enlarged at great expense some years previously No. 13 Harley Street to make a library and den for himself, and this he had fitted with books, etchings, and the various trophies, guns, photographs, and other souvenirs that he had brought back from his various wars. The Queen chocolate box from South Africa took pride of place. There was a shell case from "Long Tom" - a shell fired at Ladysmith, many Zulu relics, as well as his many decorations, hospital staff groups. In addition Lady MacCormac was a great collector of Japanese porcelain. There was a large photograph of him operating at the Bellevue Hospital, New York. There was his own portrait in oils - now in the College of Surgeons, and an interesting one of Lady MacCormac done by the French painter Dupuis. Perhaps the main interest of this latter portrait is that the painter was irritated by the unfavourable criticism of his work by the editor of a French newspaper that he challenged him to a duel. This took place and Dupuis was killed.

No. 13 Harley Street had an interesting background as it was the Town House in the Regency period of the notable Beau Brummell. Always popular with his juniors in his younger days - the parties at his house were something to be remembered, as well as the picnics in the country. A day on the river was something never to be forgotten. Everyone had to help but Sir William did much of the hard work himself. He always kept young in spirit. He always kept open house to the students and his friends at home from abroad. Although generally very popular, like most flamboyant people he usually had a "good press", yet not always so. In one or two papers it was said of his speeches that "this surgeon seemed to sympathize more with slaughter, and, indeed, that the aim of war was to kill." Freeman's Journal said, speaking of Sir William: "It would appear that it is killing rather than curing that excites his enthusiasm." Certainly in his lectures and speeches he often went into great detail regarding the type of bullet - dum-dum, explosive or soft nose, and whether the rifle was a Mauser or a Lee-Mitford.

Not enough mention is made of Lady MacCormac, who went hand in hand with him for forty years. Her home and his care seem to be her main interests. She loved London and said that New York, which they visited three times, would be her second choice. They also greatly enjoyed Russia - especially Moscow. In this modern period of easy transport we do not realise the hardships that such journeys must have entailed.

In the autumn of 1900 we see from his diary that private practice had diminished. At this stage he gave up his staff appointment to the French and Italian Hospitals in London to which he had been attached for twenty years. The light had, however, to a certain extent gone out of his life. I suppose like Alexander the Great, he had no more fields to conquer. In 1901 he gave up his final staff appointment which was that of visiting surgeon to Queen Charlotte's Hospital. In March he was the guest speaker at the Hunterian dinner with again his theme being the medical manpower of the South African war.

In August 1901 he attended one of his last big meetings when he was the guest speaker at the annual meeting of the British Medical Association at Cheltenham. His subject again was "Gunshot Wounds - Old and New." I am afraid that, like his father, he was starting to ride his hobby horse too much, sufficiently, certainly to make people think that he only had one idea. However, in October 1901 he opened the Post Graduate Medical College attached to the West London Hospital. He always performed

Ian James Fraser

well on an occasion of this sort although he did make it the opportunity to have a shot at the War Office and their meanness to the medical officer. In the autumn of 1901 people noticed that he was failing somewhat. In the summer he had had a holiday at Lahinch and seemed in excellent form, although the standard of his golf was not up to the standard of the golf course. We see from October there were fewer public duties in his diary. His final illness was only a matter of two or three weeks. He had great pain in his back and suffered from insomnia, and making no progress at home he agreed in early December to try the waters at Bath. He seemed to benefit greatly the first day and decided to get up even earlier the next day but was overtaken by a heart attack and passed away very suddenly. He was 66 years old and relatively young in mind and body and his death was felt to be premature for a man of his physique, his athletic build, and above all his family history. He was working hard, like his father, on a book at the time of his death, on operative surgery, which was never published. It was said of him by some, as was said of John Hunter, "The great surgeon had gone to his rest, cut off in the middle of his glory - he died in harness".

He died on 4th December, 1901, and was buried five days later in the central avenue at the cemetery in Kensal Green. He had been a fairly regular attender, especially after the South African campaign, at the Church of St. Peter in Vere Street. The funeral naturally was an enormous one, requiring two further hearses to carry the floral wreaths. His wife survived him, living in Albert Court, Kensington, London, S.W., in adequate comfort with her four maids till her death in 1923. One cannot be too grateful to her for leaving the busts and other mementoes to remind us of a very great man. Someone described him as the most important Ulster medical man since Hans Sloane. Sir William's work with the younger generation was one of his most important functions. On giving out the prizes he always reminded them that work in life was not over by gaining the M.D. and that they must in addition keep up outside interests - something which he practised himself. Being a general surgeon he was rather opposed to sub-specialization which even then he saw was starting to appear. His exhibitionism and his studied eccentricities did not mask a generous kind and warm hearted man with a love of simple things and although he walked with kings he never lost the common touch. In a stirring life it would be unfair if we do not stress the support that he got in all his problems from "Dear Kate".

Belfast will always remember of Sir William that although a Londoner by adoption he was proud of his

Ulster roots and his Ulster friends.

His vast collection of decorations included :

Knight Bachelor

Baronet

K.C.V.O.

Crown of Italy - Commander and Knight
Commander

Naval Merit Award of Spain

Order of Dannebrog

Knight of Malta

Queen's South Africa Medal, 3 bars

Queen Victoria 60 year Commemoration Medal

Legion of Honour - Commander-Chevalier

Order of the Crown of Prussia

Prussian Commemoration Medal

Order of Medjidie of Turkey

Polar Star of Sweden

Order of Takavo Serbia

Order of Tower and Sword of Portugal

The lives of these two men make an interesting contrast. As father and son they must have had many of the same genes, and yet in each they showed themselves in a different way. The main feature common to both was a restlessness. *With father* - the physician - it was a mental process, an irresistible urge to write, to put on paper his thoughts and his ideas. As a student till he died at the age of 86 he was still studying, and his final magnum opus - a Dictionary of Philology - was never finished. He was outstanding in the number of foreign languages he could speak, some twenty in all. The range of his writing seemed to follow no fixed pattern. He wrote with equal freedom on art, sanitation, foreign travel, religion, tuberculosis and lunacy, humane killing of animals, fever, cholera, or art in general. Unfortunately his manner of writing was diffuse, not easy to read, and rather tiresome with too much verbiage. Sir William Whitla speaking of him some years later said, "Henry MacCormac was a sage or a seer; it will be fifty years before people will understand him." This is true, but an understatement. Yet this original thinker has added little to the practical side of the profession of medicine.

With his son the restlessness showed itself in a constant desire to do something - to act quickly, to make decisions quickly, for better or worse - in fact the temperament of the surgeon as compared with the physician. There was not the same scientific thought behind what he did. He worked in a bigger field, he mixed more with people in the world and perhaps he was fortunate in timing his life in that he lived through the exciting advances of the latter half of the century - but he had a mind willing to adapt

Ian James Fraser

itself to progress and eager to accept new things which his father would not, and all his own personal charm carried him to many successes that would not have come the way of a more retiring man. To many it would appear that William, perhaps although lacking the original brain of his father, did in a practical way more for British medicine. However, each individual reader must make his own assessment of the respective worth. No matter what we think they individually and together gave a colour and a personality to the work that they did and as father and son they linked over the century these two cities together.

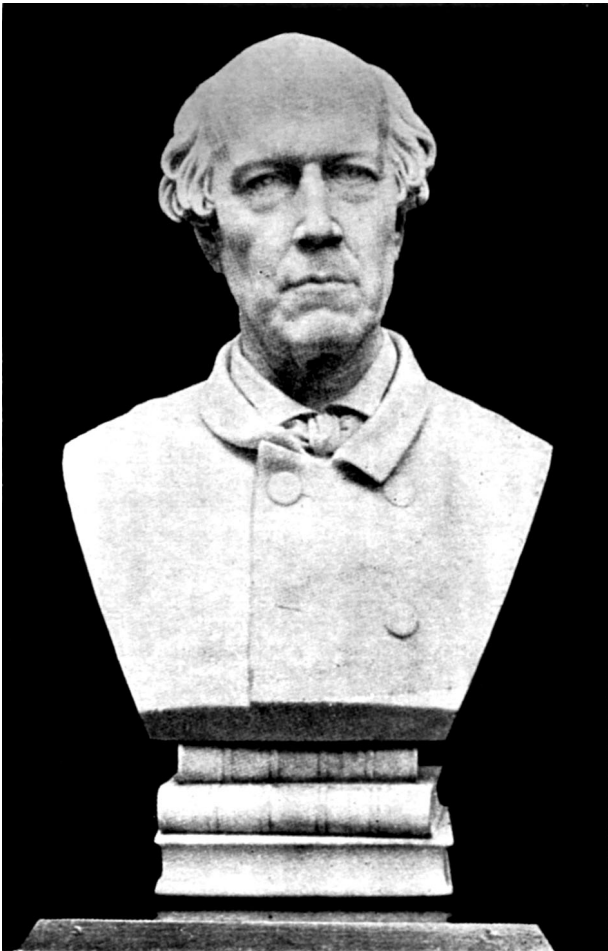


Fig. 3. Henry MacCormac.

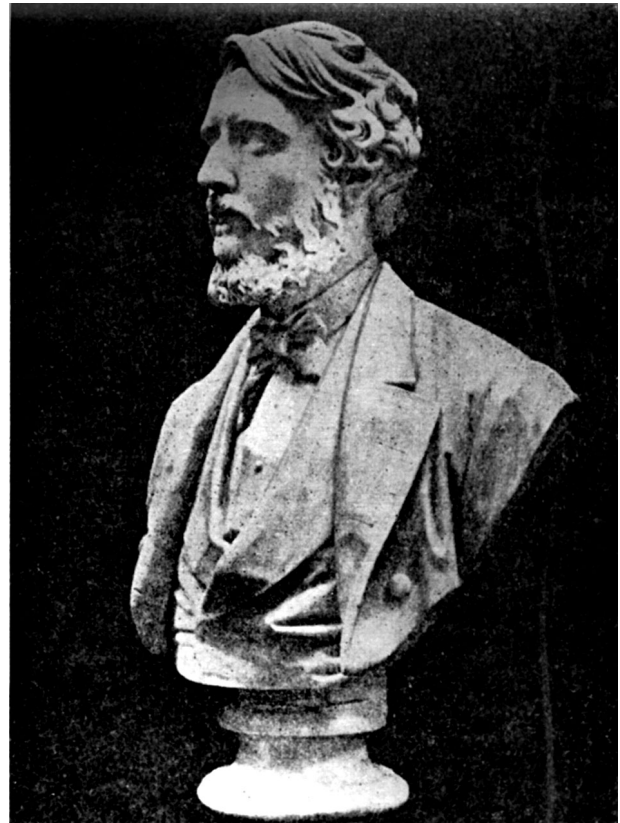


Fig. 4. Sir William MacCormac, Bart