

MEDICINE IN ANCIENT IRELAND.

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Professor Alexander Macalister in a recently published memoir of Prof. James Macartney says that "medicine in ancient Ireland was not a science of the schools." Cormac Ma Art in the third century, is said to have founded a college at Tara, but we have no record of a faculty therein for medical teaching. The practice of physic was confined to certain families who were hereditary physicians dependent on the great tribal leaders and under their protection. For example the O'Hickeys were physicians to the O'Briens of Thomond, the O'Lees to the O'Flaherties of Connaught, the O'Sheils to the Mac Coghlan and Mac Mahons of Oriel, and the Donlexys to the O'Neills.

The names Hickey and Lee, which are not uncommon in Ireland, are derived from their profession, and signify "healer" or physician. In the Brehon laws the physicians were ranked with the smiths, but they often held posts of honour and prominence: thus Mac Liag was secretary as well as physician to Brian Boroimhe, the conqueror of the Danes at Clontarf in 1014 A.D.

Among those who constituted this medical caste the traditional knowledge derived from the experience of a long line of medical ancestry was supplemented, in later years, by the study of Irish translations of Latin works on Medicine. In the library of the Royal Irish Academy there are twenty-eight of these Irish medical manuscripts, many of which are curious and interesting. It is much to be regretted that hitherto these manuscripts have not been analysed by any scholar qualified for the task on both the linguistic and medical sides. The only attempt at the scientific treatment of an Irish medical manuscript has been the essay by Dr. Norman Moore, "On the History of Medicine in Ireland" in the St. Bartholomew's Hospital Reports for 1875.

In the early days of the English rule in Ireland the health of the inhabitants within the pale was cared for by the brethren of several religious orders, by a few imported physicians resident in Dublin and by the members of the Guild of St. Mary Magdalene, to whom as barber-surgeons, a charter was granted by King Henry VI in 1446, just one year before the outbreak of a terrible epidemic of typhus fever which ravaged the closely built and undrained city of Dublin. The first attempt to found an university in Dublin was

made by John Leche, Archbishop of Dublin, 1311. He obtained from Pope Clement V, then at Avignon, a bull for that purpose, in which the Pope sets forth the benefits such an university is fitted to confer on the people and ordains that, as no general university exists in Ireland, Scotland, Man, or Norway, and as these lands are surrounded by the sea, so that no access or passage is to be had from them to any university but through great dangers, a *studium generale* in every science and faculty be founded in Dublin to continue for all time. Leche died in the following year and although Archbishop Alexander de Bicknor his successor founded in 1318 an University in St. Patrick's Cathedral, the establishment was only a school of canon law officered by Dominican and Minorite friars with a lectureship on Divinity founded by King Edward III. A Charter was granted by Edward IV to establish a University at Drogheda but the project was never realised and University education was not effectually provided for in Ireland until 1591 in which year Queen Elizabeth founded the University of Dublin. Fifteen years before she had granted a new charter to the barber-surgeons, but this body had no organised system for the teaching of the medical side of their craft to their apprentices.

The medical side of the University does not seem to have prospered in its early years and the real founder of the Irish Medical school was a Scottish physician, Sir Patrick Dun, a cadet of an ancient Forfarshire family born at Aberdeen in 1642. He had settled in Dublin at the period of the Restoration and was appointed Physician to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland in 1676. When he was residing in Dublin he endeavoured to stimulate the University to take a deeper interest in its school of medicine and at his recommendation in 1698 Dr. William Patterson was appointed by the College of Physicians to deliver a course of lessons on Anatomy. In 1704 Sir Patrick Dun executed a deed whereby he declared his intention of providing for "one or two professors of physic to read public lectures and to make public Anatomical dissections of the several parts of human bodys or bodys of other animals".

This provision was carried out by his will which was executed in 1713 and proved in the following year.

As a result of the proposed provision for teaching the Board of Trinity College in 1705 commenced the building of the first medical school in Ireland. It was opened in August 1711 when Dr. Richard Hoyle was appointed Lecturer on Anatomy.