

Alfred Hudson

Born: 1808
President: 1871-1873
Died: 1880

Alfred Hudson was born in West Bromwich, Staffordshire, to a Congregational Minister. He began his medical studies whilst apprenticed to a local surgeon, Thomas Silvester. In order to achieve his ambition of becoming a Fellow of the London College of Physicians, he was required to become a Doctor of Medicine from Oxford, Cambridge or Dublin University. His non-conformist background precluded his attendance at the English universities, occasioning his entrance to Trinity College in 1830.

Following his graduation MB (1834), he moved to Navan in 1836 to take over the well-established practice of his father-in-law, Dr Gilroy. He continued in this role for nineteen years. During this period, he was appointed Physician to the Fever Hospital, and he published many papers relating to fever: relapsing fever, differentiation of typhoid from typhus, effect of delirium on the heart, and cerebral complications in fever.

His move to a large house in Merrion Square, Dublin coincided with the death of his father-in-law and his failure to secure the post of Surgeon to the County Infirmary in Navan. He was appointed as Physician to the Adelaide Hospital in 1856 until he took up a similar post at the Meath Hospital in 1861. His private practice flourished thanks to the loyalty of his former patients from Navan. Furthermore, his practice of never charging curates of any church led to them recommending him widely. However, he did suffer a significant loss of £20,000 when a mining venture in Wales failed. He resigned from his post at the Meath in 1871, stating that 'the engagements of private practice interfere so constantly with my hospital duties so as to render it impossible for me to discharge these with satisfaction'.¹

He is accredited with the recognition of the significance of vocal fremitus and 'gave a rational explanation of the phenomenon of tympanic clearness of percussion over a solidified lung'.²

He became a Licentiate of the College of Physicians in 1854, and was elected Fellow in 1857. He was then President of the College from 1871 to 1873. In 1878, he succeeded William Stokes (qv) as Physician in Ordinary to the Queen in Ireland, and Regius Professor of Physic at Trinity College,

¹ Resignation letter of Alfred Hudson, quoted in Lambert Hepenstal Ormsby, *Medical History of the Meath Hospital and County Dublin Infirmary* (Dublin: Fannin & Co, 1888, 2nd edition), 143

² Ormsby, *Medical History of the Meath Hospital*, 144



LIVES OF THE PRESIDENTS



positions held until immediately prior to his death. He also had the honour of being elected as the first President of the Dublin branch of the British Medical Association.

Having married twice, but with no children, he died at his country residence, Lowville, Mount Merrion in 1880.

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