

## Sir William John Thompson

**Born:** 1861  
**President:** 1924-1925  
**Died:** 1929

William John Thompson, the son of William and Anne Thompson, was born in Tattyreagh, County Fermanagh in May 1861. He was educated in Enniskillen and later in Dublin. He married Mary Louisa Wilson on 9 September 1891.

Although he first entered the Excise branch of the Civil Service, he quickly abandoned it for medicine and studied at the College of Surgeons in Ireland, graduating as Licentiate of that College and the College of Physicians in 1888. He entered Trinity College in 1889 where he was awarded a BA in 1892 and where he graduated with MB (1894) and MD (1895). Awarded Membership of the College of Physicians in Ireland in 1898, he was elected Fellow in 1902. After qualification he was elected demonstrator in anatomy to the College of Surgeons and was appointed house physician at St. Vincent's Hospital in 1895. He later became a Visiting Physician and finally a Senior Physician to Jervis Street Hospital, as well as becoming Consulting Physician to the Royal National Hospital for Consumption.

When Lord Aberdeen came to serve his second term as Lord Lieutenant in Ireland in 1905, the post of Physician-in-Ordinary to his Excellency was offered and accepted by Thompson. He received a knighthood in 1907 for his distinguished services to medicine. He then resigned from medical practice in 1909 when he was appointed Registrar General for Ireland in succession to Sir Robert Matheson. He was in this office during the Spanish flu epidemic. He held the post until his retirement in 1926 and was responsible for directing the preparation of statistics that were of vital importance to the country including the 1911 (he was Chairman of the 1911 Census Commission) and the 1926 Censuses. He was a member of the Medical Consultative Board of the Royal Navy and an Examiner in Medicine in the Royal Medical Service.

Thompson is chiefly remembered for his work against tuberculosis and infantile diseases. He supported Lady Aberdeen in her campaign against tuberculosis and has been described as her



chief adviser, showing energy and manifesting powers of organisation which ultimately contributed significantly to the reduction in mortality from tuberculosis in Ireland.

Lady Aberdeen had founded the Women's National Health Association in 1907 and, during a period of illness, replaced herself as Honorary Treasurer of the Assembly with Thompson. He also accompanied her to a meeting of the International Congress of Women in Vancouver in 1909. As a member of the committee for Lady Aberdeen's 1907 Tuberculosis Exhibition, his lecture, 'Home treatment and nursing of pulmonary tuberculosis in Dublin', was included in the second volume of three of *Ireland's Crusade Against Tuberculosis (1908-1909)*, published by Lady Aberdeen.

In 1907 Sir William represented Jervis Street Hospital on the Dublin Hospitals Tuberculosis Committee which had been established as the direct result of Lady Aberdeen's request that each of the ten clinical hospitals in Dublin nominate a representative to form a committee to consider the whole question of tuberculosis in the city.

In 1910, the Association's Allan A. Ryan Hospital for Consumption in Ringsend was opened under the general direction of Thompson in his capacity as hospital secretary. He was appointed chief medical adviser to the Women's National Health Association, and became Consulting Physician to Peamount Sanatorium which was founded in 1912 by the Association. He remained Chairman of the Peamount Committee of Management until his death.

He was a member of numerous medical societies, as well as the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland of which he became President in 1918. He contributed the following papers to the Society: 'The Development of the Irish Census and its National Importance' (1911); 'The Census of Ireland, 1911' (1913); 'Fifty Years of Vital Statistics in Ireland' (1918), and 'The First Census of the Irish Free State and its Importance to the Country' (1926).

In 1924 Sir William was elected President of the College of Physicians of Ireland, having been a Vice-President for two years. He was a member of the Board of Governors of Sir Patrick Dun's, the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear, Jervis Street and Coombe Hospitals. He was also a member of the Council of the Royal Dublin Society, a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland, and was at some time President of the Section of State Medicine of this Academy. During the First World War, he was Secretary to the Red Cross Hospital in Dublin Castle.



# LIVES OF THE PRESIDENTS



He was an active member of the British Medical Association and had been President of the Leinster Branch.

Following his retirement in 1926, he devoted his time to voluntary work and remained as a working member of the many committees and boards on which he served.

He died quietly but unexpectedly at his home at 59 Fitzwilliam Square on 9 June 1929.

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**HERITAGE  
CENTRE**

ROYAL COLLEGE OF  
PHYSICIANS OF IRELAND