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## IN MEMORIAM

MISS REEVES, MATRON DR. STEEVENS' HOSPITAL  
(1874—1955)

Miss Alice Reeves, who died on 21st October, 1955, was undoubtedly one of the greatest nurses Ireland has ever produced. She combined great energy and fearless integrity with wide humanity, sympathy and understanding. These qualities brought her to the head of her profession, and made her both respected and beloved by those who knew her.

The Reeves family originally came from Dorset, but have been established in Ireland for several centuries. The earlier members appear mostly to have practised law, and several of them attained considerable eminence in that profession. Miss Reeves' great-grandfather, Boles Reeves, was a solicitor who retired early from practice. We are told that he had "a remarkable fund of wit and humour, and was original to the point of eccentricity." His eldest son, William, her grandfather, forsook the law for the Church. He had a most distinguished career, becoming Lord Bishop of Down, Connor and Dromore, and narrowly missing the Primacy of All Ireland. As a historian he was equally distinguished, and at his death he was President of the Royal Irish Academy.

Bishop Reeves had one son, Charles Robert, who also became a clergyman. He married Charlotte Haire, and to them in December 1874 Alice was born. Unfortunately both her parents died when she was five or six years old, and her upbringing was entrusted to a greatly loved, but perhaps not entirely understanding, aunt.

At the age of nineteen she entered the Adelaide Hospital to train as a nurse and on qualification she remained on as a ward sister. In 1908 she was appointed Matron of the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital. Ten years later she became Matron of Dr. Steevens' Hospital, where she remained for almost thirty years. It was as Matron at Steevens' that most of her important work was done. She became part of the Hospital, and her influence, not only on the nursing school but on the hospital itself was enormous. She could be severe, but her strictures left no scar, for she was always just, and quite as ready to tackle the Chairman of the Board of Governors as the most junior probationer. When she retired it was said, authoritatively and truly, that she was the best Matron the Hospital had ever had.

Outside the hospital she took her full share in the organisation of her profession. She was a founder member of the Florence Nightingale Committee and the National Council of Nurses, and on the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922 travelled to Helsinki to apply for its affiliation to the International Council of Nurses. With the late Miss Huxley she was prominent in framing the rules of the General Nursing Council of Ireland set up in 1925, when the Nurses' Registration Act was passed. She was a foundation member of the Irish Matrons' Association and first President of the Adelaide Hospital League of Nurses. Perhaps the organisation nearest to her heart was the Nation's Tribute to Nurses Fund, of which she was a founder member.

In her time Miss Reeves received many honours. She received the R.R.C. for her services in the first World War and was the first Irish nurse to be granted the Florence Nightingale Medal, perhaps the greatest honour in the nursing world, by the International Red Cross. In 1947 she received the degree of *M.A. honoris causa* from Trinity College, Dublin, for her services to Irish Nursing. But perhaps she appreciated most of all the sincere if sometimes simple tributes paid her by everybody connected with Steevens' when she was presented with her portrait on retiring from active duty in the Hospital. Her work for the Hospital will be a lasting memorial.

T. G. WILSON.