Richard Hayes and John Devane, house surgeons at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, strolled aimlessly from Eccles Street to Grafton Street where they happened to see in the travel agent's window an advertisement for a cheap excursion to Paris. They went there and enjoyed themselves, but for Hayes it was a fateful occasion—he returned a francophile which, combining with a furor scholasticus, led to a lifetime's research into Irish links with France.

Devane, less productive in a literary sense, later wrote a history of St. John's Hospital, Limerick; his brother, Dr. James Devane, was the author of *The Isle of Destiny*.

John Devane, F.R.C.S.I., had a busy surgical practice in Limerick City, but in 1916 he managed to come to Dublin for Easter and on Easter Sunday he took his fiancée to Lusk, count...
shall be true to Ireland, and to the King or Queen of Ireland, even though the Queen or King happen to be the Queen or King of England.' Hayes said, 'If I were convinced this Treaty meant the final reconciliation of Ireland with England I would have very little difficulty in deciding upon which way my vote would go. But it is not the end. The adoption of this Treaty will enable us, as the Chairman of the Delegation said in his opening address, to rebuild here in this country the old Gaelic civilisation that went down at the Battle of Kinsale...'

The political arena had little attraction for him. Just as he had lacked the instincts of a combatant soldier, he had no flair for the cut-and-thrust of parliamentary debate. He seldom spoke in the Dáil, and resigned his seat in 1924 to devote himself to his medical practice and historical scholarship.

A native of Bruree, County Limerick, where he was born in 1882, Richard Francis Hayes was the son of a local school teacher, Richard Hayes, and his wife, Margaret Ruddle. Having obtained secondary schooling in Rathkeale, he became a student of the Catholic University Medical School and took the diplomas Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland and Licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland in 1905. After being house-surgeon at the Mater Hospital, he was resident medical officer in Galway Central Hospital and an external assistant at the Coombe Lying-in Hospital before his appointment as dispensary medical officer in Lusk, from where he moved later to Earl Street Dispensary and finally to Donnybrook Number Two Dispensary. He lived during the tenure of those appointments at Lusk House, Thomond House, South Circular Road and at Guildford Road, Sandymount.

Frank O'Connor, his writer friend, described him as 'a tall, thin man, with a melancholy face, a big nose and a prominent chin that made you think of a punchinello.' He was well-mannered, with an elegant air, and, over a period of years, O'Connor and he strolled for an hour or so most evenings in Sandymount, '...with an elegant air, and over a period of years, O'Connor and he strolled for an hour or so most evenings in Sandymount...'

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He was the author of Ireland and Irishmen in the French Revolution (1932) which was translated into Irish in 1933; Irish Swordsman of France (1934); The Last Invasion of Ireland (1937) and Old Irish Links with France (1940).

He also compiled a Biographical Dictionary of Irishmen in France and wrote many articles for periodicals such as Studies and the Dublin Magazine. From the latter, rather than the major works, we get the flavour of the man himself and see him in his leisure moments in some French town, such as Rouen, or idling in Paris on the Left Bank, probably having spent the morning peering at

Two famous Bruree men: Eamonn de Valera, Chancellor National University of Ireland, at the conferring of an honorary degree on Richard Hayes.

Research Prize in 1934, the Catholic Bulletin described him as 'also well known to his friends as a most systematic worker in undeveloped areas of modern Irish history.' The Bulletin indicated that the Research Prize usually went to formal academics, 'but it is well, on the other hand, to see a local practitioner in medicine and surgery carry off any principal prize from the privileged group who have a permanent footing in the academic world...'

Frank O'Connor was impressed by Dr. Hayes' clinical ability. His diagnostic perception could sometimes seem uncanny. O'Connor showed him a letter from AE (George Russell) in which the poet said he was ill and that a London doctor had diagnosed colitis. 'I am very sorry to say that is not colitis,' Hayes said, and events were to prove him right. 'That is cancer.'
manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

Let us follow him as he saunters along the crowded Boulevard St. Michel towards the Luxembourg Gardens, turning into the Rue Corneille and passing by the grey hotel where Synge lived during his student days. Further on, his way takes him by 'the dingy lodging where Wilde lived in his days of shadow...'. He spends a little time in the book-boxes of La Bibliothèque de l'Université.

A few steps leave me on the Quai at the Petit Pont, the great cathedral with its massive towers standing out resplendent in the full sunshine of midday. What memories it calls up of men, and events - Saints and Kings and Emperors, the pomp and splendour of medieval processions full of faith and fervour, of Robespierre, his broken jaw hanging and dripping blood on his sky-blue coat.' Beside it and of tenderer memories, the slender spire of the Sainte Chapelle sparkles above the Palais de Justice like a jewelled sword.

Attracted inevitably by the book-boxes fixed on the quay-wall, he joins the long line of bookmen and beyond the Pont des Arts finds a volume of Ernest Dowson's poems, 'Combing' 'Un franc'. Good value at that price!

In Dublin, the vistas are less enchanting, the traditions less splendid but in St. Stephen's Green 'out of the fine bust among the hawthorns by Oliver Sheppard there gazes the soul of Mangan' and that ill-fated poet reminds Hayes of his own past.

Beyond the wharf you move down the quayside in the shadow of tall houses, gaunt and gray with time, their finely carved doorways telling of faded splendour. There is one, standing apart, with long facade in a high-railinged courtyard. Now the haunt of the poor it was in its heyday the city's most exquisitely decorated residence, 'its very windows inlaid with mother of pearl...'. Passing by this evening I stop to look at it, and out of the dead years rises a vision of a May night in 1798... its brilliantly-lighted drawing rooms are merry with a festive gathering of the city's youth and fashion. Pamela Fitzgerald is there in all her wan beauty. Pensive and serious tonight, she has put aside her French joyousness... fears, forebodings cast their shadows about her soul. The lord and master she loves has been risking life and fortune in a gallant adventure... a thousand pounds upon his head.

Richard Hayes' complex character was well summed up by General Richard Mulcahy in 'The Irish Sword', the organ of the Military History Society which Hayes helped to found and of which he was a Vice-President:

Physician, Soldier, Historian, Artist, Philosopher, 'Fire-Sider': many people of different mould knew Dick Hayes in one or several of these roles. All experienced his gentleness, his reticence; some found that there were things which drew his flash of anger.

Hayes confided to Frank O'Connor that as a young man he had fallen in love with a girl who had tuberculosis. He knew that she would not live long but he was afraid that if they married and had children the disease would be passed on, unromantically he gave her up. For years he remained a bachelor but in 1939 he married Mrs. Hilda Shaw.

A director of the Abbey Theatre from 1934, Richard Hayes was a member of the Royal Irish Academy and of the Irish Academy of Letters; the National University of Ireland conferred on him the honorary degree Doctor of Letters in 1941, and the French government made him a member of the Legion of Honour.

He did not neglect his native county and maintained his interest in Limerick and its history to the end. His writings reflected this interest, and he contributed two valuable articles to the North Munster Antiquarian Journal, The German colony in County Limerick' (1937) and 'Some Notable Limerick Doctors'(1945). He also wrote for other Limerick publications.

When he died at Woodlands, Rochestown Avenue, Dun Laoghaire on 16 June, 1958, Limerick (and Ireland) lost its most distinguished and enthusiastic francophile.

SOURCES