Though the credit of discovering the connexion of dropsy with albuminous urine and disease of the kidneys must ever remain associated with the name of Richard Bright, whose magnificent monograph is a model of pains-taking investigation, it must not be forgotten that Dr. Wells of St. Thomas's Hospital, Dr. Blackall of Exeter, and Dr. Osborne had a short time before noticed the occurrence of albuminous urine in some cases of dropsy and so paved the way for Bright's discovery, which the unique opportunities afforded in the wards and post-mortem room of Guy's Hospital made possible.


Jonathan Osborne, the son of William Osborne, was born at Cullenswood House, Co. Dublin, in 1794. On December 3, 1810, at the age of sixteen, he entered Trinity College and the University of Dublin, where he graduated B.A. in the spring of 1815. Three years later, in 1818, he proceeded to the degree of M.B., and on May 3, 1819, was admitted a Licentiate of the King and Queen's College of Physicians in Ireland. Soon after starting medical practice in Dublin he was appointed one of the physicians of the Dublin General Dispensary and Humane Society, in Fleet Street.

On May 19, 1823, he was elected a Fellow of the College of Physicians, and in 1825 was appointed Lecturer on Materia Medica in the Medico-Chirurgical School, Park Street. About 1830 he was appointed Physician in Ordinary to Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital, and shortly after Physician to Mercer's Hospital.

On S. Luke's Day, 1834, he was elected President of
the College of Physicians, and held the office for two years. In 1837 he graduated M.D. in the University of Dublin, and in the following year was appointed Lecturer in Medicine in the Ledwich School of Medicine.

On October 3, 1840, he succeeded Dr. John Crampton as King’s Professor of Materia Medica and Pharmacy in the School of Physic, and Clinical Physician to Sir Patrick Dun’s Hospital, posts which he held till his death. On October 23, 1840, he was elected an Honorary Fellow of the College of Physicians.

Osborne was a member of the Royal Irish Academy, and of the Royal Society of Quebec. He was twice married; first to Charlotte, daughter of Robert Egan, of Roscommon, and secondly to Catherine Sophia, daughter of Thomas Gerrard, of Liscarton Castle, County Meath. He died at Blackrock on January 22, 1864, and was buried in the vaults of S. Michan’s Church, Dublin.

A Sketch of the Physiology and Pathology of the Urine, with an historical Introduction. London: Burgess & Hill. 1820. 8vo. Pp. vi, 80, and one Table.


(Merely a syllabus of his lectures on materia medica at the Park Street School.)


(A review of this paper appeared in the London Medical Gazette, Vol. I., 1828, p. 637.)

On the Indications afforded by the sensible Qualities of Plants with respect to their Medical Properties. Read at the meeting of the Association of Physicians, Dublin,