

Tribute to the Schers

— Dentists supreme

THEY ADORNED SYDNEY PLACE

By ALISON WALSH

THE bright blue door of No. 7 Sydney Place marked the home in the 1930s, '40s and '50s of the Schers, a very remarkable family of Cork dentists. Isaac, the patriarch, always known to my brother and me, then children, as Mr. Scher, was a small, compact man wearing a grey suit and a very stiff, starched white coat. He wore gold-rimmed half glasses and seemed to move in an aroma of antiseptic.

School holidays were always marked by the obligatory visit to Mr. Scher and we would be shown in by a maid in a

A large north-facing window overlooked the end of the garden and the back of the basement. To the right of the window a door

up the red-carpeted stairs and were met at the glass door of his surgery by Mr. Scher himself. He was always courtesy itself to us, inquiring after our mother and asking about school, sports and music lessons. Etiquette required that we pass on the message that mother sent her love and he always "reciprocated it."

We were very fond of him and on occasion sent him hand-drawn Christmas cards. My brother still has a thank you letter from Isaac signed "Your sincere friend." His short stubby fingers were immensely strong and as he did not believe in unnecessary injections we just had to "offer up" the pain!

Once he had us in the chair he would carry on a soliloquy debating how to tackle the dental problem,

telling himself that there was an easy way but that it had to be done the right way and that he was a fool but it must be done correctly. Then, when one's mouth was full of scaffolding he would ask after Sister Joseph at school. You would "Glouch ooch" a reply and he'd say "glad to know she's well, do give her my regards."

Occasionally, one or other of his four sons, all of whom became dentists, would enter and be shown some dental wonders in one's mouth. A dental mechanic would arrive, too, with "cement teeth" and the two would hold a long discussion.

The house overlooked a garden which stretched upwards to a glasshouse and sometimes Mr. Scher would take off and hold an invigorating conversation with the gardener while an injection took effect. Returning, he did battle with one's teeth and when he said "Mix up an amalgam, Nurse" you knew the end was in sight.

GOLD MEDALLIST

He was a very fine dentist, deafness preventing him from becoming a doctor of dentistry. He won a gold medal for Pathology in 1906. He foresaw the use of acrylics in dentistry and researched this field. A founder-member of the Cork Dental Hospital, he was Dean there for many years. The basement of No. 7, now Darcy's Restaurant, was a dental lab, and four technicians worked there. Amongst these was Gus Healy, whose family still retain his apprenticeship papers with the Schers. Isaac was responsible for introducing Dr. Friel, an orthodontist, to Cork.

He liked to relax by restoring antique furniture from worm-infested ruins to beautiful pieces. He also collected old Irish glass

His four sons, Eric, Gerald, Leslie and Ivor, attended Presentation College. They qualified as dentists at UCC and joined their father at No. 7. Eric soon left to start his own practice on St. Patrick's Hill. Anna, one of his four daughters, runs a most successful young persons' stage school at Islington in London and has often commented on her happy schooling in St. Angela's, Patrick's Hill. Eric eventually became a professor of dentistry in Belfast and later settled in Brighton. Gerald settled with his wife, Margaret, in Ely in England, where they had a daughter, Geraldine. Leslie became a Professor of Dental Prosthetics at the Cork Dental Hospital. All the family were associated with this building near the North Infirmary.

Isaac died in 1954 and Stella in 1960. Both are buried in Cork. Leslie and Ivor had added their father's practice to their own on his retirement and continued to work in No. 7. They left Cork in 1961. Tragedy befell Leslie when his first wife died in a traffic accident in London. He and his second wife settled in Bournemouth where they were eventually joined



Ertc Scher

by Ivor and his wife and family.

Keen sportsman.

Ivor was a good rugby player, playing scrum-half for UCC against a Queens team which included Jack Kyle. He also played soccer with Western Rovers with Tommy Healy in goal and Jack Crowley as centre-forward. When soccer and rugby days were over, he played golf at the Island. Ivor was a small, neat figure with a moustache; he was outgoing and great fun. He was approached in the fifties with an offer to help found the Israeli dental school, but

was unable to accept this. However, in 1981, he moved to Israel where he now lives, practices dentistry and paints enthusiastically. His older brothers are all dead, but the dental tradition lives on in Eddy Scher, Leslie's second son, who is a dentist in London, while Sasha, daughter of Eric, is a dental hygienist. Isaac was fond of mottos and one over his desk in No. 7 read: *An oz. of backbone is worth a lb. of wishbone.*

He left behind him a fine tradition of dentistry which is maintained to this day by those he helped to train.



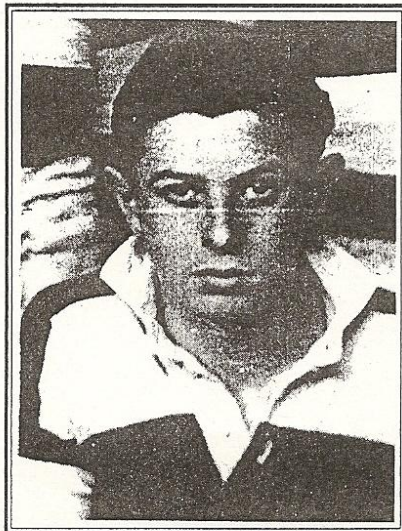
Leslie Scher

black dress and white apron. The large hall had a long, high table on the right side, behind which hung a huge overmantle. A surgery faced on to Wellington Road and behind this lay the drawingroom, where we sat apprehensively amongst a cornucopia of antiques, chairs, tables, presses, glass cabinets, pictures and overmantle, while a sideboard groaned under silver, porcelain, crystal, copper and bronzes. We would have been warned in advance not to touch anything but we never had the courage to try. The atmos-

led to the domestic part of the house from which, periodically, Mrs. Stella Scher would enter, look around, smile vaguely and leave. She was a small, heavily-built woman with pale coppery hair. Wonderful cooking smells would waft up to us bringing hunger pangs. I believe that she made splendid chicken soup.

COURTESY ITSELF

Then Mr. Scher's receptionist would arrive to show us up the stairs, past what my brother called "The Iron Mr. Scher," a full suit of armour at the back of the hall. We went



Ivor Scher (15) on the Pres junior rugby cup winning side 1945

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