

## The Great Invention | Inventors | George Cleghorn (1716 - 1794)

A learned physician, was the son of a farmer at Granton, in the parish of Cramond, near Edinburgh; and was born there, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December, 1716. In 1719, the father of Dr Cleghorn died, leaving a widow and five children. George, who was the youngest, received the rudiments of his education at the parish school, and in 1728, was sent to Edinburgh, to be further instructed in Latin, French, and Greek; where, to a singular proficiency in those languages, he added a considerable stock of mathematical knowledge.

At the age of fifteen, he commenced the study of physic and surgery, and had the good fortune to be placed under the tuition of the illustrious Monro, and under his roof. For five years, he continued to profit by the instruction and example of his great master; at the same time, he attended the lectures on botany, chemistry, material medica, and the theory and practice of medicine; and by extraordinary diligence, he attracted the notice of all his preceptors. He was at this time the intimate friend and fellow-student of the celebrated Fothergill, in conjunction with whom, and a few other young men, he established the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh, an institution of a very valuable kind, which still exists.

So great was the distinction of Cleghorn, even as a student, that, when little more than nineteen years of age, he was appointed by the recommendation of Dr St Clair, surgeon to the 22<sup>d</sup> regiment of foot, then stationed at Minorca, under the command of general St Clair. During the thirteen years which he spent in that island, he applied himself most diligently to his improvement in medical and anatomical studies, in which he was much assisted by his friend Fothergill, who sent him out such books as he required from London.

On leaving Minorca in 1749, he went with the regiment to Ireland; and next year he repaired to London, in order to give to the world the fruit of some of his observations, in a work entitled, "The diseases of Minorca." This work not only exhibits an accurate statement of the air, but a minute detail of the vegetable productions of the island; and concludes with medical observations, important in every point of view, and in some instances either new, or applied in a manner which preceding practitioners had not admitted. The medical world was indebted to Dr Cleghorn for proving the advantage of acescent vegetables in low, putrid, and remittent fevers, and the copious use of bark, which had been interdicted from mistaken facts, deduced from false theories.

While superintending the publication of this work, Dr Cleghorn attended the anatomical lectures of Dr Hunter: and on his return to Dublin, where he settled in practice in 1751, he began to give a similar course himself, and was the first person that established what could, with propriety, be considered an anatomical school in Ireland. Some years afterwards, he was admitted into the university as lecturer on anatomy.

From this period till his death in December 1789, Dr Cleghorn lived in the enjoyment of a high and lucrative practice, the duties of which he varied and relieved by a taste for farming and horticulture, and by attentions to the family of a deceased brother, which he undertook to support. In private life, Dr Cleghorn is said to have been as amiable and worthy, as in his professional life he was great. He was enabled before his death to acquire considerable estates in the county of Meath, of which his nephew, George Cleghorn of Kilcarty, was High Sheriff in the year 1794.