

The surgeon who operated on William Henry in 1895 was Frederick Treves. He was born in Dorchester in 1853, the youngest son of an upholsterer and furniture maker. After attending the Merchant Taylors' School in London from 1864 to 1871, he studied medicine at University College, London and became a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1875.

In 1879 he was appointed assistant surgeon at the London Hospital and became demonstrator of anatomy to the Medical School, where his teaching attracted many students to his demonstrations. He qualified as a member of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1875, and a fellow in 1878. Following this, he became surgical registrar in the London Hospital, and gained a wide reputation as a teacher, author and surgeon. In 1884 that he met Joseph Merrick, who became known as the 'Elephant Man' (the well-known film was made in 1980, featuring Anthony Hopkins as Treves and John Hurt as Merrick). Treves rescued Merrick and provided a home for him in the attic of the London Hospital until his death in 1890.

Treves was the author of many surgical textbooks and was one of the first surgeons to devote special attention to diseases of the appendix. He advanced English surgery by advocating the operative treatment for appendicitis. In 1901 he was appointed surgeon extraordinary to Queen Victoria, and was made a Companion of the Order of the Bath and a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order. In the summer of 1902 Treves became world famous when, on the 24 June and only two days before his coronation, Edward VII became acutely ill with appendicitis. Treves operated and the king made a good recovery and was crowned on 9 August. Treves was created a baronet that year.

He retired from professional work in 1908, but busied himself as advisor to a number of medical organisations. He also served as an examiner in anatomy and surgery to the Royal College of Surgeons and at Durham, Aberdeen, and Cambridge universities. After serving as President of the Medical Board at the War Office during the First World War, he was obliged to live abroad on account of his health. Sir Frederick Treves died in December 1923 at his home in Vevey in Switzerland, after a short illness. Ironically he died of peritonitis, the very disease in which he was the expert. His funeral service was arranged by his lifelong friend, the author and poet Thomas Hardy, and his ashes were buried in Dorchester.

## **References**

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