

THOMAS WAKLEY,

THE FOUNDER OF "THE LANCET."

A BIOGRAPHY.¹

CHAPTER IV.

The Influences of Youth and Training.—The Goodchilds.—Gerard's Hall.—Courtship and Marriage.—The Start in Practice.—Prospects in Argyll Street.—Fire and Attempted Murder.—A Digression Promised.

It will not be amiss here to summarise very briefly the salient points in the home-life and education of Thomas Wakley, for the circumstances of his youthful bringing-up dictated his adult career in a very striking manner. Brought up in the country among a simple and patriarchal folk, he positively detested shams of all sorts. A pretender was to him the biggest rogue the world could know. As a member of a large family he was endowed with a deep sense of what was fair. He obtained his own share of whatever of material enjoyment or comfort was going by favour, for he was the youngest, and could not have exacted it from his elders; but he obtained it because it was freely recognised in Mr. Henry Wakley's house that share and share alike in common goods was the only fair plan. So that there was early implanted in his breast a keen sense of rudimentary justice—that crude kind of socialism so often seen in children—only developed to an extraordinarily high degree. He desired that everyone should have his due, and in his student days this desire had developed to such a degree that towards all who belonged to classes whose manners or methods he found oppressive he could scarcely bring himself to be impartial. He had been brought up in an atmosphere of obedience as well as of equity, so that the privileges he obtained at home were the return of allegiance given. From a domestic environment of this sort he went to a London hospital, and found a condition of things that was directly at variance with all his primitive and deeply implanted ideas of fair-play. He found that although he was allowed to do his part—viz., pay his fees and attend his classes—the authorities were not prepared to do their part by him. The lectures advertised were not delivered by the eminent people who received the fees, but by their demonstrators; the one great practical help to the acquisition of a sound knowledge of pathology—viz., presence at post-mortem examinations—could only be secured by the clandestine feeing of the post-mortem-room porters; the honorary staff from whose lips he was to learn the science of healing were capricious in their visits and were generally dumb upon the occasions when they put in an appearance; the list of operations was not published to the students, and only the favoured pupils of the staff knew what was going to be done by the great men and when. And, to cap all these injustices, he found that he was relegated to a class in his profession marked out from the beginning to constitute the rank and file, not in the least through want of personal merit, but because he had not paid exorbitant fees to apprentice himself to a great man. He had no objection to being a general practitioner; on the contrary, he desired to be. He had lived for three years in the house of two hard-worked members of this class. He had shared their labours and known their trials. He could estimate—no one better—the amount of good that they did and the amount of influence for good that they were able to exercise over the community. He saw these men, who did their duties for the most rigidly according to their lights, always set on one side and

looked down upon by their privileged brethren, who had themselves obtained their places in the medical hierarchy by purchase and not by merit, and who, being in posts of office, took the emoluments and omitted to do the work. These things he saw; his sense of justice revolted at them, and none the less because he personally suffered from their effects, and these things sufficiently account for his attitude towards hospital officials, for his readiness to find them wanting in skill, and his pertinacity in convicting them of unfairness and nepotism. His championship of the cause of the general practitioner was as obvious in its origin as it was outspoken in its activity.

Lastly, as a member of the public he held that the public were unfairly treated; for the students, whose instruction was carried on in such a haphazard manner, were subjected to no properly stringent tests before being turned loose to earn their living as best they might. (This is not a decrying of our professional grandparents, but only a claim for the rank and file of them that wherein they did well they did it by their own exertions and to gratify their own feelings of what was right, and not in response to liberal assistance from the hospitals to which they had paid fees or to searching examinations by the colleges to which they belonged.) Against the injustice of all this the righteous anger of Thomas Wakley found vent. He was a reformer in the large sphere of constitutional politics, but in medical politics he was an avenger. He represented the wrath of the profession as a whole against the mismanagement of their leaders, and the wrath of a member of the public against a profession that allowed itself to be so mismanaged.

It was in this mood that Thomas Wakley arrived home in the character of a qualified man. His primary intentions were to practise in the country, and he stayed for some months at Membury after being qualified, during which time he was in search of an opening. He made many friends in the neighbourhood during this his first real vacation, and that he impressed them favourably is well shown by the generous response that Devonshire and Somersetshire friends were wont to make for many years to his appeals in the columns of THE LANCET—and this in cases where it could only have been the personality of the editor and not at all the urgency of the appeal, that swayed them.

His wish to get speedily into practice was enhanced by the fact that he desired to become the favoured suitor of an attractive young lady whom he had known during the last year of his student life, although he could not be said to be strictly and formally engaged to her. He had, however, obtained from her father a sort of qualified approval of his suit, accompanied with some very clear words as to the responsibilities that he would be expected to assume upon marriage. For Mr. Goodchild, the father of the future Mrs. Wakley, though a wealthy man, stated that he had no intention of supporting a son-in-law, but that his daughter's husband must maintain himself and his wife by his own labour.

Mr. Goodchild was an excellent specimen of the wealthy merchant at the time. His warehouses and offices were in Tooley-street, and his home was at Hendon, then situated four miles inside an area that was absolute country, being considerably less accessible to the true Londoner than Guildford, Windsor, and even Hertford are now. He was a lead merchant, and a man of great wealth, and large business connexions. Young Wakley made the acquaintance of the family by accident. The men in the Tooley-street works were very constantly in need of the services of the adjoining hospitals. Mr. Goodchild was a governor of St. Thomas's Hospital and a regular annual subscriber, but not to the extent that his great income would have warranted the hospital authorities in expecting, or to the extent that was proportionate to the labour that was expended upon the

¹ Chapters I., II., and III. were published in THE LANCET of Jan. 4th, 11th, and 18th respectively.

care of his numerous workmen by the medical officers of the charity. He employed at that time a very large number of hands—two or three hundred,—one or two of whom were almost daily in receipt of surgical assistance. The treasurer of St. Thomas's Hospital, to whose attention this was brought, sent young Wakley and his friend Wiltshire to call at Hendon and ask Mr. Goodchild whether he felt disposed to support in a special manner a special appeal that was being made on behalf of the hospital, having regard to the fact that his workmen were so largely benefited by their proximity to the building. Mr. Goodchild not only made a generous response to the lads' appeal—he gave them a £100—but invited them to luncheon and, later, to a party at his house. The acquaintance thus made ripened into friendship, and the friendship between the youngest daughter and Thomas Wakley soon became subject to the natural transformation into love. It says a great deal for the influence that young Wakley had over those whom he desired to move and please that he should have obtained Mr. Goodchild's consent to an early, if conditional, engagement, for although he was not accepted as a suitor for Miss Goodchild's hand while still a student, yet he was accepted almost immediately upon becoming qualified, and when he had no remarkably good chances of prosperity and no expectations from home. He was one, and the youngest, of eleven children. To the eldest son the land would infallibly go. If he shared equally with the other nine it was all that he could expect. Probably he would be considered to have received his patrimony when his indentures and his London course of study were paid for. From a worldly point of view, therefore, he could not be considered a good match. He had his youth and his profession, and that was all. But Mr. Goodchild was a judge of men, and he saw in the young man the stuff of which success is made, though he did not guess the direction whence that success would come, and for a time at least cordially disapproved of those very departures that made his son-in-law a man whose biography has to be written instead of a family practitioner. It was probably with some idea of asserting his independence that Thomas Wakley thought of setting up in practice in his own part of the world. There the esteem in which his father and family were held would be some sort of counterpoise to the wealth of the prospective father-in-law. Be that as it may, the idea came to nothing, for in 1818 he returned to London and went into private practice in the City.

He lived at this time, and had done so for one year, in Gerard's Hall, an old residential inn, and before the Fire of London the palace of the Lord Mayors of London. It possessed a remarkably fine crypt used as a cellar, and stood in Basing-lane on a site that was afterwards cleared in the construction of Queen Victoria-street. Thither he returned and proceeded to look about him for patients and a practice, occupying himself in the meantime in completing the gaps which he felt to exist in his education. The testimony of Mr. Ivatts, the proprietor of the Hall, to his behaviour while he was that gentleman's tenant shows that, so far from feeling that because he was no longer a student he had earned the right to cease from work and consider himself a completely informed man—a very common attitude with the newly-fledged medical man—he doubled his energies and spared no pains to learn. He was an ambitious, able, enthusiastic young lover, and intended to leave no stone unturned in his struggle to deserve his wife and support her. Mr. Ivatts had occasion under distressing circumstances that will soon be narrated to make a statement upon oath as to the manner of life pursued by Thomas Wakley at this time, and he then said that he was particularly regular in his mode of living, temperate, keeping much to himself, and exceedingly studious, rising at three and four o'clock even in the winter to read and write. It was often a

matter of wonder in later times to his enemies and friends alike, where he had got his great store of information from, and how he came from his earliest start on a journalistic career to control so adept as well as so virile a pen. It was to the rigid self-denial of his life in Gerard's Hall that he owed both. For hours each day—hours snatched from the sleep that was due to his labours—he steadily worked, reading copiously and writing assiduously, and it was thus that he acquired the solid learning and literary skill which enabled him to become a champion in journalism from the moment that he entered the lists.

During the following year an end was put to his period of probation, and he was assisted by Mr. Goodchild, now satisfied that in Thomas Wakley his daughter would find a man capable of taking care of her, in acquiring a West-end practice. The practice lay at the top of Regent-street, and his predecessor, Samuel Malleeson, in disposing of it did not desire to dispose of his house also. Mr. Goodchild arranged that Wakley should take a house in Argyll-street, No. 5, which was hard by Mr. Malleeson's house, and should purchase that gentleman's drugs and the furniture of the surgery and transport them thither. This was done; but the exact money consideration for which Wakley was indebted to his future father-in-law upon these transactions is not known. The sum of £400 was paid for the goodwill of this practice, and a similar sum as premium on the lease of the house in Argyll-street, then a fashionable and important street—and more money was paid both in Argyll-street for the fixtures and to Mr. Malleeson for his stock and sundry furniture, so that £1000 would probably not have covered the immediate outlay. Mr. Goodchild was, however, a business man, and cannot be said to have made a bad investment, having satisfied himself that his future son-in-law was a trustworthy and competent man, for, of course, everything turned upon that. The practice that was obtained for £400 cash had brought in Mr. Malleeson £690 during 1818, and by the autumn of 1819, when it was purchased, £560 had already been earned.

Argyll-street was then a street of reputable private residences. The town house of the Earl of Aberdeen shed an aristocratic flavour over the eastern side, and most of the inhabitants were persons of consideration if not wealth. No. 5 was a house of fifteen rooms, including the back study, which was used as a surgery, and was of the type and date of the houses now standing in the older parts of Maddox-street. It had a double dining-room and a double drawing-room and half-a-dozen bedrooms. This house its new possessor set to work to furnish handsomely, and those of us of this generation who are sufficiently modern to have begun to appreciate again the beauty, as well as the solidity, of the effects with which our grandparents delighted to surround themselves, know that the style of upholstery in the twenties was not an economical one. It is probable that Thomas Wakley would not have equipped his rooms so lavishly had he not been preparing for the almost immediate reception of a wife, but imposing externals were every whit as valuable then as they are now in forming a good connexion, and Mr. Goodchild's sure commercial instinct would have certainly gone in support of a somewhat lavish expenditure. From the first the venture was a successful one. The young practitioner retained the old patients who had been transferred to him, and new ones called him in both in the neighbourhood and in the City, and when in February, 1820, he brought his wife home he did so with every prospect before him of a successful career in general practice. He was married on Saturday, Feb. 5th, 1820, at St. James's Church, Piccadilly, and the announcement of his wedding, as it appears in *The News* of Feb. 6th, takes us back an enormous stride in history, for the same issue informed the world of the death of King George III.

The temptation at this point to write in the style of the dime novel, that the fair horizon of the young couple would soon be terribly overcast, is very strong, for the old contrast between present security and sad trouble in the immediate future was never more dramatically exemplified than in the case of Thomas Wakley's early married life. In February he brought his young wife to her new home. His marriage was one of affection, but also one of material advantage to him, while his prospects in his professional career were exceptionally bright. Young, talented, good-looking, healthy, a married lover, and a successful man, he was beloved by his friends and respected by all with whom his profession brought him into relation. In six months his home was broken up, his house burnt to the ground, his health seriously injured, his practice well-nigh destroyed, and last, but most serious of all, his reputation was gravely impugned, the slanders that were rife about him being as wide-spread as they were malignant.

On the evening of Aug. 26th, 1820, No. 5, Argyll-street, was burnt to the ground, while a murderous attack was made upon the hapless owner. The extraordinary as well as terrible events that occurred on that night will have to be dealt with at some length, and to place them with perfect clearness before the reader a digression must be made, and circumstances in the Cato-street conspiracy and the execution of the infamous Thistlewood must be detailed at the risk of appearing to give information upon matters of historical notoriety.

(To be continued.)

Pharmacology and Therapeutics.

THE SALTS OF STRONTIUM IN ALBUMINURIA.

THE salts of strontium are said to often cause a notable and rapid diminution of albumin. They are also indirectly useful by aiding digestion and acting as an intestinal antiseptic. According to Constantin Paul strontium is only useful in the parenchymatous forms. It is in cases of albuminuria where it is useful to moderate the loss of albumin that the use of strontium is specially indicated. The formula recommended by Gaucher and Gallois is—lactate of strontium, 50 grammes; water, 375 grammes; three table-spoonsful—i.e., six grammes of lactate of strontium—a day.

TREATMENT OF NIGHT SWEATS OF PHTHISIS.

M. A. von Székely recommends cotoine as being very useful in checking night sweats of phthisis, which he gives in doses of about 4 centigrammes. Cotoine is obtained from Coto bark, and may be in the form of a pale yellow amorphous powder or minute, curved, crystalline prisms, non-volatile, slightly soluble in water, soluble in alcohol, ether and chloroform, caustic and carbonated alkalies. It has a bitter taste. It may be given in the form of a solution or be made up with sugar into cachets. M. A. von Székely also employs tincture of belladonna in combination with liquor arsenicalis, and considers this combination to be more successful than preparations of belladonna alone. Externally, a lotion for the body may be used with advantage, as hydrate of chloral, 6 grammes, and distilled water and alcohol, each 100 grammes.

TREATMENT OF EPILEPSY BY SOLANUM CAROLINENSE (HORSE-NETTLE).

Dr. C. S. Potts gives an account of some cases treated by this drug in the *Therapeutic Gazette*. In seventeen cases in which a fair trial was given twelve showed more or less improvement, while the other five (two of them organic) showed no improvement. The general conclusions arrived at by Dr. C. S. Potts were:—(1) That the drug has a decided influence for good upon the epileptic paroxysm; (2) that this influence is probably not so great or so sure as that obtained by the use of antipyrin and the bromide salts, or even of the mixed bromides; (3) that in those cases in which it is of service it relieves the paroxysms without causing other unpleasant symptoms, such as are sometimes caused by the use of large doses of the bromides; and (4) that the dose

ordinarily recommended (ten to fifteen drops of fluid extract) is too small, and that as much as a teaspoonful or more four times daily is often needed to secure results. No unpleasant effects from the drug were observed excepting a mild diarrhoea in some cases.

VINEGAR AS AN ANTIDOTE TO CARBOLIC ACID.

Professor Carleton of New York states that vinegar is an excellent antidote to phenol. When applied to a cutaneous or mucous surface which has been burnt by the acid the characteristic whitish appearance produced by the caustic at once disappears and subsequent scarring is to a large extent prevented. Vinegar is also said to be equally good as an antidote when the acid has been taken into the stomach, and it is recommended that the patient should as soon as possible drink some vinegar mixed with an equal part of water, after which other measures may be taken to more fully counteract the poison.

THE ASHANTI EXPEDITION.

THE British expedition to Ashanti has entered Kumasi without opposition, and another of our small wars has been brought to a successful issue, and on this occasion without bloodshed, although the lamented death of Prince Henry of Battenberg has detracted from the perfect smoothness and success of the expedition. It now remains for us to make such terms with the Ashantis as will prevent all probability of our having to undertake a succession of such expeditions in the future, and will put an end to their invasion of neighbouring territories with the slaughter of the tribes and people friendly to ourselves. There is nothing in the soil or climate of Ashanti, or the semi-savage race inhabiting it, or, so far as we know at present, in the natural products of that country to make it a desirable British possession; but we are, nevertheless, bound to protect ourselves against recurring incursions and expensive expeditions in the future. It will also be possible, we hope and believe, to put an end at the same time to the human sacrifices and gross cruelties that have so long been practised in this part of the world. The way in which the expedition has been designed and carried out is deserving of great praise. It shows that nothing has been overlooked or neglected which our previous experience as regards war in, and knowledge of, that country had shown to be necessary or desirable. The undertaking has been so far carried to a successful issue with an almost scientific precision with respect to the calculation of the time required. There has been no hitch in the arrangements as to the organisation and working of the transport, the commissariat supplies, the medical and hospital services, and the labours which had to be undertaken and accomplished by the Royal Engineers. The expedition forms an excellent object lesson of what can be done under seemingly very adverse conditions by the exercise of forethought and timely provision. The work has been accomplished by selecting the proper season for carrying it out and by fulfilling all the essential requirements for its success. There were only three officers and fifty-one men of the expeditionary force in hospital at Kumasi and the troops are stated to be in excellent spirits; indeed, cricket matches were being talked of by the troops. There was, of course, no loss of life from fighting as on the previous campaign, but the great risks that had to be encountered were those to health, and the difficulties were those of transport, food, water-supply, and engineering. The results as regards the preservation of health are highly creditable to the medical service. Kumasi is reported to be built on a good site, but, apart altogether from any unhealthiness of climate, the total neglect of all sanitation of even the most elementary kind in the town (which mainly consists of miserable native huts) the remains of dead bodies, the surface filth, and the presence of burial grounds, have created a foul state of the soil, of which bad smells are sufficient evidence. European troops occupying such a site are not likely to escape disease, and we may be sure that every effort will be made to expedite matters, and to place the force in the meantime in the best practicable positions. We may assume that the troops from this country