

Obituary.

SIR WILLIAM SCOVELL SAVORY, BART., F.R.S.,

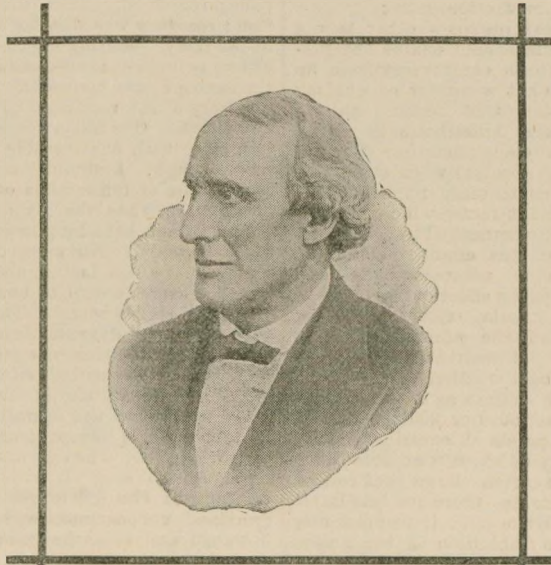
LATE PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND;
CONSULTING SURGEON TO ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL.

"The angel of death has passed over this land; you can almost hear the beating of his wings." These words of one of England's greatest orators must be in many men's minds to-day, and to our profession they must appeal with special force, since in the short space of fifteen days two of the foremost in the realm of surgery have ended their labours. Scarcely had John Whitaker Hulke been laid to his rest than he is followed by his intimate friend and fellow worker, William Scovell Savory.

William Scovell Savory was born in 1826 on Nov. 30th (St. Andrew's Day). He was educated at a private school at Ramsgate, under Mr. Darnall, whose name is inseparably connected with copy-books. Whilst at school he already showed signs of the declamatory and oratorical powers which were so noticeable in his after career, it being on record that on one occasion he took the part of Cato in Addison's tragedy with great success. Several years afterwards he could repeat many of the lines, and was specially fond of quoting those two lines so appropriate, as future events showed, to himself:

" 'Tis not in mortals to command
success,
But we'll do more, Sempronius,
we'll deserve it! "

He entered as a student at St. Bartholomew's Hospital immediately after leaving school, and was a most regular attendant at lectures, so much so that once when later in his life he was speaking to some students about irregular attendance, he said that he never remembered missing one of the lectures of Sir James Paget, which began with the utmost punctuality every morning at nine; nor was he ever late, though living at that time at Oakley-crescent, in the City-road. His work in the out-patient room and in the other practical departments of his hospital education was not less systematic. He dressed for Sir William Lawrence and clerked for Sir George Burrows, both of whom entertained a very high opinion of his abilities. At a very early period Mr. Skey formed a strong attachment to him, and took him to most of his operations; while in his "Treatise on Surgery" the same surgeon paid a tribute to his pupil's knowledge and predicted his future success. Mr. Savory read and materially modified the proof-sheets of this work, and wrote the whole of the chapter devoted to the diseases of the eye, which is sufficient testimony to the position of esteem which he occupied in his senior's mind. From student days he was a born orator and debater. At the Abernethian Society of St. Bartholomew's Hospital he always argued well. If in the chair he could always sum up better than any other member, while in discussion he could take either side with equal ease, often opposing for the mere love of argument. His scholastic career was brief and creditable, as would be expected from a student possessed in so marked a manner of the virtues of industry and punctuality and the talent of a lucidity amounting almost to genius. In 1847 he was admitted a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, and in 1848 he graduated as Bachelor of Medicine at the University of London, where he was University Medical Scholar. In 1852 he was admitted a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, from which date he



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devoted himself entirely to surgical teaching and practice. His first teaching appointment was that of Demonstrator of Anatomy at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and this was followed by his succeeding Sir James Paget in 1859 as Demonstrator and Lecturer in Physiology. He was elected assistant surgeon to the hospital on April 24th, 1861, and full surgeon on the same day in 1867. This latter position he held until Nov. 12th, 1891, when he resigned, and was at once elected consulting surgeon, which office he held until his death. In May, 1869, he was appointed Joint Lecturer on Surgery with Mr. Coote, and ten years later, on the death of Mr. Callender, was made sole lecturer, which position he retained until 1889, when he resigned his post.

As a lecturer Sir William Savory was a worthy successor of Lawrence, Paget, and West, resembling in manner and delivery Lawrence the most. His lectures were absolute models. Clear, lucid, every sentence weighed and polished, with diction perfectly distinct, the mobile, sensitive face would brighten with a singularly charming smile as he referred to his great predecessors in the field of surgery; all this made his lectures appear something very different to the ordinary routine of the work of a medical school, and so they were felt to be by all his pupils. Not only did the students of the hospital—sometimes, it must be said, slow to recognise an intellectual treat—attend and listen, but many a man from the staff of other hospitals came and profited by the great teacher's clear logic and intense sympathy with his subject. In his visits to the wards he was sparing of speech and the value of his clinical teaching was more in what he did than in what he said. Those who took the pains to watch his practice could always draw from it clear rules and close reasonings. But he was not a popular bedside teacher. His extreme modesty, so graceful in one possessing such splendid endowments, repressed the outpouring of his abundant thoughts and gave to his public manner a certain degree of severity. In the student he oftentimes inspired something akin to awe, which was due to his impressive demeanour and eagle glance (it is a hackneyed phrase, but the only one that really expresses the quality of his acute gaze), a glance which inspired an uneasy consciousness that ignorance under its influence

was certain to betray itself. But he was always ready to impart information and would take much trouble to discuss any subject of interest propounded by an intelligent questioner, pouring forth for his benefit a flood of light and knowledge. Perhaps he was seen at his best in the operating theatre on consultation days, when, in the discussion of an obscure or doubtful case, no one could excel him in the manner in which he would state the possible causes of the symptoms observed or in explaining the reasons which made him take up the particular view he held. Without being a brilliant operator he had the advantage of being ambidextrous, a faculty that on occasion served him well. Like that of his master, Lawrence, his surgery was eminently sound, and his results compared favourably with those of others both before and after the introduction of rigid asepsis. If he was slow to adopt innovations, it was the effect of a righteous desire not to endanger the patient's chances by anything in the nature of an experiment. As an operator he trod the highways of surgery. He was very sure in all that he did, and the patient ran no risk of injury in addition to that pertaining to the operation. With a nervous system highly strung it was no wonder that at times during an operation he should show signs of the strain, but he never lost his self-possession, and in moments of the greatest excitement, even of dire emergency, his intellect maintained its sway and directed his hand aright.

The position that he gained in the medical profession would have been his, we believe, in that of the law. His clear and subtle as well as logical mind would have found a congenial field in summing up an intricate chain of evidence. He would have shone on the bench. He had a singular faculty of unfolding an argument in a calm judicial manner, his ideas flowing in due sequence, the language being always equal to the occasion, and the opinions delivered with a voice of skilled modulation and without the slightest hesitation. His opinion consequently carried great weight with it. He was ready, too, in debate, carrying out his early promise to which we have referred. No one could be more prompt to detect a flaw in an opponent's argument or quick to expose it with pitiless sarcasm and ridicule; yet he was not easily put out of temper, and bore buffeting with a smile. This dialectic facility showed itself to great advantage in the somewhat heated debates which took place at the Royal College of Surgeons of England during his Presidency with reference to reforms in the government and constitution of that body. For though many a time he stood almost alone as regarded his views in the presence of a large body of opponents, he seldom failed to make his point or to keep matters in the paths which, rightly or wrongly, he regarded as the safest and best for the interests of the College.

In every branch of learning he was capable of making the best of what he knew. On one occasion he had just laboriously, with dictionary in hand, gone through the book of the "Odyssey," then required by the regulations for the preliminary examination for the Fellowship, and in a circle of some half-dozen men, the late Professor Rolleston, a most accomplished Greek scholar, made a casual remark to the effect that there was no example of a word with a certain number of feet at the close of a line in Homer. Savory objected, and, to Rolleston's intense astonishment, quoted the line he had only the previous evening read, in refutation of the really learned classic's view. He had a great faculty for criticism, and enjoyed nothing more than to discuss and comment upon the characters and situations in the books he read. He was not a voluminous writer, but his essays on Pyæmia, which appeared in the St. Bartholomew's Hospital Reports, and his scholarly "Lectures on Life and Death," delivered at the Royal Institution, are classics. He was very reserved, and modest to a fault, a thorough and sincere Christian, though he never paraded his religion.

These are the main facts in Sir William Savory's career, and the salient qualities of his character. They tell a simple, straightforward story of honesty, industry, and high intellectual endowment meeting with their due rewards, and as such require no commentary from our pen. The unique esteem in which he was held by the surgeons of his time is testified by the fact that he was President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England for five years in succession, an absolutely unprecedented occurrence; while the royal favour of a baronetcy was not without special features in his case, as it is an open secret that he had refused lesser honours. So passes a great man, not only from his professional ability, but from his hatred of shams and self-advertisement—one who, like his great master, John Hunter, was, to use his own words, "tempted by no seductive theory into undue haste, was hardly ever lost in an unsound conclusion. . . . A man of indefatigable industry, of unquenchable energy, of singleness of purpose, and unbounded sacrifice."¹

A few details of his last illness will be read with melancholy interest. On Thursday, Feb. 21st, he complained of not feeling well and consulted Dr. Habershon, who took him on the next day to see Dr. Pavy. Some slight improvement was manifest until the 28th, on which day he visited St. Bartholomew's Hospital. There were several cases of influenza in the house, and on the morning of March 1st his temperature, which was subnormal on the previous day, was found to be elevated, though beyond a slight bronchial catarrh none of the specific symptoms of influenza were present. Sir William Savory was, however, kept to his room, and on the following day symptoms of bronchitis supervened, though at no time severe, and his strength was well maintained until the afternoon of Sunday, the 3rd inst., when for the first time signs of prostration and cardiac failure appeared. At night there was a decided rally, with improved pulse and lower temperature. During the early hours of Monday morning, the 4th inst., the temperature again rose, sudden and profound collapse set in, and in spite of all that the most active

stimulation and the most assiduous care could do, he sank at 10.30 A.M. During his illness he was under the care of Dr. Pavy and Dr. Habershon, and was nursed by his daughter-in-law and Sister John from St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

Sir William Savory married in 1854, on his birthday, the daughter of William Borradaile. She died in 1868. By her he had one son, who succeeds him in the title and is incumbent of St. Bartholomew the Great, Smithfield.

A memorial service was held on Thursday in St. George's, Hanover-square, at 1.30 P.M., and the interment took place in Highgate Cemetery on the same day.

SAMUEL HOPPER ADAMS, M.D. LOND., M.R.C.S.

DR. ADAMS, who died on the 1st inst. after a final illness of a few hours' duration, was educated at the Bedford Modern School, whence he proceeded to University College Hospital. He matriculated at the same time at the University of London, obtaining high honours in Botany, a love of which science he retained throughout life. Professor Hillhouse of Birmingham and Professor Green of the Pharmaceutical Society owe, we believe, their first botanical training to Dr. Adams. He had a distinguished career at the University of London, where he took his M.B. in 1859 as a medalist, and proceeded to the M.D. degree in 1861, having become M.R.C.S. in 1858. At an early period of his professional life he served as a surgeon in the Peninsular and Oriental Company. During this time he had an attack of sunstroke in the Red Sea, to which may be traced the weak state of his health in after years. He settled in Bedford, where for several years he was in partnership, but afterwards practised independently. He was greatly esteemed by his patients and by his medical brethren. His unobtrusive and kindly manner, together with his knowledge of many scientific subjects, procured him many friends. His position as surgeon to the Bedford Provident Dispensary brought him in contact with a large number of the humbler classes, to whom he greatly endeared himself, and who showed their appreciation of his faithful services by following his remains to the grave. He was buried according to the rites of the Moravian Church, of which he was a member and a churchwarden. He leaves a widow and three children.

SAMUEL CHARLESWORTH HIRST, M.D. ST. AND., M.R.C.S. ENG., L.S.A. LOND., J.P.

GENERAL regret has been caused among a large circle in Bradford by the announcement of the death of Dr. Hirst, late of Planetrees House, Laisterdyke, Bradford, who passed away at Southport on Feb. 27th. It is only about eighteen months since he left Bradford, where he had practised for more than twenty years and had made many friends by his benevolence and zeal for good works. Having studied at the Leeds School of Medicine he qualified as M.R.C.S. in 1861 and as L.S.A. in 1867. In 1887 he graduated as M.D. at St. Andrews University. He was a consistent but not an aggressive politician, and was one of the Bradford borough magistrates.

MARSHALL HALL HIGGINBOTTOM, M.R.C.S. ENG., L.S.A. LOND.

THE death is announced of Mr. Higginbottom of Nottingham, who succumbed on Feb. 24th to an attack of pneumonia. The deceased gentleman, who was born in 1822, was a son of Mr. John Higginbottom, F.R.S., of Nottingham, and a nephew of the celebrated Dr. Marshall Hall of London. He was a student at Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospitals, and after having obtained the diploma of the Royal College of Surgeons of England in 1844, and that of the Apothecaries' Society in 1845, he travelled to Constantinople and other parts of Eastern Europe. Returning to England he went into partnership with his father, and lived to be one of the oldest members of the medical profession in Nottingham.

¹ The Hunterian Oration, 1837.