

# MEMOIRS

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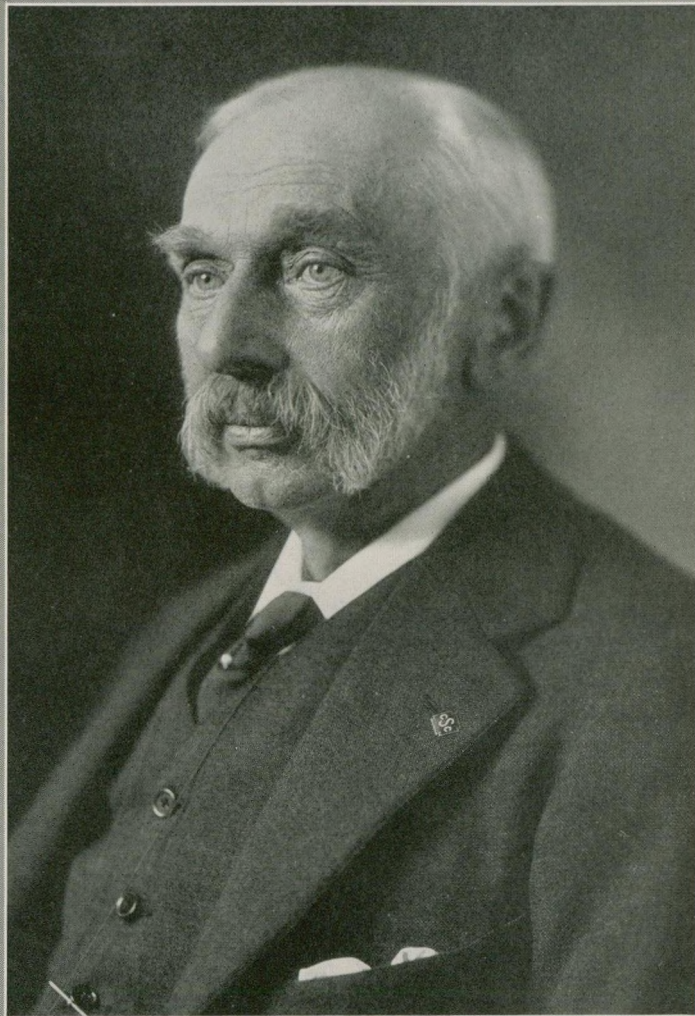
## SIR RICKMAN GODLEE

SIR RICKMAN GODLEE, the godfather of the American College of Surgeons, an ex-president of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, authorized biographer of Lord Lister, and a surgeon of international reputation, died at Coombe End Farm, Whitchurch, Oxon., England, on Sunday night, April 19, 1925. Until within two hours of his death he was apparently in perfect health, and for a man seventy-six years of age he was unusually vigorous and active.

Doctor and Mrs. Franklin H. Martin, close friends of Sir Rickman and Lady Godlee since their journey to Chicago to represent the Royal College of Surgeons of England at the first Convocation of the American College of Surgeons, went to Whitchurch to spend the week-end of April 18 at Coombe End Farm. Sir Rickman and Lady Godlee met their guests at the station at Pangbourne on Saturday afternoon. Saturday and Sunday, two delightful days, were given to motoring in the country about Oxford, punting on the Thames that flows within sight of Coombe End Farm, examining the operations on the farm, long walks about the country, and in social intercourse in and about the cozy country home.

On Sunday afternoon, Sir Rickman complained of gastric pain, and Dr. Leslie, the family doctor, was called. In the course of the examination, a pulsating tumor was located slightly to the left of the middle abdomen. Sir Rickman remarked that some specialist, in going over him within the year, had pronounced this as a probable aneurism. Dr. Leslie, however, could trace no direct connection between this pulsating tumor and the gastric distress, and as the condition of the patient did not seem serious, he was given a sedative and the incident passed over as an unimportant temporary indisposition. At eleven thirty o'clock Sunday evening, Dr. Martin was called. Sir Rickman was found to be in a dying condition. Five minutes before he had cried: "Something has given way." He was in great distress, pulseless, and there was evidence of profound shock with symptoms of acute internal hæmorrhage. He immediately lapsed into unconsciousness, and before twelve o'clock he was dead. The cause of death was given by Dr. Leslie as aortic aneurism. There was no autopsy.

On Thursday afternoon, April 23, the oaken casket which contained the remains of Sir Rickman was borne to the little English church at Whitchurch on the shoulders of eight young men among whom he had lived in the country, and by



SIR RICKMAN JOHN GODLEE, BART, K.C.V.O.  
1849-1925

whom he was loved and respected. A special train from London carried to the funeral Sir Rickman's many lifelong friends, his official associates, and representatives of his King, all of whom paid silent tribute to a great man and a friend. The services were very simple, with the local Rector and choir attending. He was laid to rest in a grave under the cedars in the adjoining churchyard.

Sir Rickman Godlee, in his official capacity as president of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, did a great service to American surgery when he volunteered, in behalf of his time-honored organization, to act as official sponsor and orator at the first Convocation of the American College of Surgeons, November 13, 1913. During his visit there developed on his part a personal friendship for our College, our journal, our Clinical Congress, and for a host of their individual members; and this friendship was reciprocated. In a long walk on the morning of the day of his death, he discussed with enthusiasm our American institutions, and asked after the personal welfare of many individual surgeons whom he had learned to know and admire, and who were his friends in America.

Sir Rickman was as generous as he was great in usefulness and in influence. In his last moments of consciousness, although he was in great agony, his concern was that his death, which he recognized as being near, would be an inconvenience to us, his friends, and that his suffering would give pain to his life's companion, whom he loved and who loved him.

The following biographical sketch is an abstract of an obituary notice which appeared in the April 21 issue of *The London Times*.

Sir Rickman Godlee, Bt., came of an old Quaker family, being the second son of Rickman Godlee, a well-known barrister of the Middle Temple, by Mary, daughter of Joseph Jackson Lister, the father of Lord Lister. He was thus a nephew of the great surgeon whose life he wrote, and a cousin of Marcus Beck, who influenced for good several generations of medical students at University College Hospital, where he was surgeon and a great teacher of surgery. Rickman Godlee was born at Upton, Essex, on February 15, 1849, and was brought up amongst those surroundings of a well-to-do Quaker family which he afterwards described so graphically in his life of Lord Lister. He was educated at a school at Tottenham, and took his B.A. degree at the University of London in 1867.

Entering at University College, he soon proved himself a most expert dissector. He was admitted a member of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1872, and was elected to the fellowship in 1876, having in the interval taken the degrees of B. S. and M. S. at the London University after winning the gold medal at each examination. He was house surgeon and house physician at University College Hospital, and then went to Edinburgh to learn the new methods which were being introduced into surgery by his uncle. On his return to London he was appointed surgical registrar at University College Hospital, and was elected assistant surgeon at Charing Cross Hospital and North-Eastern Hospital for Children. In 1877 he

was elected assistant surgeon at University College Hospital, and was appointed assistant demonstrator of anatomy in the medical school. Soon afterward he became surgeon to Brompton Hospital, where he made important advances in surgery of the chest.

At the Epileptic Hospital in Regent's Park, Godlee performed one of the earliest operations for the removal of a tumor from the brain, the position of the tumor having been previously ascertained by employing the method evolved by Sir David Ferrier in experiments.

At University College Hospital, Godlee became surgeon, consulting surgeon, and eventually emeritus professor of clinical surgery. At the Royal College of Surgeons he filled all the usual offices, including that of examiner in anatomy and membership on the court of examiners, until he was elected president for the years 1911-13, in succession to Sir Henry Butlin, who died during his tenure of office. He was surgeon to the household of Queen Victoria, and was surgeon in ordinary to King Edward VII, and to King George V. He was created a baronet in 1912, and was gazetted K.C.V.O. in 1914. He married, in 1891, Juliet Mary, daughter of Frederic Seebohm, LL.D., D.Lit., of The Hermitage, Hitchin, but had no children. After his retirement from London in 1920 he went to live at Coombe End Farm, Whitchurch, Oxon., where he died.