

SIR VICTOR HORSLEY.*

A STUDY OF HIS LIFE AND WORK.

The memoir of Sir Victor Horsley by Mr. Stephen Paget is a book which from cover to cover will be of absorbing interest to the members of the nursing profession, especially to the large group of nurses associated together in the Central Committee for the State Registration of Nurses, of which he was so prominent and distinguished a member. Mr. Paget is sincerely to be congratulated on the way in which he has compressed into one volume so complete a survey of a life so full and varied, and, at the same time, has conveyed an impression of the charm, the versatility, the modesty, courage, generosity and unselfishness which so endeared Sir Victor Horsley to those who knew him.

Difficult as it is to seize the heart out of this book, and present in a few columns the pith of matter already so highly condensed, the task must be attempted. The difficulty lies in the fact that the book presents to us a life with as many facets as a highly cut diamond. Thus we see Sir Victor as the man of science, of brilliant intellect, the operator of unsurpassed dexterity, of nobility of character, a modern crusader, ready to help to right any wrong, or to forward any movement for the good of the community, however adversely such advocacy might affect his personal interests. But though he had the brilliance, he had none of the hardness of the diamond. That he was—all honour to him—a keen fighter for the causes which he espoused all the world knows. Those most intimate with him know also that tenderness and sympathy, love of nature, love of little children, hatred of suffering and a passionate rebellion against all forms of injustice were component parts of his nature.

"It was part of the happiness of Victor Horsley's life," Mr. Paget relates, "that he was of good birth and had a family record to be proud of." His father was an artist, a Royal Academician, one of whose pictures was hung in the National Gallery; his mother, the daughter of a surgeon and the sister of a surgeon and artist—so it is not surprising that he, too, was touched with the divine fire.

EARLY YEARS.

He was born in Kensington on the day Princess Beatrice was born; and Queen Victoria, who noted the coincidence, sent word that she wished him called after herself. The following year, his father bought a country house—"Willesley," near Cranbrook, in Kent—and here he and his brothers and sisters grew up. His letters "from his sixth to his eleventh year are short, objective, and abounding in happiness. They show a quick sense of the beauty of the world, but are neither sentimental nor imaginative. It is recorded of

him, at the age of six, that he asked his governess whether a chair in French "were still feminine if a man sat on it."

His early choice of a profession was that of a cavalry officer, but when told that his father could not afford this he said he would be a doctor, on condition that he should be a surgeon, not a physician, and his choice was justified by the result.

In January, 1874, he matriculated at the University of London, after being prepared for examination by Mr. (Sir Philip) Magnus. He is described by a fellow-pupil as a tall, manly youth, with a very delightful smile, with a strong sense of humour, and overflowing with the *joie de vivre*. He was always distinctly dogmatic in his views; if sarcastic at times, there was no venom introduced with the sarcasm. He was at home all the seven years of his time as a student, concerning which Mr. Paget writes: "He was kept at home too long; he ought to have had his freedom before 1880, before the influences of home and the influences of the hospital were in final conflict over him."

His younger sister, Mrs. Gotch (Rosamund) writes of this time: "No sooner did he really take up the study of medicine than everything gave place to it. He was a born enthusiast. He gave up everything that would interfere with his work, though to the last his boyish love of fun and games and of the country was as keen as when he was fourteen. He was always kind to me—his much younger sister—and delighted to teach me odds and ends of zoology and anatomy, for I had been interested in these subjects from the time of the early dissections at Willesley." These good comrades read together Clough's poems, Boyd Dawkins's "Early Man in Britain"; and, above all, Kingsley's "Yeast," "Two Years Ago" and "Health and Education." One wonders how much his passion for social reforms in later life, in connection with the health, housing and land of the people, may be traced to the seed then sown by a master hand, which fell on good ground.

Of his student days, the author writes: "He took his dominant place in 'the best set'—the strong-willed, hard-thinking young men who are the making of a great medical school, wherever they are. To him, now and always, everything was a matter of principle, and he defended his opinions so earnestly and so good-naturedly that where lesser men would have lost influence, he gained it. He did not stop at renouncing theatres and wine and tobacco. He hated loose talk and would not let it pass; and he obeyed all his life the rule of absolute chastity. He delighted to help men over their work. And in everything he had a way with him, a magic of his own."

FIRST YEARS OF PRACTICE.

On November 18th, 1880, he wrote to his father: "I have managed the M.R.C.S. all right, although they adopted a bullying tone which shifts my centre of equilibrium, so that I am now qualified

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