

SIR VICTOR HORSLEY.

(Continued from page 229.)

Of Sir Victor Horsley's brilliant work as a surgeon at University College Hospital, and the National Hospital, Queen Square, in connection with the surgery of the brain, all the world knows. In 1910, the General Elections in January and December of that year brought him with a rush into public life. With characteristic thoroughness and energy he placarded his house with cartoons, the big loaf and the little loaf, and the peer and the working man, and rented a hoarding where the old Vere Street Post Office was in course of demolition. In the December election, he stood for the University of London. He failed to get into Parliament, and he did not live to win success out of failure, but he "never doubted of the necessity and the righteousness of a great political upheaval; fought for that, not for his own ends. . . Last, it is to be remembered that the course of events has already brought unexpected fulfilment of purposes for which he fought."

WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE.

It was his staunch support of the woman's suffrage cause, and his condemnation of the "Cat and Mouse" Act that lost him his chance as Parliamentary candidate for Market Harborough. In this connection Mr. Paget does him less than justice. He writes:—"Probably the harm was done not by what he said in the constituency, but by what he was saying in London, and writing in the London papers. Some of these papers found that his unrestrained sayings were 'good copy'; for example, his speech at a Queen's Hall meeting, July 8th, 1913, on the Temporary Discharge of Prisoners Act, the 'Cat and Mouse Act.' He so hated the thought of women being forcibly fed that he did not care what gibes and platform epithets he flung at the Home Secretary and others; he just let himself go. He had published certain statements about forcible feeding which the Home Secretary had referred to the President and Council of the Royal College of Surgeons; they had declined to interfere. Here, said Horsley to the meeting was Mr. McKenna—whom he nicknamed Viscount Holloway—seeking his revenge by secret intrigue. Fancy a Home Secretary thus secretly intriguing against private citizens. . . What an end to a back-biting intrigue by a Minister of the Crown. Such always will be the result of changing Government by Law for Government by a bureaucratic and secret police. It is no wonder that the Harborough Association was frightened."

That was, of course, in regard to the election, purely a question of politics, but some of those present at that Queen's Hall meeting will not soon forget his noble, deadly impeachment, of the prison methods of forcible feeding, and of the Government which authorised it, and his condemnation of the prostitution of medical knowledge to punitive instead of remedial purposes.

Probably not many realised, as he no doubt did, that each incisive word sounded the death knell of his justifiable aspirations for Parliamentary honours. But his closely reasoned, and unanswerable speech gained in force by being lifted on to the plane of self-abnegation and apostolic ardour. There are defeats which are greater than victory, and were he living now there are enfranchised women who would have seen to it that he represented them in Parliament.

VENEREAL DISEASES.

On the subject of Venereal diseases, his evidence before the Royal Commission was on lines which are now commending themselves to many thoughtful people. (1) Confidential death certificates; (2) more education of children in the facts of sex; (3) more education of adults in the facts of venereal disease; (4) the confidential notification of venereal diseases; (5) protection for any doctor who should warn persons against the danger of infection from this or that one of his patients.

THE SHORTAGE OF NURSES.

In June, 1914, he attended the Birmingham Conference of the National Council of Trained Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland, and gave an address on Nursing under the Insurance Act, in which he discussed the reasons for the shortage of trained nurses, chief among them that "the remuneration of nursing as a skilled and learned work is insufficient," and secondly, the long hours. "Lastly we have to recognise the competition of other channels of work, equally or better paid, and giving greater liberty."

PROFESSIONAL POLITICS.

"The administrative affairs of his profession, its place in the social system, its influence on the mind of the community, were of unflinching interest to him. . . its politics were never dull to him." We can well believe it when we remember how closely he followed the campaign for the State Registration of Nurses in the stress and strain of his work in Mesopotamia. The last words of his last letter to the President of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses were: "I am only daily regretting that I cannot be working for the great cause at home."

He was no respecter of persons. "Always he lived up to the difficult saying: 'All men are equal in the sight of God,' " but the "readiness to find fault with people in high places (from archbishops downwards) was reconciled in him—he was full of vivid contrasts—with unceasing thoughtfulness for those who neither were, nor ever would be anywhere near the high places. . . He adopted into his life not the first half only, but the whole of the text: "Deposuit potentes de sede: et exaltavit humiles."

"His love of his profession was not sentimental; it was clear sighted, masterful and creative. As he came to be on the side of democracy, so he came to regard his profession as a trade-union: it was of a kind apart, for its members did a vast

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)