

UNPUBLISHED PAPERS OF  
THOMAS HODGKIN

AMONGST the papers of the late Dr. Hodgkin there were found numerous essays and lectures relating to medical and other scientific subjects. These have been placed in my hands with a view to publication if thought worthy of it. Most of them were written about the time of his retirement from Guy's Hospital, which is now nearly forty years ago; of these some have already appeared in print, whilst others are now so antiquated that the opinions they express are obsolete and the statements superseded by those derived from modern research. I find, therefore, I have much less to lay before my readers than I had at first anticipated.

Dr. Hodgkin was born at Tottenham in 1798, took his degree at Edinburgh in 1823, and became a member of the College of Physicians in London in 1825. He belonged to the Society of Friends, as may easily be gathered from the style of his writings. He was possessed of very great literary attainments, being especially complimented on the pure latinity of his thesis on "Absorption" on the occasion of his taking his degree at Edinburgh. He passed a considerable time in France and Italy, where he perfected himself in the Continental languages, and acquired a strong taste for pathological pursuits. This was due, no doubt, to the scientific tendency of his mind, which prompted him to undertake the study of those branches of medicine which possessed a more positive character, as being more congenial to his remarkably simple and truthful nature. On his return to England he engaged himself with others in the foundation of an independent school at Guy's Hospital by becoming curator of the museum and demonstrator of morbid anatomy. The work he did in forming the museum was enormous, both in preparing specimens and framing a catalogue; the result of his labour is seen also in the two volumes of *Lectures on the Morbid Anatomy of the Serous and Mucous Membranes*. That Dr. Hodgkin was actuated by no slight ambition in his work may be gathered from the following lines taken from his opening address:—"I shall conclude by assuring you that it will be my constant aim—whether I may be fortunate enough to reach the mark or not—to co-operate with those who are strenuously

endeavouring to render the school of Guy's Hospital the first medical school in the Kingdom." The foundation which he thus laid in the museum and pathological department was one on which many distinguished men have since built by adding their mite to the work he so well began. No one who cares to look upon Guy's as his alma mater but must feel a debt of gratitude to Hodgkin for the important share he took in endeavouring to constitute it a scientific school of medicine. It may be safely asserted that there had been no writer on pathology in this country before his time who had grasped the subject in so philosophic a spirit; for although Baillie, Hooper, and others had already written good descriptions of morbid appearances, Hodgkin was the first to follow in the footsteps of the great Bichat by discussing the diseases and changes in the various tissues of the body. Indeed, few have since copied his example, and the reason may be that the time has not yet come to accomplish what he wished, for probably the descriptive method adopted by Rokitansky and others must necessarily precede the larger one which Hodgkin attempted. The perusal of Hodgkin's manuscripts and notes for lectures has more fully strengthened the high opinion which I have ever entertained of the wide extent of his learning and of that true philosophic spirit by which he made his knowledge of zoology, geology, as well as the history of medicine, all conduce to the perfection of his theme.

The feeling of admiration which arises in one's mind on perusing these documents is not unmingled with the sadness of regret that his career as a pathologist should have been so brief. It was a day ever to be lamented when he turned his back on Guy's, and his philosophic studies came to so premature an end. After having occupied the lecture chair for about ten years, to the special advantage of the school and to the advancement of pathology throughout the world, he retired from the post after his unsuccessful candidature for the assistant physicianship. The lapse of time is too great and the circumstances involved in too much obscurity to make it worth the trouble to dwell upon this episode in his history. Nevertheless it must be said that in him Guy's Hospital lost one of its greatest ornaments, and the profession in England one who was destined to shed a lustre on its ranks. After his severance from Guy's he passed to St. Thomas', where his stay was but short; he continued to practise medicine, but his sources of information on matters of pathology being gone, he turned his mind to more general

subjects. He wrote a book "On the Preservation of Health," and some notes for a further work on the subject are now before me. He interested himself in provident dispensaries and in some medico-legal questions. Latterly he almost entirely devoted himself to philanthropic pursuits, and was mainly instrumental in founding the Ethnological Society, in connection with which he devoted himself to the study of philology. Subsequently he travelled in the East with Sir Moses Montefiore for the purpose of rendering aid to the Jews. On their last Journey he was seized with dysentery and died at Jaffa, on the 5th of April, 1866, aged sixty-eight. It may be worthy of note that his successful opponent for the physicianship of Guy's, Dr. Babington, died in London three days afterwards, aged seventy-two. . . .

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