

According to the rules of the service, my grandfather was not entitled to a retiring allowance, because so much of the work he had done had been unpaid. A few years afterwards, however, a Government pension was awarded him in consideration of the services which he had rendered to the country.

CHAPTER IX.

RETIREMENT FROM PUBLIC LIFE—ST GEORGE'S
HILL, WEYBRIDGE, 1854-1860.

WHEN his official life came to a close, my grandfather retired to a house on Weybridge Heath, and he met the sudden cessation of his eager public life with the same calm courage with which he had met all the other crises in his career.

This house had been built on a beautiful spot as a gathering-place for his much-loved and somewhat scattered family, and the beauty of its position came to be a great comfort to him when he turned his quiet days to the prosecution of literary work in his little study, which, opening on to a sunny terraced walk, overlooked, through vistas of dark-green pines and yellow birch-trees, the miles of blue distance which stretched out southwards to the Surrey and Hampshire hills.

Through the kindness of Lord Ellesmere, whose property adjoined, there was a small private gate leading from our own little firwood on to St George's Hill itself; and, in the intervals of his writing, frequent strolls on to its beautiful slopes were a great source of pleasure during that first autumn and in all the ensuing years. The heather banks and wooded dells brought him much joy; for, as always, it was in the presence of nature and in the stillness of the country that he gathered strength. The strain of the last few months had been great, and it was well that the closing of the year brought with it the much-needed rest.

He now gave a good deal of time to physiological study, turning to his old subjects with the vigour of a younger man, and entering with the deepest interest into the discoveries of later science. He did this with a view of bringing his early book, 'The Philosophy of Health,' which at the time of its publication had made so much mark, up to the standard of modern knowledge; and though he did not live to complete this task, the reading for it gave a living interest to those years of quiet country life.

He had also much satisfaction in writing and

publishing a pamphlet called 'Results of Sanitary Improvement,' based mainly on the experience obtained in the "Model Dwellings" for the working classes, of which he had been the originator. This pamphlet, coming as it did before many influential men throughout the country, spread the good news of progress far and wide.

A further instance of the fruit of his labours was afforded him by his visit to Edinburgh, in November 1855, when he lectured on his own subject, "Epidemics," at the Philosophical Institution, where a brilliant reception and distinguished audience awaited him.¹

I have a vivid recollection of his pleasure in the beauty of Alnwick as we journeyed north—of its old castle's warm grey walls, its lovely woods and clear running streams, during a sunny Sunday which we passed there,—the gold and russet tints of autumn shining out against a perfectly blue sky; and I also remember the satisfaction he had in hearing from the Mayor, who took us round the town,

¹ Epidemics considered with relation to their Common Nature and to Climate and Civilisation. Published by Edmonston & Douglas, Edinburgh, 1856.

of the pure water and good drainage lately introduced. Alnwick was, I believe, one of the first places which adopted the sanitary measures advised by the General Board of Health, so that here he had the gratification of seeing some of the great reforms practically carried out.

As I am recalling the various sources of comfort which came to my grandfather during these years at Weybridge, I must mention the great happiness which arose from the opening out of the lives of two of his granddaughters, Miranda and Octavia Hill; for it was at this time that they—at the ages of nineteen and sixteen—took the responsibilities of their lives upon themselves, and began the great and good works which they have since carried to such wide issues.

In his retirement, letters of appreciation and sympathy reached him from many of the public men with whom he had worked, expressing in various ways that which Lord Shaftesbury, who knew him as well as any, gives as his own feeling when writing to a mutual friend:—

“I have known Dr Southwood Smith well, having sat with him during four years and in

very trying times at the Board of Health. A more able, diligent, zealous, and benevolent man does not exist. No work ever seemed too much for him if it were to do good. His great services will not, I fear, be appreciated in this generation.”

Such words as these cannot but have been gratifying to my grandfather; but in 1858 those who shared these sentiments resolved to make a clearer and more public demonstration of their sense of the value of the services which he had rendered to the country. At a preliminary meeting held on the 7th May 1856 it was agreed that this recognition should take the form, primarily, of a memorial bust, to be presented to a suitable public institution. This intention was communicated to Dr Southwood Smith at the final meeting held at the house of Lord Shaftesbury, 24 Grosvenor Square, on the 6th of December 1858, and was accompanied by a short address.

I give his own words of thanks, as they show not only the pleasure this recognition afforded him, but also—what is so characteristic of him—his joy in the progress of his cause, quite apart from his personal share in it:—

"My Lord, I need not say how deeply I feel the kindness that prompted the proceeding which has led to this meeting. If anything could increase the intensity of that feeling, it would be the words in which you have given expression to your sentiments in this matter, and to those of the rest of the subscribers to this recognition.

"The labourers in the work of sanitary reform have been many; and it is by the united efforts of some of the most enlightened, disinterested, and learned men that shed lustre on this century, that this great work has been placed in its present position.

"That such names as those which grace this Tablet¹ should have united to express their sense of the value of any part which I may have taken in this work, will ever be to me a source, I do not say of happiness only, but of that rare and pure happiness which results not alone from the inward consciousness of devotion to duty through encouragement and discouragement, through evil and through good report, but also from the knowledge that such judges of the matter justify that consciousness,

¹ See Appendix II., p. 164.

and in my own individual case have so placed their judgment on record, that it may be present to me to the latest day of my life and to my children and my children's children.

"I will only add that the honourable names on this Record give me this further delight, that they are to me a pledge that Sanitary Improvement will go on. They thus bear their testimony to their sense of its importance, and they, from their position and character, can ensure its progress. The first labourers in this work may not be permitted to complete it,—they seldom are in any great work; but, whoever may have the satisfaction of completing it, that work—whatever obstacles may retard, whatever short-sighted and short-lived interests may oppose it, however it may seem for a while not to advance—*that work will be done*; and the time will come when not only the professional man and the educator, but the legislator, the statesman, the general, the minister of religion—in a word, every one to whom is entrusted the care, the guidance, and the control of numbers, will feel ashamed to be ignorant, and indeed will be accounted unfit

for his office if he be ignorant, of the laws of human health and life."

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Yes! That his work had lived and would live, this was what he cared for. This it was that kept him uniformly brave and bright, and made him say to me one evening in tones of grateful joy—we were sitting on the wide balcony watching the moon rise over the fir-tree tops, his hand in mine as of old,—

"I have indeed succeeded! I have lived to see seven millions of the public money expended on this great cause. If any one had told me, when I began, that this would be, I should have considered it absolutely incredible."

CHAPTER X.

THE SUNSET OF LIFE—ITALY, 1861.

My grandfather had travelled abroad but little during his strenuous life. He had, it is true, been to Paris in 1850, accompanied by Mr Charles Macaulay, Dr John Sutherland, and Mr (afterwards Sir Henry) Rawlinson, on business connected with the General Board of Health scheme for extra-mural sepulture, but, except on that occasion, he had not left England.

So that when in 1857 he was asked to join a party of three proceeding to Milan for the purpose of examining the irrigation works of that city, he gladly undertook the journey, which was to lead them *viâ* Marseilles and along the Cornice Road, then traversed by carriage only. The beauty of Italy thus came before him with full freshness at the age of seventy, and he returned strengthened and invigorated.