EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY OF THE LATE DR. ROBERT LEE, F.R.S.

1821-22.


COLL. REG. MED. LOND.
MDXVIII
O BIOC
TEXNH
BPAXYC H
AE
MAKPH

EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY OF DR. ROBERT LEE.

Extracts from the Diary of the late Dr. Robert Lee, F.R.S. (1821–22), while resident with the Hon. William Lamb (afterwards Viscount Melbourne) . . Edited with Preface by K. L.

Privately printed by Messrs. Hatchard,
187 *Piccadilly, London* . 1897

PREFACE.

THESE Extracts are made from the Diary of Dr. Lee, and are of the last seven months of the five years passed in the Hon. Wm. Lamb's family (the previous diaries being lost); and, as they are taken from minute shorthand difficult to decipher, some allowance will perhaps be made for mistakes. It is trusted that they will interest those few who remember the noble gentleman to whom they chiefly refer, and they cannot but increase the respect and admiration which his culture and fine character deserve.

THE HON. WILLIAM LAMB, afterwards Viscount Melbourne, had an only son, whose health almost from infancy was the cause of much anxiety to his parents. When the boy was about ten years of age, Mr. Lamb requested Sir Gilbert Blane, a well-known physician in London, to recommend him a young medical man to reside in his house, and to superintend the treatment and education of his son. Dr. Lee was warmly recommended and appointed, residing for five years with the family.

When Dr. Lee left the Hon. Wm. Lamb, he travelled and lived for nearly two years with Lord Bessborough, the father of Lady Caroline

Lamb, and after that he spent between two and three years in Russia with Count (Prince) Woronzow, having the honour of intimacy with the Emperor Alexander and many nobles of the Russian court. Dr. Lee refused the flattering and strongly urged request to become attached to the court of Russia as physician to the Czarina, and returned to London in 1827. It was at the desire of his friend, Mr. Bentley, that he published at the time of the Crimean war *The Last Days of Alexander and the first of Nicholas*, and this is the only use he made of his diaries except professionally. His acquaintance with Sevastopol, the climate of the Crimea, and other matters of importance at the time of the Crimean War, was placed, by request of Lord Aberdeen, at the service of the Government. The rest of Dr. Lee's life was spent in London

in the active practice of his profession, and the ardent pursuit of anatomical and physiological research, to which branches of science he added some valuable discoveries.

The professional position Dr. Lee won for himself is shown by Lord Melbourne's appointment of Dr. Lee to one of the Regius Professorships in the University of Glasgow, an act that, from a man so just and intelligent as Lord Melbourne, was prompted by esteem for Dr. Lee's attainments rather than by personal feeling, and is therefore the more admirable.

In the life of Viscount Melbourne by Mr. Dunckley, we find the following mention of his son Augustus.

'In 1807 their only son was born, the Prince of Wales standing sponsor for him at the font. He was called George Augustus Frederick after his royal god-

father, Augustus being the name selected from the three for daily use, and its magnificent suggestiveness offered a melancholy contrast to the destiny thus honoured. Outwardly healthy, and even handsome as he grew up, there were symptoms in infancy of a constitutional ailment which showed later on in an infirmity of the intellect that lasted through life. There was no actual imbecility, but rather a constant promise of a maturity which was watched with unceasing anxiety but never came.' In the same volume (pp. 236–237) the death of Augustus some years later is graphically described. 'It was there (Brocket Hall) that he (Lord Melbourne) had witnessed the departure of his only son, whom he had loved and watched over from childhood with more than a mother's tenderness. "Augustus," he wrote at

the time, "was lying on a sofa near me; he had been reading, but I thought had dropped asleep. Suddenly he said to me in a quiet and reflective tone, 'I wish you would give me some franks that I may write and thank people who have been kind in their inquiries.' The pen dropped from my hands as if I had been struck, for the words and the manner were as clear and thoughtful as if no cloud had ever hung heavily over him."'

The following letter, which refers to Dr. Lee's appointment, addressed to Sir Gilbert Blane by Mr. Lamb, must have been given to Dr. Lee by Sir G. Blane.

[*Copy in Shorthand.*]

'*Brighton, Oct.* 12, 1817.

'Dear Sir Gilbert, — I have many thanks to return you for your kindness

in inquiring for and recommending a person who is in your opinion well qualified to fill the situation which has been described to you by Lady Caroline.

'The letter which you enclose from Dr. L. gives me a good opinion of his character and understanding. I gather from it, as well as from your own, that you are personally unacquainted, but you have, no doubt, information with respect to him from competent persons upon whose impartiality you can implicitly rely. With respect to talents and (attainments ?) I have no doubt he has enough for the task he is desirous of undertaking. The fear, perhaps, is lest he should possess too much. As you well know, that for the purpose of education, industry, steadiness, and patience in a life even (often ?) of drudgery is qualification far more important and

essential than quickness of parts or extent of knowledge. With regard to the management of the health of his pupil, Dr. Lee will, of course, have the entire control. With respect to his education, I beg leave distinctly to state that the principal object of it at present must be to teach him the Latin and Greek languages according to the modes practised in our English schools, which I shall be able to point out to him, and that he must come prepared to submit any opinions he may have formed respecting the superiority of other branches of study, or of more eligible modes of conducting this branch, to my southern propensities. The first place being given, and the principal attention directed to this point, he should have *carte blanche* as to the rest, and may teach him as much logic, moral philosophy, and metaphysics as he can get

in. This is almost the only preliminary upon this part of the subject that I should have to state, being willing to rely in other respects on Dr. Lee's own good sense and right understanding.

'It is necessary, however, before the engagement proceeds, that you should give me some idea of the terms which you think it will be right for me to offer. My means are somewhat limited, and it is possible that they may at once prove an insuperable objection to the arrangement. I rather fear, from some expressions in Dr. Lee's letter that he exaggerates to himself the advantages which are likely to arise to him from the connexion. Persons at a distance are very apt to do so. Nothing is so painful as to excite expectation that must be afterwards disappointed, and you will, of course, make him thoroughly understand that, though he

may probably derive some advantages from being introduced and becoming known to persons whom he would otherwise have no opportunity of seeing, yet that any such result is very doubtful and in no respect to be counted upon. You will be kind enough to explain to him my situation, but no point of political connexion and of fortune. I certainly have no interest that can serve to advance him to any public employment, nor sufficient wealth to enable me to make for him any permanent provision. Perhaps I say too much upon this part of the subject, but I am particularly anxious that there should be no misunderstanding. I shall be glad to hear from you again at your leisure upon all the points which I have noticed in this letter, particularly upon that of terms. I must rely upon your goodness to ex-

cuse the trouble which I am imposing upon you. Augustus has had attacks since he has been here, but appears notwithstanding exceedingly well and strong. I have, as usual, a cough at this time of the year; I expectorate in the morning, and perhaps seven or eight times in the course of the day. In other respects I am exceedingly well. Believe me,

Dear Sir Gilbert,

WM. LAMB.'

Those who know something of Lord Melbourne's domestic life may find in this sad condition of an only son much to explain the unhappiness of the home and the conduct of the mother. It would have been better to have placed the boy among companions and away from his mother, and certainly a classical system of education in the case

of defective intellect would not find favour at the present time with those who understand this interesting subject.

(DIARY.)

Wed. July 11*th*, 1821.–Melbourne House. Dined with Lord Melbourne at 8 (this was the father of Mr. Lamb, he died in 1828). Present, Lord Cowper and Lady Cowper, Lady Caroline and Mr. Lamb, Mr. and Mrs. Latour, Lord W— and Mr. Milbank. Nothing very remarkable passed; conversation chiefly about the coronation.

July 12*th*.—Went to Astley's to see the Champion ride. He had a suit of beautiful armour. The horse is a piebald, a large head like a cart-horse; it is thoroughly trained to retreating. There were present the Duke and

Duchess of St. Albans, Mr. Beauclerk, Col. Carnac; returned at 5, and then went to the Exhibition at Somerset House. Afterwards walked to Lord Guilford's and left my card. Dined with Lord Melbourne, Lord and Lady Cowper, Mr. Lamb, and Lady Caroline. Mr. Lamb's conversation brilliant, yet nothing remembered.

July 18*th*.—Slept at Mr. Murray's, Albemarle St., where I saw Dr. Black and Mr. Belzoni. Mr. Belzoni accompanied Mr. Murray and myself in the carriage to Westminster Hall.

July 19*th*. — The Coronation (George IV.). The magnificence of the scene in Westminster Hall exceeded all description. The Queen presented herself at the platform about half-past 6. The shouting, a mixture of huzzas

and hisses, was very great. The rush along the platform was soon stopped by the decision of the soldiers and order almost immediately restored.

July 21st.—Dined with Lord Melbourne. There were present, Mr. Clifford and his lady, Mr. Ponsonby and Lady Barbara, Mr. Banks, the great traveller, Mr. Foster, Mr. Lamb and Lady Caroline, and Mr. Milbank. It was stated that 10,000 troops are to be exported. Mr. Banks seems a very clever and learned man, but I could recollect but little of what he said.

July 23rd.—Dined with Lord Melbourne, Mr. Lamb and Lady Caroline, Mr. and Mrs. Latour, and Mr. Milbank at 8 o'clock. Remember but little of the conversation which passed. Something was said about the Coronation

medals. Lord Melbourne had promised 3 to some children, and was astonished to find that they cost 3 guineas. Mr. Lamb said he was to receive his to-morrow morning, and that he would instantly carry it to the Mint.

The King is going to Ireland; four Lords of the Bedchamber are to accompany him. The Queen has disappeared, and gone nobody knows whither. Lord Melbourne said he supposed it would be necessary to take some Cabinet Minister, and that he thought Lord Sidmouth would be the proper person, as the management of Ireland belongs to the Home Department. The King will enter Dublin in a chariot drawn by 8 grey horses. The occasion will be very great, no doubt. Lady Caroline talked a great deal of nonsense at dinner, but was rather

more agreeable than usual, a certain prelude to a violent storm.

August 5th.—At dinner Mr. Lamb told a most interesting story of Sir Gore Ouseley when Ambassador to the Court of Persia. It was said that it produced a violent dislike to him on the part of the King of Persia. One day when at court the King publickly insulted him and asked who he was. He told him he was the representative of the King of Great Britain. The King of Persia said, 'The King of Great Britain is not as great as the King of Russia.' 'In the eyes of Russians; but much greater in the eyes of Englishmen.' The King of Persia replied, 'I have heard that your King is a mere cypher, and can do nothing.' Upon which Sir Gore's loyal spirit rose to such a height that he said, 'He was such a cypher as to

be able to make and unmake a hundred such kings as you,' alluding to the Rajahs in India, for whose wealth the King of Persia entertained great respect. The King was so enraged at this observation that he drew his sword half out, and Sir Gore expected to be killed instantaneously. He, however, remarked, 'Attack me in the midst of your Court?' Upon which the King said, 'I only wished to frighten you.' The quarrel had arisen from a cause I have not mentioned. It was that Sir Gore had not visited the King's Prime Minister before he had called on the King himself; and this gave rise, on the King asking why he did not do so, to his stating that he was the representative of the King of Great Britain, and the subsequent question.

August 8th.—Received the account

of the Queen's death. It took place yesterday evening at 10 o'clock. The symptoms became very rapidly unfavourable after the bulletin at 1 o'clock.

August 18th.—Mr. Lamb said he did not quite trust Southey in detailing facts; that he thought him accustomed to exaggerate.

August 30th.—Mr. Sheridan (son of the great S.), Mrs. W. Hallett, and Miss —— came over. I walked in the garden with Mr. Sheridan, but heard no observations worthy of being remembered. After we returned to the house there was much light conversation, which was chiefly on the subject of marriage. Lady C. thought it would be an improvement if ladies lived in houses different from their husbands, and that they only simply

called upon them. Mr. S. remarked how delightful it would be to have a card left for you on the table by your husband; that before the Revolution in France this was the case, the house was divided completely, and Mr. L. said it was so bad that it was all swept away. Mr. S. said that it was a pleasant way of going to the d—l. It was a path strewed with roses, &c. He mentioned a work which he had seen by an Italian on whether an old man ought to marry; it was in Latin. The first question was whether an old man ought to marry a young woman, or whether he ought to marry at all or not. Mr. S. said he would rather like a woman to have some faults. It would interest him more deeply in her welfare. Mr. L. thought there could be no doubt it was most advisable to marry, but that those who are not rich

ought not to marry at all. People who are forced to live much together, are confined to the same room, the same bed, &c., are like two pigeons put under a basket who must fight.

Mrs. Hallett and the other ladies said they wished that they were men; but I did not learn what they proposed to attain by the change.

October 19th.—Mr. Lamb observed that it was the common practice among the Jews to send their children out into the world at a very early period to make provision for themselves; that the parents furnish the children with a certain stock, and that they demand an account of the profits every week. Mr. Ricardo was abandoned by his father when young, because he renounced the Jewish religion and married a Quaker lady. Mr. R. had, however,

previously to this been known on the Stock Exchange as a man of talent and character, and he was befriended by others. His wealth now is very great.

October 20th.—When at dinner, we had a long account of Lady Caroline's meeting with Sir W. Scott at Paris, after the Battle of Waterloo. She declared that he then denied upon his honour that he was the author of the tales, *Waverley*, &c. Mr. L. said that although he admired Sir W. Scott's talents, still there was something about him which he did not like —a sneaking, flattering, sycophantish manner, and that he considered his conduct in regard to the 'Beacon' as by no means open and fair.

October 25th.—Mr. Lamb remarked at dinner, when the subject of emigra-

tion was mentioned, it was no loss to the country for the gentry to live abroad: for example, in Italy, as it enabled the Italians to take so much more of our manufactured goods than they would otherwise be capable of doing. It was necessary to recollect that money was seldom taken out of this country to Italy. Mr. R. had reduced his rent 20%. Mr. Lamb remarked that he could afford to do so, as he had but little land, and had large property in the funds.

Mrs. Opie, Mr. L. remarked, had rather a wild, roving look. Lady Cork remarked that she was propriety itself, though her manner was certainly against her. Her father is now in an hypochrondriacal state, and will not allow her to leave him. He is an old man and had been irreligious, his reason never having been convinced

of the truth of the Bible. He is now a truly evangelical man and completely altered. Mr. L. said that he should not have thought the worse of her for being a little wild. He asked if she had never thought of marrying again. Lady Cork said that Lord ——, the uncle of the Marquis of Bute had proposed to her, but her father would not consent to the match. He is a very clever and agreeable man. The cause of this I did not discover. Mr. L. remarked that all the Stuarts were clever. Lady Cork said it was so, and that she was accustomed to designate them by the term of the 'Bute Creation.'

Lady Cork gave us some account of Mr. Littleton, son-in-law of Lord Spencer. On talking of Lady S. going abroad, Mr. L. said, 'May she go, and may the d—l go with her; she is a

cold, hard person.' Lady C. remarked she must have suffered much on account of her son having gone abroad with some common person's son.

October 27th.—There dined here to-day Lady Cork, Mr. and Mrs. and the two Misses Blake, and Mr. Sheridan, the son of the late Mr. Sheridan by his second wife. It was a most agreeable party. The manner in which Mr. B.'s family spend their time is most rational and must be delightful. The young people occupy themselves with drawing, botany, and other studies. Lately they visited Devonshire. One of the ladies draws outlines of the various scenes they visited on their tour, and Mr. B. fills them up and colours them in the most beautiful manner. They are also making a collection of all the plants to be found in this neighbourhood. Mr. B.

informed us that Mr. Chevern is the gentleman referred to by Dr. Marcet in the Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, in whom exercise cured the chronic rheumatism. He resides in France, and is the author of the papers in the *Edinburgh Review* on France. He married a French lady. Mrs. Marcet's last work on Natural Philosophy is not considered so good as her two former. She is a person of very great attainments, and yet is quite destitute of presumption. Mr. Blake, when talking of tragedies, said that one in which all the individuals introduced are murdered, reminded him of the story of the two Irish cats, which fought until nothing of them was left except the tails. Mr. Sheridan said he did not like any part of the ancient tragedies except the choruses, and those as odes, which were most beautiful.

The ministers, Mr. Lamb told us, had sent in their resignations before the King's departure for Hanover. They will not allow him to appoint Lord Conyngham to be Chamberlain. Lady C. would not go to the Continent, which fretted him exceedingly. She said that, if she were to do so while her husband held no official situation, it would be publicly proclaiming herself the King's mistress. I did not hear any material cause assigned for this disagreement between the King and his ministers. They agreed that she was a fine woman, but Mr. Blake could not comprehend how she could have such an influence over him. He thought it dangerous in her to allow him to go abroad without her, and thought it not improbable that he might fall into the hands of some German or French dolly, and that Lady

C. would lose all. He asked how Lady Hertford bore all this. Mr. Lamb said it was strange that the King should behave so ill to all whom he left. The King told the ministers that he would consider the subject of their resignation when he returned. Mr. Lamb said the country contained a great number of very aged people, and not more than seven or eight beautiful women in the lower ranks. Mr. Blake saw Wimbledon House burnt about 36 years ago. He said that a house not far from London was on a conflagration, and two gentlemen rode past at the time. They remarked it was not half so fine as Drury Lane. The person to whom the house belonged heard this, and said that he was sorry for it, but it was the best his house could afford. Mr. Sheridan told us that when Will's Coffee House was

burning many of the Whigs were standing at the door of Brooks's witnessing it. An Irishman passing at the time when Mr. Sheridan was expressing his admiration at the effect of one engine, and supposing that he enjoyed the scene, said, 'Don't be afraid, your honour; there will not be a drop of water in two minutes.' Mr. Blake thinks there is danger from the quantity of capital carried out of the country and invested in the French funds, and that the state of the circulating medium has very little to do with it.

November 1st.—Dined yesterday at Mr. Blake's; present, Sir G. Ouseley, Lord Dacre, Mr. H. Cowper; Sir Gore informed me of some things respecting Persia. Mr. Martyn died three weeks after leaving his house of dysentery, from eating too much fruit, not of consumption. His translation of the

New Testament was good, though sometimes defective. He was assisted by a native who had renounced Mohamedanism and become a Deist. Deism is not uncommon in Persia. The Turks are fatalists, not so the Persians. The most common of the people can read and are poets. More men devote themselves to learning in Persia than in this country. The atmosphere is so hot that the best mahogany tables will be immediately burnt if exposed to the sun; but the air is remarkably dry, and there are no marshes, so that fevers, except along the shores of the Caspian, are quite unknown. The finest surgical instruments may be exposed and never rust. Plague has visited Persia, but not for a long period. The Turks, being fatalists, will use no precautions to stop it, although they see Europeans in Con-

stantinople perfectly exempt from its ravages. The Persians use all proper precautions.

The conversation turned next to Cobbett and Lady Morgan. They all thought it was unfair to cast reflections on the truth of Lady M. or the profession of her husband. Sir Gore was prevented from reading it in consequence of what was stated in the reviews. If she stated that she had been introduced to different people, and had conversation with them when she had not, certainly no treatment could be too bad for her to receive. She had shown more genius, Mr. Lamb thinks, than Miss Edgeworth, and that the 'Wild Irish girl' was beautiful. She was the heroine, and how could a woman of fifty be a wild Irish girl? Mr. B. replied it is twenty-one years since the publication of this book. He

thought Miss Edgeworth had done more for morality by her tales than all the sermons that had been written for the last forty years. Much was to be learned from her treatises on education. Mr. Blake tried with one of his children the plan recommended by her to learn to read, not to divide the words into syllables, but to take the whole word; but it did not answer for the spelling. Sir John Sebright's spelling was this method. Sir John states that the only difference between him and General Gage when they left Westminster School was that he could spell a little, which Gage could not.

Nothing has occurred of any consequence.

November 5th.—Lady Cork informed us that she was once dining with Lord Erskine and Mr. Jekyll, and

that some persons came in on urgent business, which obliged Lord E. to leave the dinner-table, and to put Mr. Jekyll in his place. Mr. J. began a discourse with Lady E., supposing that her husband was dead and that they were married. 'You will recollect,' he said, 'a dinner that Thomas gave to us at one time. It was a very bad one, and we were never asked to drink wine.' In this manner he went over everything that was laughable respecting Lord E., and all the persons who were then present. The effect was ludicrous in the extreme. She also informed us at breakfast that Lady (then Mrs.) Crewe gave a grand ball in honour of Mr. Fox's return for Westminster (in 1784). The dresses were all blue and buff, and she first saw quadrilles danced that evening.

November 12th.—After dinner sat for a short time in the drawing-room with Lady Caroline. She said that Lord Byron was about to publish his Memoirs, and that Mr. Murray had given him 2000*l.* for them; that they were of no value—a mere copy-book, and that they contained an account of all his profligate amours; that they were worse than Rousseau's Confessions, and that there were passages which could not be published. Lord Byron was very ignorant before she and her friends took him up, and had always lived in the worst society; that he had read nothing but a few classical books; that she would publish her memoirs, which would be worth 5000*l.*; that she had been acquainted with all the great people of former times, &c., &c. Then she went on to give an account of Mr. Beckford's disgrace.

February 1822.—Left London in the evening at 7 o'clock, and reached Dover at 8 a.m. the next morning. There were two persons in the coach with me, Col. French, M.P., and Mr. Cuff, sadler, of Charing Cross.

It was proposed that I should join the Duchess of Devonshire at Paris and accompany her Grace to Florence, where the family of Lord Bessborough was, whom I was to accompany in the capacity of physician from Italy to London.

The Diary contains an account of the various places, districts, &c., &c., which were visited during the following six months, as Lord Bessborough travelled through the North of Italy, along the Riviera to Nice, and thence to Bordeaux. About the middle of August the family returned to England.

(Diary.)

The night that we slept at Montreuil a messenger passed from England who conveyed intelligence that the Prime Minister was dead, and until we reached Boulogne we all believed that it was Lord Liverpool who had died suddenly from gout. The morning before we left Boulogne I went to the English reading-room, and there saw the account of the coroner's inquest and the statements respecting Lord Londonderry's having committed suicide. We had rather a rough, unpleasant passage to Dover, where we slept the first night. The following night we reached Rochester, where we were met by Lady Caroline, Augustus, &c. At first there was a good deal of feeling on all sides, but it was soon over, and in a few instants

she seemed to feel as little as if nothing has occurred since their separation. Her conduct is as strange as ever; the boy has grown much, particularly in the extremities, but his head is small and there is a lamentable appearance of vacancy in his look. His attacks are the same, although Sir A. Carlisle promises great things from animal diet, &c.

On returning to London we have occasional entries in the diary of the dinner parties at Lord Bessborough's, at which the members of the family and intimate friends of Lord and Lady Bessborough, and (as was natural) Mr. Lamb and Lady Caroline were usually present.

August 31*st*, 1822.—Mr. Lamb, Mr. Greville, and Mr. Foster dined here to-day. Wine was the subject

of conversation during the first part of the dinner.

Mr. Greville asked of Mr. Lamb what advantage we reaped from Portugal by our treaties. What do they take in exchange for the port we took? He answered, they took a great quantity of cotton goods to the amount of £600,000 annually; but that lately they had passed several laws against our trade. Claret was the common drink of the people at one time. Mr. Ponsonby said it was a mistake that Burgundy could not be drunk out of France; it was just as good in London as in Paris. The French at Bordeaux, Mr. Lamb remarked, never knew the value of claret till the English taught it them.

In a short time, a long discourse took place on the income of certain persons in England. The Duke of Devonshire was declared to be the

greatest landed proprietor in England. The Duke of Rutland's estate in Derbyshire is soon to be offered for sale. Mr. Greville did not expect this, for he always looked a contented, comfortable man, and did not appear to be in difficulties. His income is about £70,000. The Duke of Devonshire would, it was supposed, purchase this estate if it were to come into the market. Lord Grosvenor is said to be immensely rich. Mr. Lamb said it was a foolish thing to calculate what a man saved and to add the compound interest; there were a vast number of expenses never mentioned. Mr. Ponsonby remarked, Mr. Portman is one of the richest men in England.

After this date the diary ends, so far as any general interest is concerned.