
"How great and good the times are now" was the exclamation of Davies the poet-tramp when by happy chance one early summer day "the rainbow and the cuckoo-song" came together for his enjoyment. His words seemed to echo in my mind when I found that the brief but brilliant biographies which form this latest collection of Lives had their source in the unique association of two inspired authors. The Introduction explains that up to the end of October 1940 the late Sir D'Arcy Power was responsible and thereafter Mr W. R. Le Fanu was the author and editor. I had already browsed here and there with a pleasantly increasing feeling of surprise that anyone could have made the subject so succinct and comprehensive and still so palatable. The explanation gave me peculiar pleasure, and from his remarks in the Introduction I do not think that Le Fanu will feel disparaged if I say that but for his guidance one could not tell which author had written which memoirs. They are all informative and satisfying, yet lively and attractive. No dull repetitive catalogue of dates and achievements is here recorded, but charming studies are presented, so accurate and so vivid that the man himself seems to come to life and to step out of the page and to speak to the reader in the same fresh and engaging manner as the portraits in Ruddigore.

For instance those who knew Rowley Bristow (and who didn't?) would appreciate "Bristow was a man of abounding vitality; as a student he had excelled at Association Football, lawn tennis and water polo; in later life he found his recreation in shooting, fishing and golf, and was a keen player of bridge. He was a good teacher with much humour and humanity, and a hospitable man with many friends and a love of good living. He did much to lead the developing speciality of Orthopaedics along the best lines."

Similarly we recognise Hey Groves in "He had inherited a natural aptitude towards mechanical devices which led him, a general surgeon, to a particular interest in orthopaedic operations. At that time the "carpentry" of fractures held the field; steel plates were screwed to the bone, according to the method brilliantly invented a decade earlier by Sir William Arbuthnot Lane who, like Groves, was a general surgeon... Groves was a man of unbounded energy and ability. He was naturally friendly and sociable, and his early experience of poverty no doubt prompted his generosity, but also determined his hard-headed will to success... His recreations were golf and swimming; while his aptitude for mechanics and his ability as a linguist enabled him greatly to enjoy motoring on the continent, combining holidays with attendance at medical conferences."

The College, says Sir Cecil Wakeley, is justly proud of this record. And well it may be. Precious as are the many treasures of the Royal College of Surgeons, there are none that can surpass the permanent and enduring value of these pictures of our immediate forefathers in Surgery. Their qualities are so clearly displayed that their precepts and principles are set up for all time. For all time—there is the core of my pleasure in reviewing this book. To-day, when millions sit entranced before a silver screen across which flit transient figures leaving nothing to posterity, as a monument to impermanence might fitly be carved in smoke, born of hot air and vanishing with a gust of laughter, it is encouraging and heartening and hopeful that someone will set to and work as Power and Le Fanu have done. How fortunate are we that these two came together. So may the living fabric of our College be preserved for us, and for ever. Not only will surgeons of to-day and of to-morrow be indebted to the authors for their industry and their devotion, but Medicine itself will be the richer for their happy association. It is not unlikely that many of their readers may also echo the sentiment "How great and good!"—Bryan McFarland.