

News, Notes and Queries

DR. HODGKIN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS DISTINGUISHED FRIEND AND PATIENT, SIR MOSES MONTEFIORE, Bt., F.R.S.*

IN 1824 Abraham Montefiore journeyed to the Continent in a vain attempt to restore his failing health. He was accompanied by Dr. Thomas Hodgkin. They proved incompatible, so Hodgkin was pleased when he heard that they were to be joined by Abraham's elder brother, Moses, whom he had previously met in Paris. Thus began their close association. They were of different types. Hodgkin was small and slight with an aquiline nose and very bright dark brown eyes. He was alert and full of activity. He favoured the Quaker speech and dress:¹ a plain black, grey, or drab suit, the coat shaped like a covert coat with stand-up collar and a white necktie. The broad-brimmed hat was not removed either in place of worship or for salutation. A joint founder of the Aborigines Protection Society, he worked hard for oppressed savages, persecuted Jews, and ill-housed poor.²

Moses Haim Montefiore^{3,4} was born in 1784 and died in 1885. In 1812 he married Judith Cohen, whose sister was wife to Nathan Mayer Rothschild, and moved his business of broker and banker to 4, New Court. He was a founder of the Alliance Assurance Company,⁵ Imperial Continental Gas Association, and Provincial Bank of Ireland.⁶ Having amassed great wealth by the age of forty, he retired in order to devote his few expected remaining years to charity.

He stood six feet three inches, was of soldierly bearing, having been a Captain in the Surrey Militia, and was something of a martinet. He was possessed of great personal bravery: at Bucharest,^{7,8} when eighty-three years old, his hotel was surrounded by a howling mob of several thousands seeking his life, but he fearlessly strode to the window, flung it open and addressed them; then he drove through the city in an open carriage with one companion.

He was a Sheriff of the City of London and of Kent, a friend of princes and potentates. He gave his neighbour, the young Princess Victoria, a golden key⁹ to his garden at Ramsgate so that she might enjoy it at will. He was no ascetic, drinking a bottle of port daily until he was ninety-nine, and delighting in making the Ramsgate schoolboys tipsy at the weekends.

Lady Montefiore's health began to fail in 1860.¹⁰ In spite of Dr. Hodgkin's care and that of Sir Charles Locock and others whom he called into consultation, she died on 24 September 1862, just as the Jewish New Year (5623) began. Sir Moses, in expressing his gratitude for the medical care, wrote to Mrs. Hodgkin,¹¹ 'I feel assured that you will both of you preserve the memory of my dear Wife with sentiments of genuine attachment and I trust you will gratify me by accepting the enclosed for any little Souvenir which may approve itself to your own taste as a parting Gift from her and in

* A paper read to the Osler Club of London on 1 April 1966.

her name'. He gave presents with such sympathy and understanding that they seemed to dignify the recipient.¹²

News of injustice to Jews anywhere would send him hurrying to the Foreign Office and then straight to the seat of trouble abroad, but he was equally prompt in assisting persecuted Christians or in redressing injustice to Moslems. At this time many Jews were still living in ghettos, speaking their own language, and having little contact with the world outside, much as may still be seen in Mea-She'arim, Jerusalem. He persuaded them to learn the vernacular and to take up useful trades.

Sir Moses made many journeys on which he was accompanied by Lady Montefiore^{13,14} until her death: Damascus 1840; Russia¹⁵—an exciting journey, for the ice broke when they were crossing a river and one of the party was drowned—in 1846 and 1852; Roumania 1867; Rome 1852¹⁶ with Hodgkin, over the case of the Jewish child, Edgar Mortara, kidnapped by the Papal police on the specious plea that a servant girl said she had secretly had him baptized some years before. This was Sir Moses' only unsuccessful intervention. The Pope refused to receive him or to liberate the child. 'The Journey to Morocco in 1863' is well described in Hodgkin's volume¹⁷ which also covers the flora, fauna, and geology, and was beautifully illustrated by him. His style is pleasing, rather like that of Peter Beckford. I give an example:

On the 31st day we were informed that the Sultan could see us at half-past seven o'clock the next morning, and we had to be stirring early to be ready to keep his appointment. In the morning of the 1st day, February, the Prime Minister and the Chamberlain came to us. The latter was very solicitous that we should make haste and keep our time. All our party went on horses or mules, except Sir Moses, who used the sedan chair which had been brought for his service. This, I believe, caused some delay. We had about half a mile to go to the imperial premises, for we did not go into, or even in sight of, the palace. We passed for a considerable distance between two straight and high walls, made of beaten earth, a peculiar Moorish type of building, which is more durable than could be expected. This straight lane was lined on both sides with troops, who had a very strange appearance. In clothing and arms they have quitted the old Moorish style, and become a sort of degraded European army. In the first place the men were of various ages, sizes, and colours—some old, others only lads; some quite diminutive, others tall; some as fair as almost any German, others the darkest Negroes, with every intermediate shade. In general those who are quite dark, yet not black, have the typical Negro countenance and hair, but on the contrary rather sharp noses, moderate lips, and straight hair. Many of the heads are shaven, but even then some hair is left which shows its character. Few, if any, of the men had shoes or stockings, but some I believe had slippers.

I do not know whether they had shirts or not, but their old cloth jackets were indiscriminately of red, blue, or green. The garments worn for trousers did not cover the legs. The troops had very much the appearance of prisoners clothed in left off soldiers' garments. Each held a musket in due form by his side, but some had bayonets, others not. Even the officers were little better clad. The lane opened into a very large open space surrounded by a similar wall, which was lined with soldiers, in some places in single and others in double line.

Most important were Sir Moses' seven journeys to the Holy Land¹⁸ in 1827, 1838, 1849, 1855, 1857 accompanied by Hodgkin, 1866,¹⁹ and 1875. He founded a girls' school²⁰ and a school of agriculture, built a windmill, and persuaded the Jews, who lived on learning and charity, to take up more practical occupations. He also founded two colonies for them, and was a forerunner of Zionism and the State of Israel. The journey was then more hazardous than it had been in the fifteenth century,²¹ for, to the dangers of pestilence and foreign war, that of piracy was now added. As regards pestilence, Lady Montefiore's maid, Ann Flinn, died in the lazaretto at Malta on

News, Notes and Queries

the return from their second journey, and Hodgkin himself succumbed on the sixth. It had been hoped that the voyage would restore his health, but he fell ill shortly after landing at Alexandria, which they left on 18 March, and could go no further than Jaffa, where he died on 4 April 1866 from dysentery.^{22,23,24} His last letter, to his wife,²⁵ says, 'My dear love to all my friends, I lament the little service I have done and I entreat all to—and serve their Lord and Master. The two last days at Alexandria knocked me up; the weather was oppressive, I have been in almost ceaseless agony, delirium, tenesmus, griping, have worn me down. Dear Sir Moses was obliged to leave me to go to Jerusalem, but he has been boundless in his kindness, and spared nothing for my relief'.

Sir Moses was devastated to hear of his death. He had an obelisk erected over his grave^{26,27,28} in the Protestant cemetery at Jaffa. On the back it says:

This tomb is erected by Sir Moses Montefiore Bart. in commemoration of a friendship of more than forty years and of many journeys taken together in Europe, Asia, and Africa.

On the front:

Here rests the body of Thomas Hodgkin M.D. of Bedford Square, London, a man distinguished alike for scientific attainments, medical skill and self-sacrificing philanthropy. He died at Jaffa the 4th of April 1866, in the 68th year of his age in the faith and hope of the Gospel.

Humani nihil a se alienum putabat.

The epitaph is inscribed by his deeply sorrowing widow and brother to record their irreparable loss.

It is fitting that these words of Terence, a freed slave, should be inscribed here, for Hodgkin and Sir Moses had done so much together to free the oppressed and enslaved. It was surely this lofty and practical idealism that united these very different men for so long.

Let us not end on this melancholy note, but say a little more about the Montefiore family's connection with Guy's Hospital. Abraham Montefiore's son, Nathaniel (1819–83), qualified M.R.C.S. from Guy's in 1858.^{29,30,31} Nat, as he was called, being of a jovial disposition, was a popular student. He married Emma, daughter of Sir Isaac Lyon Goldsmid, who was one of the founders of London University. She was a pious and strong-minded lady. He kept his rooms at the porter's lodge in St. Thomas's Street to the end of his life, and used to retire there when the pressure of this 'Stern Daughter of the Voice of God' became too much for him, his sentiments being like those of Sir Toby Belch, 'Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?'. He accompanied his son, the Jewish theologian Claude Montefiore to Berlin in 1882–3,³² ostensibly to visit clinics and hospitals. I have his letters, describing many good dinners, social activities, and the pretty Fräulein who gave him German lessons. There are references to only three hospital visits and another to du Bois-Reymond's physiological laboratory. His great-grandson, David Montefiore, a Guy's man, is Professor of Bacteriology at the University of Ibadan.

I do not know of any further connection between the two families, but Dr. Hodgkin's great-great-nephew, Thomas L. Hodgkin, and Sir Moses' great-great-great-nephew Alan G. Montefiore, are both Fellows of Balliol College, Oxford.

News, Notes and Queries

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Dr. R. E. Smith, a Guy's man, for suggesting the subject of this paper and especially to the Hodgkin family and my wife's family of Montefiore for much help and access to papers.

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