



The Life of Dr. Knox

The Life of Robert Knox, the Anatomist. A Sketch of his Life and Writings by Henry Lonsdale

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And such a twain, can do 't, in which I bind,
 On pain of punishment, the world to meet ;
 We stand up peerless."

DR. DAVID ASHER.

Leipsic, May 1870.

NOTE.—Since writing the above, I gather, from a review of F. Galton's work on *Hereditary Genius; an Enquiry into its Laws and Consequences*, that the author has also referred to Darwin in support of his hypothesis. I hope this statement may suffice to save me from the imputation of plagiarism. At the same time, I am glad to find the deductions from the theory propounded by Schopenhauer, and presented in the preceding article, have been drawn by so able a hand.

ART. IX.—THE LIFE OF DR. KNOX.*

To attempt to review Dr. Lonsdale's work will be a difficult task. A biography of a most eminent English anthropologist, who passed away immediately before the foundation of the London Society, has, after the lapse of seven years, been successfully accomplished by the pupil and colleague of Dr. Knox—Dr. Lonsdale. He has done this well. Not imbued with the prejudices which still lurk in the minds of some English anthropologists and anatomical teachers against the morality of Knox, and in relation to his alleged connection with the Burke and Hare murders, he has told us, and told us well, what Knox was, what Knox thought, and what Knox did. He was, perhaps, the most simple-minded and thorough teacher of anatomy that the Edinburgh school ever produced; and in the sentences which he published we have a more thorough idea of future anthropological science than at present exists in England. What he did was perhaps bold—it certainly was truthful. He thought of the old maxim, "Senhores ricos, e filósofos pobres, nao pôdem fazer cousas grandes, porque a estes lhes falta dinheiro, e aquelles espirito." He was, however, not too rich to be truthful, nor too poor to be

* *The Life of Robert Knox, the Anatomist.* A Sketch of his Life and Writings, by his Pupil and Colleague, Henry Lonsdale. With portraits. Macmillan and Co., London.

a philosopher. In fact, when we look at the latter years of Knox, we can apply to him the words of Swift, whose mocking antinomian denunciation of the surrounding world forcibly reminds us of Knox:—"It was bitterness that they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit, so I disregarded all power and all authority." Why, he even laughed at the editors of our popular manuals of physiology, and his laughter was long afterwards approved by the unanimous vote of the Edinburgh Town Council, at the time of the famous election for the chair of physiology at that city.

Whether Knox's plan of always saying the truth without reference to the feeling or prepossessions of his auditory was absolutely the best, we do not know. It certainly was not lucrative; and it brought him enemies during his lifetime,

"Das Beste, was du wissen kannst
Darfst du den Buben doch nicht sagen."

Knox had an unfortunate habit of letting out all he thought to his students; a habit we cannot commend to all those who prefer the profits to the verities of science. And we see in his outspoken utterances the real motives which have actuated so many of our most profound anthropologists. Bunsen says, "Even the greatest men reveal, in the deepest outpourings of their hearts, their frightful despair of humanity." The sad events which marked much of Dr. Knox's life have not invalidated the triumphant words with which Dr. Lonsdale pronounces, "General consent has awarded Knox an exalted platform as an anatomist, and he was undoubtedly the first teacher of his day, but posterity will probably figure him as the chief anthropologist of his epoch, a pioneer of a philosophy that sought to recognise the true nature of man, his instincts, his passions, his psychological leanings, and social influences." The number of great English minds that owe their first scientific *impetus* to Knox's influence and personal teaching are enormous. We, as anthropologists, while we recognise the greatness of such men as Fergusson, the Goodsirs, and J. H. Bennett, must gaze at the eminent anthropological authorities whom Knox taught. Richard Owen—*αριστων ουδα εγω φιλοσοφων γενομενον*; Nott and Gliddon; the late lamented Dr. Hunt; Robert Druitt; Professor W. Macdonald; H. Lonsdale; Kelburne King, are instances which immediately

occur to one. Although the present writer dares not to associate himself with the before cited illustrious teachers, yet his mind goes back to the time when Knox by letter could applaud "an earnestness and love of science *for its own sake*, a sure pledge that science will not be suffered to remain stationary in your hands." He who feels towards Knox the sentiments of personal gratitude, which have led to this quotation, may be excused if at the risk of egotism, he says a little of what he personally knew of the great master, who departed to another existence on the 20th December, 1862, the very week when a few zealous anthropologists, under the command of Hunt, were meditating the foundation of the Society which has since become so influential and famous. And when we contemplate the science then and now, we feel the greatness of our losses.

To attempt to abstract the life of Knox, to attempt to excerpt from his numerous printed teachings aught that could form a categorical history of the successive facts that he brought to the notice of the English public, would be impossible in our present space. We can only point to a few of the great services he rendered science. At the period of his teaching much baleful influence was cast over English science by eight unwieldy and dull volumés, that Knox used to be fond of calling the "Bilgewater Treatises." It is probable that the doctrines and facts of Knox have produced that verdict on the ultra-teleological school which was pronounced twenty years ago, and is now almost forgotten. If this was all he did it would have been a great thing. But something more was done by him. He revolutionised altogether our study of the races of man. Many, since the time of Blumenbach, had recognised the difference between the skulls of men of various races, but none had pointed out that the inherent mental distinctions in the dress, music, manners of thought of various nations, were due to race. The only remedy for it is the extirpation of the weaker race. We fear that present events bear out entirely the predictions to which Knox gave utterance. "No one could converse with Knox without recognising the great space that man's nature filled in the schedule of the anatomist's philosophy. Race would set aside geographical position and boundaries, protocols, autocracies, and the like; it overtopped restraints of every kind, diplomatic or dynastical. Knox could not glance at a cranium for the common descriptive

anatomy without speaking of its ethnological bearings; it was the same with the external features and form of man generally and specifically. However much he might owe to study and acquirements, Knox seemed to the manner born to investigate distinctive anatomical characters; even when walking along the streets thronged with men and women, he was always on the *qui vive* for race features. He could see at a glance what ordinary men could scarcely distinguish at their leisure; if his eye was penetrative beyond most, his more gifted vision lay within an alert and discriminative mind. Previous to his time little or nothing was heard about race in the medical schools; he changed all this by his Saturday's lectures, and race became as familiar as household words to his students, through whom some of his novel ideas became disseminated far and wide, both at home and abroad. The terms 'peoples', 'nationalities', and the like, used to constitute the staple vocabulary of writers, without, however, any tangible groundwork or ideal perception of the larger truths involved. Knox, travelling like a peripatetic from one great city to another, helped to convey to the English mind a larger meaning than hitherto existed of the history of peoples; and this he accomplished by holding up a mirror that reflected not only the names and colours of humanity, but the inherent virtues and vices—call them the distinctive qualities of race." Yet, seven years after the death of Knox, we have an eminent German professor, distinguished for ability and generally profound knowledge on many subjects, writing to the *Times* to tell Englishmen that they are of the same race as the Germans! And where Max Müller has erred, many lesser men have more deeply floundered. These facts show that Knox's philosophy is not yet universally taught, and indicates the necessity that chairs of Anthropology should be founded at our Universities to teach the next generation, at least. "Men are of various races; call them species, if you will; call them permanent varieties, it matters not. The fact, the simple fact, remains just as it was; men are of different races. Now, the object of these lectures is to show that in human history race is everything." So said Knox in 1850. His description of the Celt and the Saxon will live for ever. We dare not here quote it at length. It has been often misquoted, garbled, and diluted, and the subject just now becomes so political that

we must say *non ragionam di lor, ma guarda e passa*. The principles which Knox laid down were applied by him to the Jewish race, and we must commend all Knox's generalisations respecting the Jews to the attention of the present generation of anthropologists. With Dr. Beddoe's valuable little pamphlet, they form the groundwork on which we hope that some future anthropologist will base a reliable memoir on the physical, moral, and mental history of the Jews. Future generations, however, may, perhaps, not enjoy the advantage of such an artist to depict the Jew as Dr. Westmacott, whose beautiful contours of the Jew of various social types will always be of the highest anthropological value. Dr. Lonsdale, however, well points out that the Jews of the East were unknown to Dr. Knox, and he calls attention to the Jews of Constantinople, and of Syria and Rome, as types far superior to those Northern European forms with which Knox was most familiar. Our own experience, both in Morocco and Southern Spain, teaches us that Portuguese and Spanish Jews are of a far higher and more intellectual type than the English and German Jews whom Knox chiefly describes. The thorough history of the Jewish race is, indeed, a subject carefully to be worked up from a dispassionate Aryan point of view.

"Dr. R. Druitt read some passages of Knox's work to the late Lord Lyndhurst, whose 'aliens in blood, in language, and religion' speech to the House of Lords had been severely handled by the O'Connellite party and the press. In Knox's description of the Celt, the ex-Lord Chancellor found consolation to his wounded feelings. Both Lord and Lady Lyndhurst wished their estimable medical friend, Dr. Druitt, to express to Dr. Knox the delight they had in perusing the *Races of Men*, and their wish to see the work freely circulated in the best English society." It is really significant that at the time of O'Connell's efforts to obtain "Repeal", a more true appreciation of the difference between Celt and Saxon should have been shown by an English Celt, like Lord Lyndhurst, than by an Irish Celt. O'Connell, whose Celtic sympathies were so prominently developed, actually did not perceive that the Celt and the Saxon were radically different, and that even the laws of morality were diverse in the two races.

The greatest political event of the last ten years prior to the

present war, has been undoubtedly the breaking up of that synthesis which used to be the Austrian Empire. That Italians, Hungarians, Saxons, and Slaves, could form a compact autonomy was, in the eyes of Knox, an impossibility. And the opinions which in 1846 he uttered have since been corroborated on other than anthropological grounds. We now see that race governs the disposition of events in Western Europe, as well as in the South-east. Race may shortly indicate the great contrast between the dolichocephalic Swede and brachycephalic Teuton. A little caricature-map, "dressée par Hadol," now being sold at our street-corners, perhaps indicates a profounder appreciation of the anthropology of the future than popular writers on the daily press may care now to admit. "La Suède fait des bonds de panthère". The Slavonic races also are moving westwards, possibly to regain that linguistic pre-eminence which the researches of Dr. Latham have taught us they once possessed in Germany.

"If Defoe, in his wrath against the Stuarts, said that Englishmen were the mud of races, Knox hesitated not in his leisure to call them a mongrel crew." So says Dr. Lonsdale; and there is, doubtless, truth contained in Knox's somewhat uncouth expression.

The last time Dr. Knox spoke in public was on July 1st, 1862, at the meeting of the Ethnological Society. A discussion had arisen on a paper on Human Remains from Muskham and Heathery Burn, by Mr. Mackie. The skull from Muskham, since figured by Professor Huxley in 1866, presented some peculiar characters in which it was considered by Mr. Mackie to have some slight simian affinity. The present writer having spoken at great length on the subject, Dr. Knox rose, and, with a gesture of eloquence, entirely put right the whole matter, and corrected the errors into which both Mr. Mackie and myself had been led. The manner in which the great old man then spoke will never be forgotten by those who heard him. Though the chief actors of that evening—Crawford, Hunt, and Knox—have passed away, yet the remembrance of the last occasion on which Knox spoke will be an eternal *souvenir*. He was, by his teaching, the last almost of a great school of anatomists which has nearly passed away. It will be difficult to find in succeeding generations his equal as an anthropologist, an anatomist, or as a teacher. Those who had the pleasure of knowing him can appreciate the

feeling of loyal reverence with which Dr. Lonsdale, never blind to Knox's faults, represents his character in a light which is logically and historically accurate. Few scientific men have ever possessed a biographer so elegant or so exact.

C. CARTER BLAKE.

ART. X.—AFFINITIES OF THE OLD ITALIANS.*

ONE would have thought we had had enough of works to prove that the Latin and Greek languages are principally based upon Celtic, a dogma only equalled in absurdity by that of Jäkel, who traced the Latin language to the German. Mr. Stratton does not embrace the whole of the Celtic dialects. He goes no further than the Gaelic, and his work is chiefly composed of vocabularies. In these, a large portion of the words might well have been omitted, either because the meaning of such words is different, or because they are not etymologically connected at all; *e.g.*, *eo* and *bao*, to go, which are respectively compared with Gaelic *uidhe*, a way; *flo*, to blow, with *aile*, air; *sagino*, to make fat, with *sac*, a sack. The only use of the remaining words in the vocabularies is to prove the reverse of the theory advocated; viz., that the Gaelic, like the other Celtic dialects, is to a great extent based upon Greek and Latin. This is shown by the fact, that many words of which no etymology can be found in the Celtic languages, may, when referred to the Latin and Greek, be analysed or traced historically: thus the Gaelic *buchaille*, a cowherd, shepherd, comes from *βους* and *κολων*; *bean* (Welsh, *benyw*), a woman, from *femina*, from an obsolete *feo*; *cathair*, a fortified city, chair, seat, from *καθηδρα*, from *κατα* and *εδρα*; *cairt*, a cart, from Lat. *carrus* (*cour*, court, from *curia*). It would be absurd to suppose that *στρουθος*, an

* *The Celtic Origin of the Greek and Latin Languages.* By Thos. Stratton. Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart. 1870.

2. *Lectures introductory to a History of the Latin Language and Literature.* By John Wordsworth, M.A. Oxford: James Parker and Co. 1870.

3. *The Asiatic Affinities of the Old Italians.* By Robert Ellis, B.D. London: Trübner and Co. 1870.