



*Charles Brown*

SIR CHARLES BROWN, M.D.

KNIGHT OF THE RED EAGLE OF PRUSSIA.

'Charles Brown, M.D. (of the County of Northumberland), Member of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of London, St. Petersburg, and Berlin; Privy Counsellor and First Physician to His Majesty the King of Prussia.' (MS. note in Dr. Brown's handwriting.)

(From a photograph by the Rev. G. Pybus, of a miniature in the possession of the Rev. E. H. Adamson.)

## XII.—SIR CHARLES BROWN.

By the Rev. E. H. ADAMSON, a vice-president of the society.

[Read on the 31st March, 1897.]

I propose in this paper to give some account of a northern worthy—little known and now almost forgotten—sir Charles Brown, M.D., chief physician and privy councillor at the court of Berlin to two kings of Prussia, Frederick William II. and Frederick William III., the latter of whom conferred upon him the order of the Red Eagle of Prussia. Although he spent his youth and early manhood in Newcastle, he was not a native, having been born in the Highlands of Scotland soon after the battle of Culloden. His father was understood to be prince Charles Edward Stewart, commonly known as the young chevalier or the young pretender. His mother's name was Cleghorn, but for obvious reasons she preferred to remain incognita, and in Newcastle assumed the name of Mrs. Brown, by which surname her son and his family were afterwards known. The mother came to Newcastle whilst her son was still an infant. Being ill and requiring medical treatment on her arrival she was attended by Mr. Nathaniel Bayles, a well-known practitioner in the town, and the acquaintance thus begun ripened into a friendship which lasted for the remainder of her life. Mr. Loggan, grandson of Mr. Bayles, in a letter to Mr. John Adamson,<sup>1</sup> states that he had heard his mother say that Mrs. Brown was one of the most amiable and ladylike women she ever knew. She died about 1785, leaving hardly enough to pay the funeral expences, although at one time she had a comfortable annuity which she had gradually sold for the benefit of her son.

From a reference in his diary recording a visit to Newcastle at the beginning of this century, it would appear that he attended the grammar school at Newcastle, and there he was probably the class-mate of his two famous contemporaries, Lords Stowell and Eldon, with the former of whom at any rate he was intimate at a later day.

<sup>1</sup> My father, the late Mr. John Adamson, has added to his MS. a note: *N.B.*—I gave the originals to the Rev. Ed. Coleridge, who married a granddaughter of Sir Chas. Brown, P.A.

He was afterwards bound apprentice to Mr. Bayles, and, on the completion of his indentures, he proceeded to London to pursue his studies.

During his residence in London he was at one time assistant to the popular surgeon, Robert Perreau, who lived in Golden Square, enjoyed a large practice, and occupied a good position in society, but who in January, 1776, was hanged with his brother, having been convicted on a charge of forgery of which he was probably innocent.<sup>2</sup>

But some time before this happened Dr. Brown had established himself in practice at Carmarthen in South Wales. Here he brought his bride in 1772, and here his children were born.

The bride was Mary, daughter of George Huthwaite,<sup>3</sup> of Gateshead, by his wife Isabel Smith, of Whickham. It was not known where they were married (and some trouble was caused thereby) until quite recently an entry was noticed in his diary for 1798 stating that he had visited Kingston-upon-Thames for the first time since his marriage twenty-six years ago. A reference to the register there showed that the marriage had taken place in that town, near which the bride's uncle, William Huthwaite, a London merchant, had a country house. He is described as 'of Carmarthen, M.D.'

About the year 1787 he appears to have taken his family to Berlin, where he continued to reside until 1806. We do not know what it was that induced him to go abroad. We believe that at first he held some subordinate post in the royal household, but afterwards he was promoted to be chief physician, and at the same time that he held the court appointment he was engaged in a considerable private practice. One of his early patients was the duchess of Courland, wife of Peter, the last duke of the Biron-Sagan line. Mrs. Brown, in one of her letters, says that the duchess 'has been very genteel to the doctor for his attending her. She gave him a gold box with his

<sup>2</sup> The popular opinion at the time was that although he had presented the document with the forged signature he was not aware that it was not genuine, and that both he and his brother were the dupes of Mrs. Rudd, his brother's housekeeper. See *Annual Register*, 1775, pp. 222-233; *Gent's Mag.* vol. xlv. pp. 148, 278, 603, vol. xlvi. pp. 23-44; *Chronicles of Newgate*, chap. xii. p. 310 (1884 edition); Wheatley's *London, Past and Present*, vol. 2, p. 122. All quoted or referred to in *Notes and Queries*, 8th S. March 20, 1897, p. 232.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. George Huthwaite was at this time dead, but Mrs. Huthwaite survived until 1799, when she died at Gateshead, aged 88 years.

name set in diamonds, and the words "a gift of friendship" and a hundred louis d'or.' The babe (born 21st August, 1793) was Dorothy, afterwards wife (1809) of Edmond duc de Talleyrand-Perigord, nephew of the famous Talleyrand, over whose household she presided and did the honours when he came to London as ambassador from the king of the French.

Dr. Brown's introduction to his prominent position at the court is said to have been due to his skill in vaccination.

He has been a lucky fellow this Dr. Brown. Some 12 or 13 years ago he held a subordinate appointment as one of the medical advisers of the royal family, when he was called upon to perform the operation of inoculating the Prince Royal with cowpox. He succeeded perfectly, and the king was so well satisfied that when the prince recovered, his majesty not only thanked Dr. Brown in the most gracious and condescending manner, but wrote him a very handsome letter and requested his acceptance of 2,000 louis of this country, about £1,500 sterling, added a hundred a year to his salary, appointed him sole physician to the king and his court, and gave him the title of privy councillor, with the promise of a house as soon as it could be built and got ready for him. His majesty could hardly have shown more gratitude and generosity had Jenner himself performed the operation. I believe he intended by it to show also his sense of the value of Jenner's discovery, and to encourage his subjects to avail themselves of it. Dr. Brown has of course since become eminent, influential, and rich.<sup>4</sup>

In Mrs. Brown's next letter, dated April 28, 1795, Dr. Brown's new house at Charlottenburg is mentioned as finished but not yet quite fit for occupation. Evidently the court physician was required to move from town to country and back again with the court.

On Saturday, when the doctor was with our good queen, she made some enquiry when we went to Charlottenburg. He answered it was not yet furnished. She immediately begged to take the liberty of sending paper and curtains, which in the afternoon she sent. But such a royal present! I was astonished at 130 yards of beautiful, rich yellow India damask, with 200 yards of rich striped and figured silk for furniture for two rooms, and superb India paper of a yellow ground to fit up two apartments. It is all a great deal too elegant for us, but we shall be obliged to put it up, as her majesty says she shall certainly visit us.

In the letter of October, 1793, already quoted, Mrs. Brown mentions the approaching marriage of the crown prince Frederick William and his brother Ludvig. The brides were two sisters, daughters of prince Charles grand duke of Mecklenberg-Strelitz.

<sup>4</sup> *Diaries and Letters of Sir George Jackson*, vol. i. p. 113.

Thus they were nieces of the English queen, Charlotte, and cousins of the bridegrooms. The sister whom the crown prince married was the amiable Louisa, whose memory is even yet dear to the Prussians, and who held Dr. Brown in very high esteem as a physician and also as a friend. In October, 1795, Mrs. Brown writes: 'Our amiable princess requires his constant attendance. . . . The doctor has at present the two princesses upon his hands, as her sister, princess Loui, was likewise brought to bed of a prince.' . . . In November, 1797, on the death of his father, the crown prince succeeded to the throne, and soon after this event queen Louise addressed a warm letter, which is without date except the endorsement, 'Billet de la Reine, ce 24 Janvier, 1798, a 1 h,' to Dr. Brown, of which the following is a translation:—

According to my promise, my dear Mr. Brown, I write to you to inform you of everything that has happened to us since we have met. Mr. Sell had been called in before I was up, and he having arrived this very moment, has found the invalid as well as possible, but he is really undecided whether it is 'cœnupon' or the measles. I feel it my duty to inform you, as I am accustomed to see you and to look upon you as my friend. At the same time I look upon it as unnecessary to say to you, my dear Mr. Brown, that the reason why another doctor was called in was not any want of confidence in you; but my consort has given way to the urgent requests of those who surrounded him. So kings have less of their own way than royal princes. If you will come at 7 o'clock you will find Sell here according to appointment.—I am your friend,

LOUISE.

Show this letter to no one.

On November 17, 1796, the empress Catherine II. of Russia died, and I have been informed by the doctor's grandson, the rev. J. C. Keate, that he was summoned to attend her sometime before her death. Her granddaughter, the princess Helene, second daughter of Paul, emperor of Russia, and wife of the crown prince Ludwig Frederick of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, in 1803 was seriously ill, and, at the urgent request of the king and queen, Dr. Brown proceeded to Ludwigslust to consult with the local physicians and with those from St. Petersburg as to the possibility of her being able to make a voyage to her old home and to her relations. This visit led to a very interesting correspondence between the queen and Dr. Brown, which has recently excited some attention on appearing in a German periodical, *Vom Fels zum Meer*. At the request of queen Victoria and

of the empress Frederick the original letters of queen Louise were sent to Osborne for 'their majesties' inspection, and lady Biddulph wrote expressing the interest which they took in the letters.

The queen Louise writes, in the first instance, without date :—

The king charges me to tell you, my good Mr. Brown, that he desires you to betake yourself, with all expedition, to Ludwigslust. The princess (thank God) is better ; that is to say, the improvement continues, and one hopes that she will be able to undertake a sea voyage. I lay before you a letter of his majesty, from which you will see that the emperor Alexander I. and the dowager empress Maria have consulted their physicians, who believe that it will do her good ; but she will not undertake it without consulting with you and Böckler, and the empress has especially mentioned you. Do not, therefore, delay to set out, and give me news of the interesting angel immediately upon your arrival, that I may be able continually to address my prayers to the Most High. A good journey, my dear Mr. Brown. If you find the Princess in a condition to make the voyage, have the goodness to hand her this letter ; if not, bring it back to me. Give her my tenderest greetings.

LOUISE.

Dr. Brown made three visits to Ludwigslust during 1803, and the experienced eye of the physician was not deceived as to the real nature of the sickness which he had been sent to combat. He clearly expressed his opinion that the poor princess would never recover nor be in a position to leave this dreadful place. The journey of Helene to Petersburg to her mother and brothers and sisters was altogether impossible. A journey to the south of France or Italy, of which mention was made on the 30th July, was not less impossible. The companion of the princess, Fraulein Simms, agreed with the view of the doctor, that the sickness would take a worse turn. On 7th August Dr. Brown returned to Berlin, but already, on the 15th, he had to return to Ludwigslust at the wish of the royal pair. The journey, owing to the bad carriages of the crown prince and the wretched horses which the rascal of a postmaster gave him, took two whole days, one to Ferbeld and one to the castle itself. On the 23rd the royal Prussian pair arrived at Ludwigslust, and stayed until the 25th. Dr. Brown mentions three visits by them to the poor princess, who was treated in the most loving way, and so at least had two happy days before the fearful illness carried her away. The journey to Russia was again mooted, and couriers went constantly backwards and forwards between Petersburg and Ludwigslust. On the 18th September the princess went for her last drive, for which, as usual,

Brown lifted her into the carriage. She became so weak on the way that the doctor would not have been surprised had she died there and then. Since the 4th September he had been of the opinion that she could not last very long. The night from the 22nd to the 23rd Dr. Brown was obliged to stay with her. On Saturday, 24th, the death struggle began. 'I passed a dreadful evening, and the whole sorrowful scene of the day became impressed upon me through the curiosity of all the horrible people who belonged to the court, and who made the occurrence into a spectacle. Exactly at 9.30 the sorrowful life was ended, and the poor patient one was released from her pain.'

In November, 1805, Dr. Brown received a very flattering letter from the king offering him the highest medical appointment in the Prussian army. He says: 'I must naturally make a point of having a chief surgeon whose known skill and long experience as a practising physician promise real assistance and who also possesses my personal confidence. These requirements are fully found in you, and, therefore, I can entrust the office of first surgeon general of the army to no one better than yourself. . . . Your proved attachment to my person leads me to believe that you, if it is possible, will gladly meet the wishes of your gracious king.'

In answer, Dr. Brown expressed his gratitude to the king for conferring upon him so great an honour, which he did not hesitate at once to accept. His health was then pretty good; he devoted it to the service of the king and of the army, and he awaited the king's further commands with the deepest respect.

On 14th October, 1806, queen Louise wrote a letter to 'privy counsellor' Brown from Heiligenstadt: 'I beg you, my dear Mr. Brown, immediately to depart to the army of the king. If money fails you, show this letter to general von Gensau or to general von Schulenbourg, who will provide you with everything. Go to Halle where you will learn whither you must betake yourself. Do me the service of starting as soon as possible to join the king, who has no one equal to you in skill about him. I embrace my children and my sisters. Tell them this, and add that I will see them soon.—Adieu, LOUISE.'

On the very date which this letter bears the double battles of Jena and Auerstadt were fought, and, therefore, it seems impossible that

Dr. Brown should have been (as has been asserted) on the field of Jena ; but he seems to have been engaged in the arrangement for the flight of the queen, and he accompanied her until she was joined by the king at Kustrin. Here the final parting between the royal couple and their favoured physician took place. The king and queen were lodged at the Golden Star. There were only ten or twelve at dinner, the fare was very humble, and the wine very bad. Officers were coming in all dinner-time with reports of the surrender of fortresses. There was a cover set next the doctor for Hangwitz, the Prussian envoy to Napoleon, but he did not put in an appearance. Poor Buch, the chamberlain, was in tears, expecting they would all be made prisoners then and there. The doctor was much affected at the change of circumstances which had overtaken his royal patients, who in their turn were very civil and kind to him, and warmly thanked him for this last proof of his attachment to them. After coffee Dr. Brown got his passport and dispatches and set out on his way to England.

Dr. Brown's house in Berlin seems to have been the rendezvous of all the English either residing in or visiting that city, most of whom were, of course, connected with the embassy. Amongst the visitors mentioned in Mrs. Brown's letters and elsewhere were prince Augustus of England (afterwards duke of Sussex) (December, 1798), Lord Talbot, Lord Spencer, Mr. Harris (afterwards Earl of Malmesbury), as well as the minister of the United States of America, Mr. Adams and his wife. At a later date Lord Carysfort and Lord Elgin are mentioned. His chief personal friend in Berlin was Mr. Richards, a banker.

Dr. Brown visited England from time to time. In 1798 he appears to have been a guest at Oatlands,<sup>5</sup> the residence of H.R.H. the duke of York, who gave his son William a commission in the 13th regiment of light dragoons, with leave to prosecute his studies in Prussia for a year. On another occasion, in 1805, he had audience of the queen at Weymouth, accidentally meeting there his wife's cousin, Capt. John Huthwaite, of the 31st foot. His chief friend in England was Dr. Goodall, provost of Eton, at whose house he often stayed.

<sup>5</sup> This is the house now owned and occupied by Mr. Alexander S. Stevenson, one of the vice-presidents of the society.



Some time after his final return to England, Dr. Brown bought an estate at Clenchwarton, near King's Lynn, in Norfolk, where he lost much money in an attempt to reclaim fen land, or in some such operations. Besides the son William already mentioned, he had three daughters, Margaretta, whom queen Louise requested to undertake the instruction of the royal children, a duty declined for some now unknown reason ; Isabella, who died unmarried at Berlin, March 24, 1801 ; and Frances, who married the rev. John Keate, D.D., head master of Eton, canon of Windsor, and rector of Hartley Wespall. Margaretta and Frances both died at Hartley Wespall, and were buried there. Major William Brown died in 1812, the same year in which his mother died. Dr. Brown himself died May 11, 1827, at Clenchwarton. He left behind him a long series of diaries, which show that he was a shrewd observer and a good friend as well as a good hater. He was an affectionate husband and father. It has been stated that Dr. Brown was made a baronet by the prince regent, but it seems more likely that his foreign title was recognized, and that thus he became 'Sir' Charles Brown.

The voluminous diaries and the other memorials of Dr. Brown have passed through his daughter (Mrs. Keate) and his grandson (the rev. J. C. Keate) to their present owner, Mr. Durnford, a great grandson.<sup>6</sup> The writer, who is the grandson of Mrs. Brown's cousin, Mr. Samuel Huthwaite, possesses a miniature of the doctor and a very handsome enamelled snuff box (no doubt one of many similar gifts of friendship and esteem from his royal patients) given by him to Mr. Samuel Huthwaite in acknowledgment of his friendly offices in looking after some business for the doctor during the latter's residence in Berlin. The letters quoted above were written by Mrs. Brown to my grandmother, Mrs. S. Huthwaite, and are also in the writer's possession.

<sup>6</sup> This gentleman kindly furnished a copy of the German periodical in which the letters of queen Louise appeared.

## APPENDIX.

Copy of letter from Mr. Loggan, with will of the late Mrs. Brown.

Shieldfield, July 2nd, 1832.

Dear Sir,—Inclosed is a copy of Mrs. Brown's will, the lady whose son married your aunt [*i.e.*, mother's cousin].

It was never proved, the little remaining after discharging the funeral expences would be of course disposed of as pointed out, but I think from memory (for she died, I think, about 1785, when I was a child) I have heard my mother say there was hardly enough to pay the expences, for she had literally subsisted by selling her furniture, &c., for some years before her death. She once possessed a comfortable annuity, which she sold piece meal and gave her son the produce.

Her maiden name, or rather *real* name, was Cleghorn; her family respectable and once opulent in Edinburgh. I think they were distillers and brewers.

It was always understood that Charles Stuart was the father of Dr. Brown. She (Mrs. Brown) had been extremely beautiful. She was, I have heard my mother say, one of the most amiable and ladylike women she ever knew. Some slight inaccuracies in her will do not, in my opinion, at all take from my mother's estimate of her. The ladies were not so well educated as to book learning 100 years ago as they are now.

Dr. Brown was, I have heard my mother say, born in 1746, in the Highlands, much about the time of the battle of Culloden, but after that event.

He was quite an infant when Mrs. Brown came to Newcastle to reside.

My grandfather's acquaintance with her arose from his having been sent for to attend her, then ill, at the inn she had taken up her temporary residence at. This would be, I believe, about the year 1747 or 1748. Their friendship continued until her death (nearly 40 years after). Dr. Brown served an apprenticeship of 7 years to my grandfather, as a surgeon. He then went to London, and was actually for some time assistant to the unfortunate Robert Perreau, who then kept a carriage and moved in high sphere as to practice and society.

Dr. Brown, I am almost certain, was made a baronet about the year 1811. He had been chief physician and privy counsellor to the king of Prussia, and was on the field of battle of Jena when that king was entirely defeated by Napoleon.

My mother always spoke of Dr. Brown as a man of the highest talent, touchy and fiery as to matters of honour, and punctilious as could be imagined.

In compliance with my promise, I have given you all the particulars I can collect or remember. I regret they are so few.—I am, my dear sir, yours faithfully,

T. LOGGAN.

John Adamson, Esq.

[Copy of Mrs. Brown's will.]

Newcastle-upon-Tyne, May 20.

I, Margaret Brown, having given to my son Charles Brown, physician in Carmarthen, South Wales, all my capital, and now nothing remaining but my furniture and linen, and after disposing of few things to some of my best friends,

after paying my debts (if I should leave any) and my funeral charges, then whatever remains of furniture, linen, or if any money be in my possession at my death, all shall go to my son Charles Brown. To my good friend Mr. Bayles I leave my checked dining room carpet with the border belonging to it, a promise I long ago made him, he having the best right to it as he collected most of the materials that made it. I desire also that Mr. Bayles may have a present of five guineas for the trouble he may likely take at my death, but I can never repay the trouble his friendship has prompted him to take for both my son and me. After all is discharged as I have ordered, whatever remains then my son may have it in his choice either to have sent him or sold here. And I give Mrs. Huthwaite power to act in these matters as she and my son please. As I have little to leave I need not mind the form of a will, and will only mention the few trifles to be returned which I got as presents and some very small remembrances from me to friends. But to make more secure, I shall seal and sign it before witnesses. I do hereby appoint Mr. Nath. Bayles my sole executor of this I may call my last will and testament, and do hereby subscribe my name.

Witnesses { DEBORAH ALLEN.  
              { JOHN BOWES.

MARGARET BROWN.

