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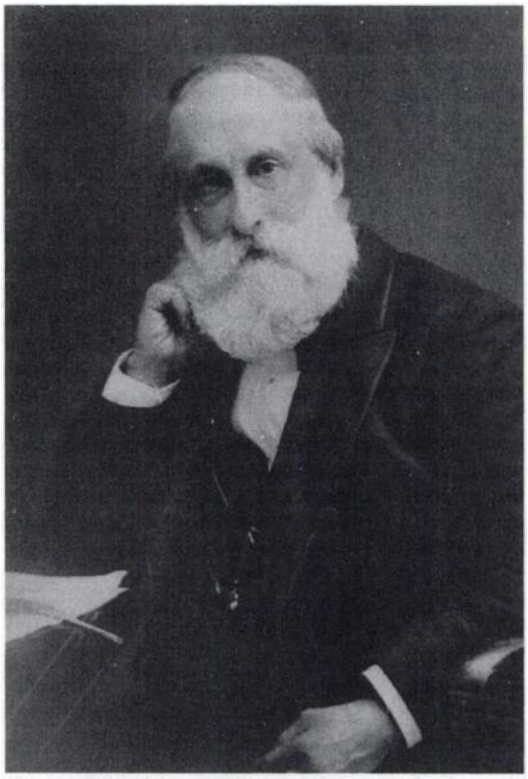
A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

Obituary: Daniel Hack Tuke



Daniel Hack Tuke, M.D., LL.D.

In our issue of last week we had the mournful duty of announcing the death of Dr. Hack Tuke. The following details of his life and estimate of his work will be of interest to his many friends and admirers. Daniel Hack Tuke was born at York on April 19th, 1827. He was the youngest son of Samuel Tuke and the great grandson of William Tuke, the founder of the York Retreat, whose work in connexion with the humane treatment of the insane was on the same lines as that of Pinel in France, though the two laboured independently of each other. Dr. Tuke was delicate as a child, but he was remarkable, even in those early days, for his high spirit, which seemed to carry him through his troubles in an unexpected way. Although his schooling was often interrupted by illness he was always busy with learning of some sort or other or investigating on his own account. As an instance of this early scientific spirit may be mentioned a journey to the woods with the household cat, which he there deposited in the hope of some day re-finding it as a wild cat. Samuel Tuke, his father, was a well-known Quaker, and his son was accordingly brought up in the family traditions, and in due time, when his health would allow, he attended as day scholar at a Friends' school. Later he went to another Friends' school at Tottenham, where he numbered among his schoolfellows some who have since become eminent. When his school education was finished he was thought to have such a legal mind that he was sent to Bradford to study law, but three months of this were quite enough for him, and he was at last allowed to begin the study of medicine, for which he longed. At about this time he seems to have held the post of steward at the York Retreat. He next came up to London, about the year 1849, entering at St. Bartholomew's Hospital. In 1852 he took the Membership of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, and in 1853 he graduated M.D. at Heidelberg. In this same year he married, and went abroad to visit the asylums of Holland, Germany, and France. In 1854 he published his first work, an account of these visits. He was now appointed visiting physician to the York Retreat and to the York Dispensary, and about this time he held the Lectureship of Psychology at the York School of Medicine. In 1857, on the death of his father, it was decided that the old family house in Lawrence-street, York, should be converted into a private asylum for ladies. This scheme, to which he looked forward with great eagerness, was frustrated by a serious attack of haemorrhage from the lungs, which obliged him to give up practice entirely and to go south. After a year of wandering he settled in Falmouth, where he lived for fifteen years. Here, with improved health, he soon began to take active interest in town matters, such as the library, British schools, working men's club, &c., and at the same time he did much literary work, maintaining throughout the keenest interest in all things relating to psychology and the insane. In 1874 he came to London, where after a time he settled and gradually resumed practice, unable to resist the temptation so to do. Among his greatest pleasures at this time were his frequent visits to Bethlem Hospital, of which institution he subsequently became a

governor; and when within the last year or two he was obliged on account of pressure of work to forego these visits he felt it as a great trial. In 1882 his eldest son, William Samuel Tuke, died at Bournemouth. This was a terrible blow to Dr. Tuke, who had set high hopes on his medical career, which, as many of W. S. Tuke's fellow students will remember, had promised brilliantly. Dr. Tuke subsequently took up his residence at Hanwell, where the proximity of the asylum proved a great attraction to him. Here he continued to reside till the time of his death, coming up to London daily to his consulting-rooms in Welbeck-street. It was at the latter place, just after his arrival on the morning of March 2nd, that he was suddenly seized with a left-sided hemiplegia. After a few hours of incomplete consciousness Dr. Tuke gradually lapsed into a coma, which lasted till his death at four o'clock on the morning of Tuesday, the 5th.

A prominent feature in Dr. Tuke's life was his indifference to the pleasures of the table; a meal would never stand between him and his work, and his family would alternately scold and smile at his ridiculous snatch luncheons of buns and glasses of ginger beer. Of Dr. Tuke's kindness of heart we think many must have a record. He was most genial and sociable by nature, and the meeting of his friends and colleagues was the chief attraction to him at social gatherings, which he invariably enjoyed. He liked to talk over matters of all kinds, but philosophical subjects and religious questions attracted him most outside the domain of medicine, and such readings and conversations were his relaxation. He was sometimes affectionately taxed by his home circle with being sentimental; but whilst it was quite true that "sentiment" was ingrained in his fibre, as many little relics and hoardings would testify, his nature was far too simple and honest to allow of anything that savoured of the unreal. He was rather fond of poetry – Tennyson and Whittier being, perhaps, his favourite authors. He was certainly a hero-worshipper, and when engaged in this cult would take minute pains to learn all he could about the object of his affection. Hampden was thus much in his mind when he was at Oxford last year. Dr. Tuke had many devoted friends amongst young men – he was so exceedingly kind to them and would help whenever he could. A letter written by a medical friend whom he valued much described him as possessing "the gift of inspiring friendship" – it was quite true.

In endeavouring to form a true estimate of the value of the work of Dr. Hack Tuke we cannot but feel that it is difficult at present to appreciate its various parts at their just value, but yet we think it is a proper time to note the nature and quantity of what he has done, and its apparent influence on English psychiatry. Dr. Tuke had a power of continued intellectual work such as is given to very few, and which we are almost inclined to say is given most commonly to those who are not physically robust; he worked regularly till the early morning hours in his study and yet was regular in his London professional work. He always got a clear notion of the end he was aiming at, and never rested or turned till he had reached it. Steady, persistent observation with methodical recording and arranging of facts was his chief power, for, though not, as we have hinted above, without poetical feeling and sentiment, yet he was not imaginative, and he was rather a receiver and a recorder than an originator. He was the cool-eyed observer of nature, and not the far-seeing prophet. We have heard him described as a scientific sponge, taking up greedily whatever was presented to him and rendering it back uncoloured by any personal tint. His memory for facts and details was till the end extraordinary, and a case once registered in his mind was always fit to be brought out for use when the proper occasion came. We believe that he will live, if for no other work, as the historian of lunacy and its humane treatment in the nineteenth century. He knew the actors and their works personally, and in an absolutely truthful way gave the results. Dr. Tuke was not a clinical teacher, nor did he add much to the purely scientific medical knowledge of his specialty. He was a great reader of the works and observations of others and for years was a constant frequenter of the wards and the post-mortem room of Bethlem Hospital. We think that he expected to find more physical change than was generally visible to the naked eye and often left a necropsy with feelings of disappointment and yet with a hope that the time would come when the physical side of insanity would be more demonstrable. Kindly and considerate for all, his mind was a sort of balance for the weighing of scientific truth. No man and no man's work were better known all over the world, and he had visited most of the asylums in Europe and America, never losing the chance of picking up the threads which connected the present with the past. He knew the City of the Simple (Gheel) in Belgium and the secluded valley in Ireland where priest-healing had held sway. His holidays were combinations of the study of asylums with (insufficient) complete relaxation. As we have already said, he was judicial in the extreme, and though he might have strong personal feeling, by education or association, he was ever ready to hear the other side; thus, though a strong and persistent believer in

non-restraint and in the humane treatment of the insane, he was quite able to see that cases might arise in which mechanical restraint might be the most humane treatment; and quite recently he expressed himself strongly that he hoped panic and sensational writing would not prevent the judicious use of baths and the pack. Dr. Tuke's earliest established work was in connexion with Sir (then Dr.) Charles Bucknill, and "Bucknill and Tuke" still holds its place as a monument of work. Later the "Influence of Mind on the Body" occupied him, and he always had a very strong personal affection for this book, which, though at its time of great value, has now been left behind. Yet it was an early record and comprised a collection of facts of great value. Though not imaginative, Dr. Tuke was a thoughtful and careful student of hypnotism and lost no opportunity to see its legitimate development. Another special subject to which he devoted great thought and attention was moral insanity. He took a very definite position, in which he differed from some of his oldest friends, and to the end he believed in a form of insanity in which the social side was chiefly or altogether at fault, while the higher intellectual powers were intact or but slightly affected. He recently wrote a small book on the development of this idea by Prichard and Symonds.

For nearly eighteen years Dr. Hack Tuke bore the weight of editing the *Journal of Mental Science*, and no labour was too much for him to undertake and carry through for the perfect and exact editing of that journal. He not only carried out the ordinary work, but added an Index Medicus of great and lasting value. Friends believed that Dr. Tuke's hands were already full, but yet he undertook the "Dictionary of Psychological Medicine," and knowing exactly whom to get as assistants, he produced this splendid book, which must long be the text-book for all medico-psychological subjects. Dr. Tuke's life was not devoted only to book work; he was not forgetful of the patients in and out of asylums, and was one of the originators of the "After-care" Association for patients whom, having left asylums, were not fit for full work, and who needed a kind of convalescent home where they could give evidence of their real fitness to return to their ordinary work. Dr. Tuke was chairman of this association at the time of his death. For years he was a regular attendant, not only at the courts of governors of Bethlem and Bridewell Royal Hospitals, but he attended the weekly committees and knew every patient who was admitted, and thus his life was full of work and thought. Of late years with all this work he was a busy consultant whose opinion was regarded as of the first value. He did too much, but he would himself have chosen to die in harness. No one can tell the amount of good he did by that influence which is only recognised when it is lost, but the younger men in the special branch of medicine to which he was attached looked upon him as the "grand old man."

He was a representative man in the special sphere of work to which he had devoted, and even sacrificed, all his life and energies, and it is difficult to see who is to fill the gap which his death has caused amongst the practical workers in medical psychology. The simplicity of his funeral was in keeping with that of his character, and it was felt by all his colleagues who attended on that occasion that the grave had closed over all that was mortal of a worthy, loved and highly esteemed brother.

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