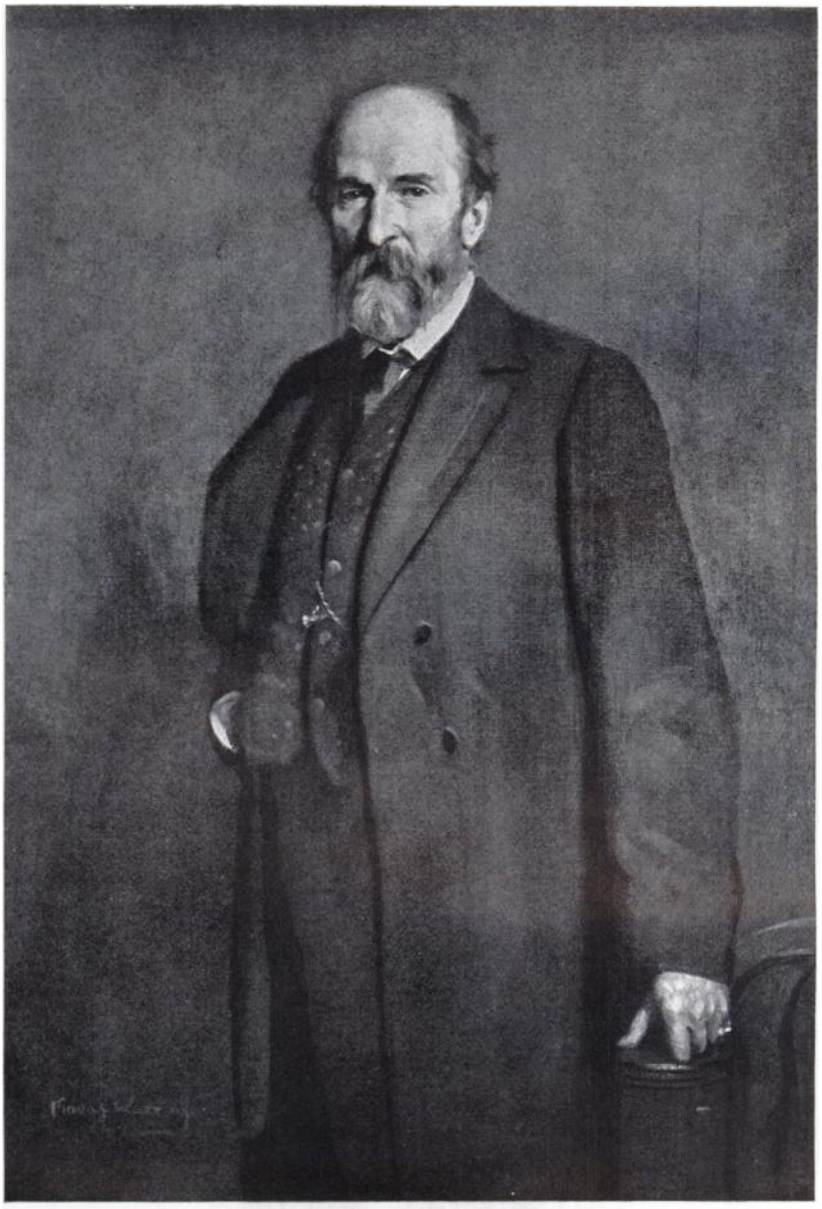


SIR THOMAS SMITH CLOUSTON, M.D., LL.D.

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Part I.—Original Articles.

Sir Thomas Smith Clouston, M.D., LL.D.

THE medical profession, through its leading journals, has paid respectful tributes to the memory of Sir Thomas Clouston—tributes which indicate, among other things, that he was regarded as more than a mere specialist, and as deserving of a place among those whom the profession considers worthy of honour. This distinction is eminently fitting, for his life's work was devoted to the purpose of identifying his specialty with the general scope of medical science and practice.

To us, among whom he laboured for over half a century, he was more intimately known, and his loss is as much a personal as a public one. He filled the presidential chair of the Association, was an editor of the Journal, always a valuable counsellor in our deliberations, but, above all, he held our honour as his own. Many a member of the Association has confided difficulties to him and received the benefit of his advice.

Thomas Smith Clouston was born in Orkney seventy-five years ago. He continued throughout his life in

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close touch with the people and place of his birth. In doing so, apart from natural inclination, he showed his wisdom, for men, like plants, most easily derive sustenance from their native soil. Scotsmen are proverbially clannish, but, although he was a good Scot, he was an Orcadian first. The peoples of the northern islands, though of mixed descent, claim Scandinavian origin, and to this day it is common to hear the natives of Orkney speak of the "Scotch," or of going to "Scotland." Clouston never lost this sentiment, or the pardonable pride in a Viking ancestry.

After receiving the rudiments of a scholastic education at Aberdeen, he entered the University of Edinburgh as a medical student when still a mere boy. He showed great aptitude and originality as a student, and his inclinations turned early to the subject of neurology. This inclination may be observed in his thesis for the M.D. degree, for which he selected the nervous system of the lobster. It is not possible to account for motives of this kind in young men, but among the many distinguished teachers then in the Edinburgh School, Laycock was not the least prominent. He was a voluminous writer, a philosophical thinker, and a man of immense erudition. In addition to his lectures on medicine, he lectured on medical psychology to a limited but thoughtful class of students. That he influenced Clouston's career in life and his modes of thought is undoubted, for many of Laycock's views reappear persistently in Clouston's writings. To give one example, Clouston preached and taught that periodicity in the appearance and recurrence of mental diseases was intimately connected with the periodicity of Nature. This, obviously, was the teaching of Laycock, as set forth in his well-known essay on the "Development of a General Law of Periodicity." From Laycock's hands he passed to those of another man who exercised a potent influence on all his assistants—Dr. David Skae, Medical Superintendent of the

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Royal Edinburgh Asylum. Skae's place in the specialty is not easy to fix, for it was conditioned more by an influence than by permanent records. His personality was vivifying; he was fertile in ideas, broad in his conceptions, and contemporary opinion regarded him as a man very much above the average. Associated with Clouston as residents at Morningside were the late Sir John Sibbald and Dr. David Yellowlees.

Such was his early training preparatory to the real work of his life, which began in 1863, when he was appointed Medical Superintendent of the Cumberland and Westmorland Asylum, Carlisle, at the unusually early age of twenty-three years. His ten years' work at Carlisle were full and strenuous years, occupied in administrative detail, and marked by a multiplicity of clinical observations, most of which were published. The value of his medical work during this period can scarcely be judged by present day standards, for the modern exponents of psychiatry would appear to have acquired a pseudo-pentecostal gift of tongues, confusing to one another, and bewildering to everybody else. When they return to simplicity again, as they assuredly will, no small benefit will result to the specialty, and many of the older writers will receive the recognition they are entitled to.

It was at Carlisle that Clouston acquired the experience of asylum administration which he put into practical use at Morningside when he returned there in succession to Skae, in 1873. The keynote of his policy was the predominance of the medical idea in administration. Now this is an elusive and somewhat slippery standpoint—not always easy to maintain against the tendencies which make for under-estimation on the one hand, or exaggeration on the other. Clouston never had any doubts on the subject, and consequently no difficulties. He kept the flag flying high, and it is safe to say that he was one of the

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most shining examples of the justification of the medical management of institutions for the insane. He was little influenced by custom or precedent or fashion in administration, and in comparison to the medical needs of his patients everything else became subsidiary. If a man is possessed of a right principle of this kind, as well as of the requisite character and purpose to give it effect, the results are, as in this instance, fruitful and edifying. No doubt he had opportunities and stimuli which only asylum physicians attached to large medical schools possess, but he grasped them with the conscious ardour of a pioneer. When he succeeded Skae at Morningside the latter had commenced his famous Morrison lectures on the *Classification of Insanity*, and Clouston first identified himself loyally with the views of his former chief, and then completed the course as he believed Skae would have done had he lived. The somatic classification of insanity, and the controversy it occasioned more than forty years ago, have both faded into obscurity, but when we have passed into regions of greater certainty and calmer reflection, the undoubted influence of physiological and pathological somatic states upon the origin and course of mental diseases will again come into substantial prominence, though not in the form which Skae and Clouston conceived. Form changes, substance remains, and no thoughtful alienist doubts the intrinsic truth underlying Skae's theory.

Although a formal lectureship on mental diseases was not established in the University of Edinburgh until 1879, Clouston followed Skae's practice of lecturing to such students as voluntarily chose to attend the course. From the outset his lectures were deservedly popular, and in this capacity he found an outlet for his talents. By nature a teacher, he threw a glamour over the subject which left a lasting impression on his students. He used the lecturer's chair for the prosecution of a propaganda, the object of which

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was the elevation of psychiatry into an honourable place in the medical curriculum, and the dispersion of the prejudice and scepticism which had previously militated against its adequate recognition. What Clouston really aimed at was the establishment of an atmosphere in which no more stigma should attach in the public mind to the incidence of an attack of mania than to an attack of measles, and to that end he set himself to instil his views into the medical mind, and through it to influence the public. Hence the popular strain in which his well-known text-book was written, and hence his efforts to adapt asylums and their administration to medical conceptions of the treatment of disease. In so doing he was not led into optimistic views of the cure of the more chronic forms of insanity, but he held strongly the opinion that for the proper care of all classes of the insane medical supervision and administration were essential. His writings were numerous, but of them all the *Clinical Lectures on Mental Diseases* was from every point of view the most successful. Again we have to apologise for its comparative simplicity, though simplicity of expression has been a characteristic of all great medical classics. It is not pretended that this was a classic work; Clouston himself would have been the last to make such a claim, but it contained a description of adolescent insanity which is undoubtedly classic, and with which Clouston's name will ever be associated. Moreover, it presented for the first time in English psychiatric literature certain clinical pictures of insanity of so masterly a character as to entitle their author to a foremost place among contemporary alienists.

The man himself was many-sided. In professional work he was punctilious in the performance of duties which many lesser men find irksome, but his versatile personality supplied the quality which redeemed the veriest routine from monotony and futility. In addition he manifested, at his best, magnificent courage which

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ensured, when occasion demanded it, the frank acknowledgment of his own faults, which scorned all subterfuge, and which entailed the sharp exposure of the shortcomings of his subordinates. No man could take a broader view of the frailties of human nature, but he never allowed these sentiments to interfere with discipline or degenerate into laxity in his professional or business relations with his fellow men. To his assistants he was always loyal, and it is safe to say that, considering their number, they remained through life extraordinarily attached to him. In private life his intimate friends were not numerous, but those admitted to his friendship generally continued in it. There was that aloofness of disposition often characteristic of greater minds which repelled mere acquaintances rather than attracted them within the sphere of intimate friendship. While he was no ascetic, but participated freely in the pleasures and festivities of his fellows, his high moral ideals and an intense desire to benefit others led him to devote the later years of his life to delivering numerous lectures, and writing such popular books as *The Hygiene of Mind*, and *Unsoundness of Mind*, both of which were well received by the public.

He enjoyed, deservedly, a large share of public confidence and, what is a surer test of worth, the confidence of his professional brethren throughout the English-speaking world. That he was made the recipient of those civic and academic honours which the State and learned bodies confer upon worthy citizens was but the outward stamp of the appreciation of a long and useful career.

This notice would not be complete without a reference to his domestic life. He was fortunate in his marriage, the fiftieth anniversary of which was celebrated last year, and at which his children and his children's children were present. Lady Clouston, who survives him, was ever a helpful consort, in some respects a complement, in others a sharer of his burdens.

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