

adopted; at the same time the Governors themselves cannot be held altogether blameless in the discharge of their duties, as the Lord Lieutenant has very plainly intimated to them. The very arduous and responsible post of the Medical Superintendent was certainly not lightened, but heavily weighted by their bearing, which, instead of being conciliatory and encouraging, was the very opposite, and only too well calculated to have a most depressing effect on any man of the least spirit or possessing the smallest particle of self respect. When a Board of Governors complain that no power is vested in their hands of "punishing" the head of a public institution with which they are connected it is saying quite enough to shew that there is something "rotten in the state of Denmark," and yet this is what has been done in a recently published communication of the Limerick Governors to the Lord Lieutenant. It is to be hoped, however, that the infliction of the treadmill or the "cat" will not be placed in the hands of these "punishment" Governors, who appear to be entirely forgetful of their own proper duties, and of the commonest respect towards a gentleman as well entitled to it as any one of themselves from his position and the important trust reposed in his hands. It is only further to be observed that the more than ordinarily trying and difficult task committed to Dr. Nugent in this most unpleasant and invidious matter was carried through by him in a manner highly to his credit in every point of view; he having a very hostile local party to contend with, and one only too well disposed to throw any difficulty in his way.

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Obituary.

DAVID SKAE, M.D.

Great Britain and France have each suffered the loss of one of their most distinguished alienists since our last number was published. Dr. Skae and M. Morel have long held a high place as physicians who, being both engaged in the active practical duties of their profession, not only did those with success, but also did much to advance our knowledge of insanity by their investigations and writings.

Dr. Skae was born in Edinburgh on the 5th July, 1814, and was educated by his uncle, the Rev. W. Lothian, in St. Andrews. He attended the art classes in that university for two years at the early age at which Scotch students of that time usually went to college. He was then for a short time a clerk in a lawyer's office in Edinburgh, and he used to say that it was there he acquired those orderly and business personal habits, and that clear handwriting that always distinguished him. He then studied medicine in Edinburgh, and settled in practice in partnership with Dr. Davidson in that city. In 1836 he became a Fellow of the College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, and began to lecture on Medical Jurisprudence in the Extra-Academical Medical School there in the session 1836-37. He delivered 14 courses of lectures on that subject, and had larger classes than any extra-academical lecturer on that subject had ever had before. He afterwards lectured on anatomy in conjunction with Drs. Handyside, Lonsdale, and Professor Spence. His colleagues during his career as a lecturer were men many of whom have since made enduring fame for themselves by their work in medical science. Dr. Knox, Sir J. Y. Simpson, Professors Hughes Bennett, John Reid, E. Forber, Goodsir, Henderson, Day, Geo. Wilson, Lizars, Miller, and Douglas MacLagan, Sir W. Ferguson, Drs. Argyll Robertson and Martin Barry formed a galaxy of medical talent enough to have given lustre to three or four medical schools. They were all then in the glory of their youth, eager to make new discoveries in medicine, eager for fame as teachers, and laying the foundation of that work which will carry their names down as benefactors to humanity and medicine. Skae was looked on by them as by no means the least brilliant or promising, and unquestionably he caught at that time the spirit of doing original work in medicine, which he earnestly inculcated on his assistants to the last. His attention was first directed to the subject of insanity in connection with mental and nervous physiology, and undoubtedly he approached it from a good point of view. As a medical jurist he had to acquire some practical acquaintance with it. Like his friend Sir James Simpson, he had to begin with an unsuccessful candidature for a parish doctor's place. He was surgeon to the Lock Hospital, and wrote several original papers on syphilis. In 1846 the Physician-Superintendency of Morningside Asylum fell vacant by the death of Dr. McKinnon. Dr. Skae became a candidate, and as the institution had been founded through the influence of members of the medical profession in Edinburgh, and it is laid down in its regula-

tions that one of its chief objects is to teach insanity and extend our knowledge of it through the wide range of experience which such an institution affords, he was considered the most suitable man for the position. Sir Robert Christison and Sir James Simpson assisted him actively in his application. In addition to the superintendence of the institution, he began successfully to lecture on insanity, was much consulted in his own department, and was an Examiner in Medicine at St. Andrew's University, which had conferred the honorary degree of M.D. on him in 1842. He did not, therefore, divorce himself from the general body of the profession when he entered a specialty. His conduct of the Asylum gave satisfaction to its Directors and to the profession in Edinburgh. His annual reports were from the beginning distinguished by great clearness, apt illustration, and literary elegance, and were most interesting, both professionally and to the public. He took great pains with his reports, and largely by their means he and his asylum became a power, not only in Edinburgh but throughout Scotland. They always contained an elaborate pathological appendix, and usually some original medical views.

Dr. Skae contributed several important papers to the medical journals. Those on "The Specific Gravity of the Brain in Insanity," on "The Treatment of Dipsomanias," on "The Legal Relations of Insanity," and on "General Paralysis," are the best known of these; but unquestionably his most important production was his address as President of the Medico-Psychological Association in 1863. The system of classification of insanity he there put forth has already had important results, and will have still more important results in the future. He was appointed Morisonian Lecturer on Insanity for 1873, and had intended to give a full exposition of his system in those lectures. He attended regularly the quarterly meetings of our Association, held in the North, and usually presided. His influence was very great, from the large number of his assistants who were fortunate enough to secure asylum appointments.

His personal character was well described in the *Scotsman* at the time of his death:—"Dr. Skae was one of the most kindly and genial of men, large-hearted, sympathetic, and tolerant, with a refined taste and most subtle humour, a singularly clear judgment and a well-balanced mind."

His personal appearance and characteristics were striking, and agreed with this description of his mental qualities. A stout figure, a kindly expression, ever ready to break out into a winning smile or a jovial laugh, reassuring brown eyes, a massive head, only second to Simpson's among the Edinburgh doctors, set on a strong neck and shoulders, the impression he made on a stranger was that of one who enjoyed life and wished others to enjoy it too. He was careless to a fault in his dress, was a great smoker, and did not despise the good things of this life. He exercised a wonderful charm on those who knew him intimately.

He married early in life, and leaves a widow and five sons, three of whom are members of the medical profession, two of them following worthily in their father's footsteps as Asylum Superintendents.

He had been in failing health for the last two or three years, and died on the 18th of April of soft cancer of the œsophagus, from which he suffered most severely, but was perfectly calm and patient and composed in mind to the end. His unruffled mental equanimity, the expression and effect in a great degree, no doubt, of thoroughly balanced brain power and perfect bodily health up to the time of his last illness, carried him safely through his pain and weakness, enabled him to look steadily and trustfully at his grounds of hope for the future life, and was an euthanasia that made his last moments tranquil as those of a child going to sleep.

T. S. C.

B. A. MOREL, M.D.

Our great men are passing away from among us. It is not very long since we had the sad duty of announcing Griesinger's death, and now Morel, of Rouen—another man of genius—who filled a not less eminent position in psychological medicine, has gone over to the majority. We are not acquainted with the early history of this distinguished physician: all that is known to us is that he was for a long time the chief physician of the Asylum of Saint-Yon (Seine Inférieure); that many years ago he visited England, and resided for a time in the Hanwell Asylum, in order to make himself practically familiar with the working of the system of non-restraint; that he was ever afterwards its earnest defender in France; and that he has published several most valuable contributions to our knowledge of mental diseases, and especially to our knowledge of the characters of the different forms of degeneracy of