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THOMAS DRAPES, M.B.Dubl., L.R.C.S.I.

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THOMAS DRAPES, M.B.DUBL.

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ANOTHER outstanding figure has gone from the ranks of British alienism with the passing of Thomas Drapes, which still arouses a feeling of sorrowful surprise; for so little apparent change had the years brought in his active, cheerful personality that all confidently expected for him an extended period of useful and happy life in the leisure he had so well earned and was so capable of enjoying. *Sed dis aliter visum.*

Thomas Drapes was the third son and namesake of the late Dr. T. Drapes, of Cavan, where he was born at Lakeview, his father's residence, on January 17th, 1847. The period was that of the terrible Irish famine, and he was no more than seven months old when his father succumbed to an attack of the epidemic fever which followed it.

Having disposed of her property in Cavan, Mrs. Drapes brought her family to Kingstown, and there, after a period at a preparatory establishment in Derbyshire, Dr. Drapes completed his early education at Mr. Wall's private school. From this he passed, in 1864, into Trinity College, Dublin, graduating in Arts in 1867 with the class of Respondent at the B.A. examination. Having decided on the profession of medicine, he studied at the Trinity College Medical School and at the City of Dublin Hospital, distinguishing himself by taking first Medical Scholarship at the former in 1869, and the Purser Studentship and Clinical Medal at the latter; and he finally proceeded to the degree of M.B. in 1871, in which year he also took the Licence of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, and the Licence in Midwifery of the Rotunda Hospital. Immediately after, while on a short holiday with friends in County Wexford, he learnt that the post of Visiting and Consulting Physician to Enniscorthy Asylum was vacant, was induced to apply, and on March 21st he was duly appointed. With this post as a starting-point he commenced a general practice in Enniscorthy, which gradually increased to large dimensions, so that

he was able to marry in 1875, his wife being a member of an old Enniscorthy family, the Prestons of Salville. In 1883, however, the position of Resident Medical Superintendent of Enniscorthy Asylum fell vacant on the death of Dr. Joseph Edmundson, and Dr. Drapes, deciding to become a candidate, was elected on September 4th of that year. Thenceforward until his resignation last May he managed the affairs of that important institution with a success to which those connected with its administration have borne testimony. As in most asylums at that period, the accommodation and equipment of the Enniscorthy institution left a good deal to be desired, and Dr. Drapes speedily induced the managing body to initiate a series of improvements, as the result of which the buildings were enlarged by the addition of two new wings, a laundry, and a kitchen, while the interior of the older part was remodelled and improved. As time went on other matters received attention. A new system of drainage was installed, as well as a new water supply and a general heating plant, while in comparatively recent times wise advantage was taken of an opportunity of purchasing a derelict mill, which rendered it possible to supply the asylum with electricity for lighting and power purposes at a very economical rate. Although the structural improvements effected during Dr. Drapes' period of office involved considerable expenditure, there is no doubt as to their wisdom and necessity, and it has been well stated that the manner in which they were carried out "will long remain a monument to his prudence, foresight, and remarkable business capacity." Meanwhile the training of the staff in the proper care of the insane was not neglected, while in his dealings with the members he always showed not only a desire to secure efficient performance of duty, but also a kindly solicitousness for their welfare which rendered the relations between them of a peculiarly friendly character. This was acknowledged on his departure from the asylum by a valuable presentation; and when the sad news of his death came, it may safely be said that, outside his family and personal friends, no more sincere regret was felt than amongst those who had been his subordinates.

But structure and administration are but means to an end, and, though successful in these directions, Dr. Drapes was always first and foremost a physician; and it was in his personal and professional relations with the afflicted beings who passed through his hands that the bent of his mind and character were most conspicuously shown, while the unflinching kindness and conscientious care which characterised his attitude to his patients were no more conspicuous than the keen medical and scientific interest which marked his observation and treatment of the forms of disease from which they were suffering.

On his appointment as Resident Medical Superintendent he joined the Medico-Psychological Association, and it is not too much to say

that his intimate connection with that society, which brought him into touch, not only with the alienists of Ireland, but also with the leading members of the specialty in Great Britain, afforded him some of the happiest moments of his life, while providing opportunities for the expression and discussion of his views which were advantageous both to himself and his fellow-members. In his first paper read before the Association he dwelt on the difficulties which beset the medical officer of a country asylum who desires to keep abreast of the progress of science and so to do his best for his patients; and there can be no doubt that it was his constant effort to carry out in practice the very practical suggestions which were there made for overcoming them. During his whole career he continued an active member, contributing to the *Journal of the Association* a series of valuable papers on the statistical, clinical, and other aspects of his subject, which were marked by careful observation, clear reasoning, and lucidity of expression, as well as other useful work in the form of reviews; while at the various gatherings of the society his genial presence, no less than his alertness of intellect and ready power of fluent speech, made him a welcome figure. It was therefore natural that the Association should eventually mark their appreciation of him and his work by choosing him for the highest office in their gift, that of President, which he should have held during the session 1911-12. Unfortunately his health in the spring of 1911 gave so much anxiety that he felt obliged to withdraw, but he was able to attend the annual meeting at Dublin in July, 1911, and contributed to its success by reading an excellent paper on "The Personal Equation in Alienism." In the following year (1912) it was felt that fuller advantage should be taken of his literary ability, and he was unanimously elected Co-Editor of the *Journal of Mental Science*—a choice which was more than justified in the years that followed. Up to midsummer, 1915, his editorial duties were mainly routine, except for one or two occasional articles; but at that time the Senior Editor, Dr. Lord, having taken a commission, was obliged to relinquish work on the *Journal* owing to his military duties, and thenceforward until the end of the war Dr. Drapes had sole responsible charge, though well supported by the Assistant Editors. Both his mental endowments and his training peculiarly fitted him for such work, for with accuracy, punctuality, and conscientiousness he combined a thorough knowledge of English and a sound working acquaintance with French and German, while his keenness and quickness of intellect must have rendered editorial routine easier for him than it would have been for many.

In his views on the disputed questions of psychology Dr. Drapes' tendency was in the direction of conservatism, and in addition he was too clear and honest a thinker to accept without question new opinions, no matter how eminent the authority by whom they were advanced.

Thus he never could bring himself to adopt the doctrines of Kraepelin, to many of which he was in outspoken opposition, and his attitude to psycho-analysis may probably be accurately judged from a statement in the prefatory note to his translation of Delage's *Une Psychose Nouvelle* (published in the *Journal of Mental Science* of January, 1917), to the effect that Freudism "in the view of many sober thinkers is, in much of its theory, scientifically unsound, and at least capable of becoming demoralising in practice." With the philosophic position of Maudsley, however, he was to a great extent in sympathy, his desire for orderly system and definiteness of thought inclining him, as it did many able men of his period, in the direction of a materialistic conception of mind. He was not, however, disposed to go as far as his leader, and he found it possible to reconcile a material attitude towards scientific truth with adherence to the essential doctrines of Christianity, if we may judge from the fact that he took an active interest in the work of the Church of Ireland in the parish and diocese in which he lived.

For the various spheres of activity to which allusion has been made by no means exhausted the interests of his many-sided mind. Thus he served on the Synod of his diocese, as well as holding other Church offices, and he took a particular interest in temperance work; while his love for music—he was at one time a good pianist—led him to act for thirty years as secretary of the local Choral Union, the members of which marked their gratitude to him by a handsome presentation on his leaving the district. He was also no mean photographer, was interested in chess, and was a keen croquet player and an occasional golfer; and he took his part in all the social life of the neighbourhood, his geniality and sense of humour making him a most pleasant companion and winning him numbers of friends, to whom his loss has brought unfeigned sorrow.

Although, beyond some degree of deafness, the passing years seemed to have little effect upon him, there can be no doubt that a certain fatigue was making itself felt, which was probably accentuated by the multitudinous anxieties and occupations of the last five years, and lately by the spread of the general industrial unrest to the staffs of asylums, though happily at Enniscorthy tact and good feeling rendered it possible to avoid a strike, such as unfortunately occurred in some other institutions; and when, with the approach of the County Council elections, it became evident that the new Asylum Committee would differ in many respects from that under which he had worked on such friendly terms for so many years, he decided that the time had come for him to give place to a younger man, and he severed his long connection with Enniscorthy Asylum on May 15th, 1919.

Great as the wrench must have been in leaving the place with which

he had been associated for nearly half a century, the rest and relief from responsibility gradually produced their effects, and even shortly before his death it was noticed how well he was looking. His new house and its arrangements provided him with pleasant interests, and his connection with the Medico-Psychological Association and its Journal kept him in touch with lunacy matters, and enabled him still to do useful work in the cause of the mentally afflicted. At the annual meeting of the Association at York in July, 1919, he was his old cheerful self, and his many friends there little thought that they had seen him for the last time.

All went well until the death of his brother-in-law rendered it necessary for him to return to Enniscorthy at the end of last September, and on the journey he contracted a chill which after his return home developed into double pneumonia, and brought his life to a close on Sunday, October 5th, 1919. His widow, a daughter and four sons remain to mourn his loss. Their grief has been shared, not only by his close personal friends, but by the committee of his asylum, his subordinates on the staff, and all, it is not too much to say, with whom his varying activities brought him in intimate contact.

Dr. Drapes, as has been said, succeeded as an administrator, but he was first and foremost a physician, and amid so many calls upon his time he never failed to keep up with the advance of knowledge, not only in his own subject, but in general medicine. Had his lot lain elsewhere, the quickness and lucidity of his intellect and his ready power of expression with voice and pen would have rendered him an admirable teacher, and there is little doubt that he would have taken a position at least more conspicuous in the world's eyes than that which he was called to fill; but it may well be doubted whether such a position would have given him greater happiness in his life, while it could not have increased the respect and affection in which he was held. An upright and honourable gentleman, as free as a man may be from self-seeking and self-assertion, quiet and unassuming in manner despite his knowledge and attainments, cheerful, humorous, hopeful, ready to do what he could for all, he was, as has been well said, "one of the kindest, straightest, and most loyal friends a man could ever have," and he leaves a memory which any might envy.

W. R. DAWSON.
