



SIR FREDERICK NEEDHAM, M.D. St. And.
Obiit September 6, 1924. President 1887-88.

THE
JOURNAL OF MENTAL SCIENCE
[Published by Authority of the Medico-Psychological Association
of Great Britain and Ireland.]

No. 292 [NEW SERIES
No. 256.] JANUARY, 1925. VOL. LXXI.

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WITH perhaps the exception of the youngest in our ranks, there can be no member of the Association or, indeed, of our branch of Medicine, who learnt of the death of Sir Frederick Needham without realizing that an important link was thereby severed in the sequence of those who, in our time and in their respective spheres of action, have rendered great service to psychological medicine, especially in bringing about the many improvements that have taken place during the past three-quarters of a century in the conditions under which insane patients are housed and treated.

During the major portion of that long period Needham was not only an active and indefatigable worker, but was an outstanding figure. With his strong, somewhat stern face, and tall well-knit frame he was the model for the man-at-arms in Blair Leighton's picture, "*Vox Populi*"—and with his directness of speech, scorn of diplomacy, breadth of vision and ability to see essentials, he embodied a type not easily forgotten. He possessed, indeed, a personality; and although he was so long—twenty-seven years—a Commissioner that most of us remember him chiefly in that capacity, it would not be right, in an attempt to appreciate his influence and the affection and respect in which he was held, were omission made of the facts associated with his childhood and the earlier years of his life.

Frederick Needham was born in York in 1836, and was the younger of two children, both sons. He was brought up in high traditions of devotion to duty and service to his fellow-men; for his father, Dr. James Peacock Needham, was amongst the foremost of the medical men in that city in fighting the devastating cholera irruption, which, reaching York in June, 1832, and breaking out immediately after a race meeting, attacked one in every fifty-six of the inhabitants;

he lost his life six years later, at the age of 32, from pneumonia contracted in the discharge of professional duties, and when the subject of this memoir was only three years old. From the perusal of a small book⁽¹⁾ which he wrote in relation to this outbreak, its author, the father of the future Sir Frederick, is seen to have been a man of high purpose, self-sacrifice, transparent honesty, careful to acknowledge the work of others, and sensitively courteous towards those from whose opinions he differed. These qualities, perhaps to some extent transmissible, cannot have failed to serve as an incentive and tradition not merely to be cherished with legitimate filial pride, but to be translated into actualities in the lives of his children. However potent this influence may have been, to be bereft of such a father at so tender an age must always be a disaster, and it was fortunate for the two sons that they possessed a mother not less high-minded as well as resourceful. Very largely to her Sir Frederick Needham always ascribed the foundations for his success in life. Left with only slight provision, owing to the early death of her husband, the widow devoted all her energies and slender resources to the education of her sons—the elder for the Church, in which he succeeded and held a living near Wakefield, and the younger (Frederick) for the medical profession—and it is pleasant to know that, in reaching beyond the allotted span of human life, she witnessed in the success of both her sons the fruits of her own efforts on their behalf. Brought up in such straitened circumstances, lessons in self-denial and self-control were obligatory and early learnt.

Needham's early education was obtained at St. Peter's School in York, which, dating back as it does to the eighth century, is one of the oldest schools in England. It is not without interest to learn that among his companions at school were Sir Clifford Allbutt, Bishop Brown, of Bristol (retired), Hughlings Jackson and Jonathan Hutchinson. The influence and stimulus of such a constellation of intellectual giants, even in the heedless days of early adolescence, can scarcely have been a negligible quantity.

Following a period of apprenticeship with a doctor in York, Needham studied in London at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and, having qualified in 1858 as M.R.C.S. England and L.S.A., he graduated M.D. of St. Andrew's University in 1862, and three years later he became a member of the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh.

Despite his youth—only 22 years of age—Needham was appointed almost immediately after qualifying to the Medical Superintendship of the York Hospital for the Insane (Bootham Park)—a post he won not without doughty competition, for among the select

list of six of the candidates appears the name of Dr. Maudsley. The post at that time was but a small one; it was designated sometimes as medical superintendent and sometimes as house-surgeon, and carried with it a salary of £150 a year without provision for its occupant being married. The hospital itself, though it was then doing good work and had been purged of the abuses for which, 130 years ago, it had once been notorious, lagged behind in some respects, especially in its arrangements for so-called pauper patients, who, in those days, formed a section of several of the registered hospitals for the insane. Needham set himself to make good these deficiencies and to bring the institution up to date; and, if at the end of sixteen years, when he relinquished this post, some of his efforts still awaited fruition in the hands of others, he had accomplished much good work, the number of patients had risen from 120 to 197, and the revenue of the hospital had doubled. It was, indeed, in no uncertain terms that the Committee of Governors, who within three years of his appointment had recognized his capacity and had materially improved the status of the post and its remuneration, testified to the energy, zeal, ability and success with which he had discharged very onerous duties.

Those were the days when an active campaign was still being conducted by the most enlightened of the physicians in mental disorders against the systematic use of mechanical restraint and other allied forms of treatment. Of all these devices Needham was always a stern opponent: even with respect to forced alimentation by the nasal or œsophageal tube, salutary and life-saving as he admitted them to be when judiciously used, he urged that there were not a few cases in which rectal feeding was kinder, safer, and as efficacious. In this relation, and to anticipate for a moment his work as a Commissioner, it is of interest to know that it was he who, on behalf of the Board, drew up not only the regulations made under the section in the Lunacy Act dealing with mechanical restraint, but also the definition of "seclusion"—the steady enforcement of both of which has left so deep a mark in the better treatment of the insane. Wisely—and a lesson many of us might profitably take—Needham by no means immured himself; entering into the social life of the neighbourhood, he also often lectured for the Yorkshire Philosophical Society, and took an active interest in the Society's scientific and archæological researches; he was President and subsequently an honorary member of the York Medical Society. Bound by many ties to the city in which he was born and bred, beneath the shadow of whose minster he was taught, and in whose social and professional life he was held in high esteem, his appointment to Bootham Park, the present high reputation

of which is now so well known, brought him no small satisfaction, and he ever maintained an abiding affection for his native county and its associations.

This affection and his association with York were widely known. In this connection, and if a reminiscence in a lighter vein be not wholly out of place, the following incident will serve to show the happy relations which subsisted between Sir Frederick Needham, as a Commissioner, and the patients whom, in the course of his duties, he visited: On completing his inspection of a large county mental hospital it was discovered that he and his colleagues had omitted to see a certain patient—one who, though of humble upbringing, was a wide reader and not ill-versed in poetry, and who, by reason of his integrity and accuracy, was entrusted with important clerical work; it was owing to being thus seldom in his ward that he had been overlooked. After passing the time of day with him at the front door of the hospital and commending him for his work, Sir Frederick, in turning to say good-bye, and in response to the patient's remark about the coldness and discomfort of the weather, laughingly made use of the quotation, "Now is the winter of our discontent"; to which in a flash and without a moment's hesitation came the rejoinder—"Yes, Sir, but made glorious summer by this sun of York." Needham's enjoyment of this subtle humour was not greater than his surprise at the reply from such a source; and, indeed, what sane wit or courtier could have responded more deftly than this poor patient?

While at Bootham Park, and some four years after his appointment, Dr. Needham had married Charlotte, the daughter of the Rev. J. Shooter, Vicar of Bishop Wilton, in Yorkshire. Her health was not very good, and it was thought that residence in a more southerly county might be beneficial. This belief influenced Needham in his decision in 1874 to apply for, and ultimately to accept, in succession to Dr. Wood, the post of Medical Superintendent at Barnwood House, Gloucester. It was here that he found full scope for the exercise of his qualities of vision and prudent venture; and, with the support and goodwill of his Committee and with his own now matured experience and foresight, he converted what was a homely but somewhat old-fashioned asylum into a modern mental hospital, equipped with every appliance which treatment at that date demanded, and which could conduce to comfort, composure and recovery. He considered that such an institution for the insane should represent both home and hospital—to which notion we would nowadays add the proviso that accommodation reserved for recent and presumably recoverable patients should be free from any atmosphere of chronicity—and he believed that the maintenance

of both conceptions was necessary as well as practicable; his ideal was on generous lines, he saw it realized, and the developments and adaptations he effected have stood the test of time. Of not less importance towards his success were his familiar knowledge of his patients and his kind solicitude for their individual welfare—the depth and reality of which never failed to impress visitors, whether official or others. By those who, having worked under him, were in the best position to judge, Needham was looked up to as a great chief; he encouraged initiative in his officers, but demanded reason in support of their suggestions; and he was always ready with commendation of the success of others, whether in work or play.

While at Gloucester, besides continuing to enter into the social life of the city and county, he occupied several Presidential chairs—notably in 1887, that of our own Association, when he gave an address upon the progress of the Lunacy Bill then before Parliament; of the Gloucestershire Medical and Surgical Association, and in 1890 that of the Psychological Section of the British Medical Association. Of the first two of these bodies and of the Medico-Legal Society of New York he was later elected an honorary member. He was a member of the Council of Epsom College, in the welfare of which establishment he took a lively interest. His reports upon foreign mental hospitals, a number of which he visited in the course of holidays spent abroad, are informative and marked by much critical acumen; besides which, he was the author of many thoughtful and valuable papers contributed to medical literature. In this connection, and as characteristic of his loyalty, mention may be made that, while in his Presidential Address he strenuously deprecated the function of the magistrate in the working of reception orders as being likely to delay and hamper treatment in early stages of mental disorder, he was, as a Commissioner, inflexible in insisting that the provisions of the Lunacy Acts and, later, of the Mental Deficiency Act were duly carried out. In 1871 he published a paper on the necessity for legislation in reference to habitual drunkards, and his views and influence were later on a powerful factor in framing the legislation which was enacted subsequently.

Those who still can remember Dr. and Mrs. Needham at Barnwood House speak in high terms of the wisdom and fine influence of the latter, upon whose health their migration to Gloucester had had the desired effect. It is certain that, encouraged by her husband, her personality and her devotion to the well-being of patients and staff were of signal assistance to him; and, when this second chapter in his life's work terminated, his Committee included in their high testimony of his nearly eighteen years' superintendentship a graceful

tribute to her voluntary assistance. She died in 1907, and a stained-glass window to her memory was placed in the chapel of the hospital.

It was in April, 1892, when Sir Clifford Allbutt relinquished his Commissionership upon being called to Cambridge as Regius Professor of Physic, that Dr. Needham was offered and accepted the post of Commissioner in Lunacy; and, upon the coming into force of the Mental Deficiency Act of 1913, he *ipso facto* became Commissioner of the Board of Control. These positions, extending together to the long span of twenty-seven years, he filled with conspicuous distinction until his retirement in June, 1919. Needham's professional life readily divides itself into three chapters—to which, if the peculiarly happy years of his retirement may be included, a fourth might be added. To attempt to appraise with nicety the relative importance of these chapters would be futile as well as rash; each had its own significance, as well for himself as for the many thousands who came under his influence; and many years will pass before the latter has spent itself. Naturally, however, it was in his capacity as Commissioner that this influence came to be most widely felt. Of his dignified appearance and manner—no mean asset in themselves—something has already been said. It was quickly evident from his force of character, energy and outstanding personality that here was an official who had to be taken very seriously; and that he was by some held somewhat in awe, especially in his early days as a Commissioner, is undoubted. But, of those who may have resented his criticisms, it is probable that there is now not one who did not later learn their justice, and find in him a very real friend and mentor. Whatever austerity of manner there may have been—and he could, indeed, be stern when occasion demanded it—this was very superficial; closely beneath it was a kindness of heart, a uniformly good temper, and a full measure of that spirit of helpfulness which has been said to give to the profession of medicine its value to humanity. Not an active worker upon the scientific side of medicine, he nevertheless fully recognized the necessity for research, and he was an active member of the Royal Commission (1904–8) on the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded. But he worked always for the betterment and happiness of the individual; to him the patients were never really cases.

If some characteristic be sought of his attitude towards his responsibilities as a Commissioner, it can safely be said that, over and above the inspectorial and advisory duties of the Board, he always considered that any question affecting personal liberty and the propriety of remaining under certificates was of paramount concern, and that it was of vital importance to maintain a close

and individual touch between the Commissioners and the patients, to whom the former should at all times, either at visits or through the post, extend a sympathetic ear. He was especially insistent upon the provision of adequate safeguards, structural and otherwise, in case of fire. That a large section of the patients were conscious of the friend they had in Sir Frederick Needham was manifest from their numerous inquiries of his former colleagues as to his welfare. Broad-minded, peculiarly tolerant of opposition and of the views of others, a most patient listener to conflicting claims and endowed with a keen sense of justice, his judgment, opinion and advice were of immense value and weight to the Board of Control; and it was no wonder that, when he retired, his colleagues, by each and all of whom he was revered, felt his loss to be irreparable.

No servant of the public has better deserved the honour of Knighthood, which was conferred upon him in 1915.

In 1914 Sir Frederick Needham remarried, his second wife, by whom he is survived, being Helen, daughter of Mr. W. L. Newman, of York. Members of our Association will recall how astonishing, to the very end of his Commissionership, was his physical endurance, and how after a long, and what to most persons would be an exhausting day's visit, he would sometimes walk to the station—"to take exercise," as he put it. From Lady Needham, who can look back as a school-girl to his work in York and Gloucester, and whose help (*) in the preparation of this memoir has been immense, it is pleasant to learn—as some of us were privileged to witness—how happily he spent the closing years of his life at Bournemouth, enjoying his leisure in reading, walking, and in the society of his friends, none of whom will forget the charm of his welcome. It was not until five months before his death, which occurred on September 6, 1924, that his health failed, and in those months he was greatly helped and solaced by the devoted skill and friendship of his doctor, Dr. Hyla Greves. In the sorrow of her bereavement Lady Needham has the consolation of knowing, as all her late husband's more intimate friends know, that she brought great happiness and comfort to him in his latter years. The interment, at which besides his widow, relatives and friends, three of his old colleagues—representing the legal and medical side of the Commission—were present, took place on September 9 in Bournemouth Cemetery, after the first part of the service had been held in St. John's Church, Boscombe.

Any attempt to depict the life of the late Sir Frederick Needham would not only be incomplete, but would be to give the shell without the kernel, were no mention made of his deep religious faith.

Disliking ritualistic form, he held close to the faith of the Established Church in its Evangelical form, and, in the translation of his faith into practice, his hand was ever ready to be stretched out to the poor, weak or suffering. Abhorring outward show and anything false or pretentious, his home life was of the simplest. To those nearest to him and to his friends he was the most delightful companion, ready to enter into the fun and enjoyment of life, yet striking a deep note of intellectual thought and of those still deeper things without which no companionship is worth having. The key to his life lies in the following words, found written on the front page of his diary :

“Do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with thy God.”

C. H. B.

(¹) *Facts and Observations Relative to the Disease commonly called Cholera, as it has recently prevailed in the City of York*, by J. P. Needham, Member of the Royal College of Surgeons in London, MDCCLXXXIII. A book of 138 pages and dedicated to Thomas Simpson, M.D., one of the Physicians to the York Dispensary, and printed by R. Needham, 30, Pitfield Street, London. Is the name of the printer merely a coincidence? The copy, kindly lent for the framing of this article by the Librarian of the Royal Society of Medicine, is a presentation one, and on the title-page are two lines apparently in Dr. J. P. Needham's handwriting. Though close upon 100 years have elapsed since it was published, the book still repays perusal, as well for historical gleanings as for the enlightened manner in which its author approached conflicting evidence, and what was then a very baffling problem. In those days no one in York could practice any profession or set up in business of any kind until enrolled on the list of Freemen. Reference to this list shows that James Peacock Needham took up his Freedom of York in 1832 and is therein described as a Surgeon.—(²) Much assistance has also been kindly forthcoming from Dr. Soutar, Dr. Jeffrey, Dr. Edwards, Sir James Crichton-Browne, Sir Dawson Williams, and Mr. Cooper. Portions of this memoir appeared in the *British Medical Journal* and *Lancet* in their issues of September 20, 1924.

Part I.—Original Articles.

Some Observations on the Types of Blood-Sugar Curve found in Different Forms of Insanity. By K. K. DRURY, M.C., M.D., B.Ch., B.A.O., and C. FARRAN-RIDGE, B.Sc., M.B., Ch.M., D.P.M., Assistant Medical Officers, County Mental Hospital, Stafford.

THE object of our investigations has been to find out if carbohydrate metabolism is disordered in the different forms of insanity.

To this end we have determined the sugar tolerance of 100 insane patients by observing the variations in the blood-sugar content after the ingestion of a known amount of glucose.