THE HISTORY OF THE TEACHING OF PSYCHIATRY IN EDINBURGH: AND SIR ALEXANDER MORISON.*

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SIR ALEXANDER MORISON was born in Edinburgh on the 1st May 1779. He attended the High School and subsequently went to the University of his native town at the early age of thirteen. At the age of fifteen he was apprenticed for five years to Alexander and George Wood, surgeons in Edinburgh—the former well known as “Lang Sandy Wood.” The premium paid was £60. In his twentieth year he graduated M.D.; but before he graduated and while still in his nineteenth year he married his cousin, a lady of means, and this influenced his future career.

Some of his wife's fortune was very early invested in land, and this led to an interest in agriculture and to many pleasant and valuable friendships, but it had an unfavourable effect on his profession. He does not appear at first to have practised medicine except in a desultory manner, and he seriously contemplated giving it up altogether. He, however, became a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh in 1801.

In 1804 he built “Larchgrove” at Currie, near Edinburgh, in which he and his family lived, and this property ultimately constituted the foundation of the Morison Lectureship on Mental Diseases.

In 1808 he entertained the thought of practising in England and became a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, London. He settled in Cobham in Surrey, but he also had quarters in Half Moon Street. His struggle for a medical practice in London and Surrey met with so little success that he again had thoughts of throwing up medicine.

An apparently unimportant event happened in the year 1809, however, which influenced his whole subsequent career. Through the influence of his powerful friends he was appointed Visiting Physician to the Private Lunatic Asylums in Surrey. His medical career for ten years yet to come was uncertain,

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but this appointment as Medical Visitor to the Surrey Mad-Houses had a steadying effect upon him, for he did the work connected with this post punctually and with zeal.

In 1817, a Lunacy Bill was before Parliament, and this interested him greatly because it was proposed to appoint eight Commissioners to inspect Lunatic Asylums. Owing to his experience in this class of work in Surrey, and through the influence of his powerful friends, he hoped that he might receive one of these Commissionerships; but he was disappointed, as the Bill for the Regulation of Mad-Houses was thrown out.

In the year 1818, his brother John, a Writer to the Signet, who seems to have been a man of great sense, advised Alexander to go to Paris, and to bring himself up-to-date medically by studying in the French hospitals which were then at the zenith of their fame. He took this excellent advice, and the incident which interests us most in this visit to Paris is that he there met Esquirol, who impressed him more than any other physician ever appears to have done. This was natural, seeing that the only department of medicine in which Morison had shown a practical interest was the Care of the Insane.

Esquirol was a great teacher, and in the previous year, 1817, had begun a course of Clinical Lectures on Mental Diseases, which was the first of the kind and attracted medical men from all parts of Europe. The impression made on Dr Morison's mind by these lectures suggested to him four years later the idea of giving lectures himself. He returned home from Paris and medical practice for a time went on much as before. He still hankered after a Commissionership in Lunacy, but this never came off, as three Bills in succession, which had passed the House of Commons were thrown out by the House of Lords.

In 1820, he was introduced to the Marquess of Bute, who was in search of a travelling physician, and Dr Morison agreed to accompany Lady Bute, who was one of the three daughters of Thomas Coutts, the banker, to Italy. Two years later, in 1822, Thomas Coutts died, leaving the bulk of his fortune to his second wife, and Morison became in turn the private physician of this wealthy widow. His work was not of an exhausting character and towards the end of the year, as a result of repeated visits to Esquirol and his interest in mental diseases, he devised a plan for establishing a Professorship in Mental Diseases, of which Chair he himself should be the first

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occupant. For the whole of the next year with praiseworthy zeal and persistent energy he did what he could to advance this project.

The problem presented two difficulties which had to be overcome. In the first place, there was the question of funds; and in the second, there was the question of the University or Medical School under whose ægis the Professorship or Lectureship should be established.

With regard to the first, on New Year's Day 1823, Sir Alexander presented the widow of the banker with a copy of his Proposal for Lectures on Mental Diseases. A few days later she gratified him by stating that she had made up her mind that she would perpetuate the memory of that excellent man, the late Mr Coutts, by endowing a Benevolent Professorship in the City of Edinburgh, where he was born and educated. She promised to give a hundred guineas a year, on one condition, that the holders of the office should be Scotsmen. Certain connections of the worthy banker objected to the name of Coutts being attached to the Professorship, as insanity was not known in their family. Whatever designation the Chair should bear, it was not to be called the Coutts Professorship or Lectureship.

Several nobles and other generous friends also gave financial assistance, and a sum of £1031 was subscribed; the conditions on which the lectureship was to be founded were arranged, and the Lord Provost, the Sheriff, the Marquess of Bute, and Sir Alexander Morison, were nominated trustees.

Sir Alexander wrote to a friend of his in Paris to procure notes for these lectures from Esquirol; and Mrs Coutts, the widow, who was formerly Miss Harriet Mellon, the actress, gave him some practical advice on elocution.

Although the financial difficulties for the creation of a lectureship had apparently been got over—largely owing to the promises of Mrs Coutts—this lady after three years, unfortunately, ceased to contribute her quota of £105 a year.

The next problem was to have the Professorship accepted by the University of Edinburgh, and this proved an insuperable difficulty. On 25th March 1823, Dr Morison had an interview with Principal Baird, who was civil and much interested in the project; he actually summoned a meeting to discuss the proposal, but it was unfortunately not favourably received.

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Dr Thomas Charles Hope, the Professor of Chemistry and Medicine, the discoverer of the maximum density of water, a very influential member of the Senatus, was critical. He questioned the necessity of a Chair on Mental Diseases; and when Sir Alexander adduced the analogy of the recent creation of a Chair of Agriculture, Professor Hope said that the analogy was not good. He could understand, he said, the appropriateness of a Chair of Agriculture but not one of Ploughing. He added that the whole principle of specialisation was objectionable and that it might lead to the establishment of a Lectureship on Dropsy by some gouty old gentleman; if they were not careful they might have to accept a Lectureship on Pleurisy. He also suggested that objection might be taken to a separate Chair on Mental Diseases as that subject already formed part of the courses of the Professors of Medicine and and of Medical Jurisprudence. Dr Alison, then Professor of Physiology but afterwards of Medicine, was favourable and gave evidence to that effect before the University Commission in 1826.

Sir Alexander having failed to get the University of Edinburgh to accept a Professorship on Mental Diseases, next approached the Lord Provost of Edinburgh for recognition by the town, but he received no encouragement in this quarter. Principal Baird then suggested that the lectureship might be attached to the new asylum of Morningside, which had been opened for the reception of patients only ten years previously and of which he was an extraordinary manager. Sir Alexander thereupon approached Professor Andrew Duncan, the Founder of the Asylum; but Dr Duncan saw difficulties in carrying out this suggestion also.

Lastly, Dr Home, the Professor of Medicine suggested that the lectureship might be established under the patronage of the Royal College of Physicians. Sir Alexander approached the President of the College, Dr Andrew Duncan, junior, but the proposal did not meet with his support. His proposals for a lectureship were thus rejected in turn by the University, the town, the asylum at Morningside, and the Royal College of Physicians.

In spite of all these disappointments, which might well have depressed any ordinary man, having received funds from various sources, Morison decided to lecture on his own account, and the first lecture was delivered in Edinburgh on the 21st

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November 1823, before an audience of six persons. The course consisted of nine lectures.

This course of lectures is important from the fact that it was the first regular Course of Lectures on Mental Diseases given in this country, and Sir Alexander continued to deliver them annually with occasional assistance from his son for a period of thirty years. On the 9th February 1826 he began to lecture also in London, and he continued to lecture there till 1852, when he retired from Bethlem Hospital, to which he had been appointed Visiting Physician.

I desire now to explain how he lit his torch at the flame of Esquirol in Paris, and how we have inherited a tradition in Edinburgh in the direct line of descent from that great teacher and administrator, the Napoleon of Psychiatry.

Sir Alexander Morison first met Esquirol on 16th March 1818, and was received by him as a guest. He accompanied him round the wards of the Salpêtrière and he attended his course of lectures, the second which Esquirol had inaugurated, the first course having been delivered in the year 1817. He visited Esquirol again in 1819 and in 1821. He also saw him in 1822, and it was on the 18th December of that year that he thought out the details of the lectures, which he intended to deliver himself. He also paid other visits to Esquirol in 1825 and 1826.

In addition to these personal visits to Esquirol Sir Alexander took notes of his lectures. In May 1823, he wrote to Esquirol asking him for notes, and he also engaged a medical man in Paris to prepare notes of Esquirol's lectures. Even in 1826 he consulted Esquirol regarding Lectures on Mental Disorders. Esquirol supplied him with a note of the articles he had contributed to the *Dictionnaire des Sciences Medicales*, and also with casts of brains, and gave him permission to use some of his illustrations.

From the above statements, it is obvious that Esquirol was the source from which Sir Alexander Morison drew his inspiration; and therefore we may regard the School of Psychiatry in Edinburgh—which has existed for over a hundred years—as the direct offspring of Esquirol and of Paris.

Two interesting observations by Fellows of the College regarding this great psychiatrist may be recorded. Esquirol was an excellent lecturer and inspired enthusiasm for his subject but he did not write much, though his views were

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incorporated in the works of his pupils—as for example, Georget. In explanation of this failure to write, Esquirol told Sir Alexander Morison in 1825, six months before he was promoted to Charenton, that “the more he knows about Insanity, the less he feels inclined to write on it.” On the other hand, the great Pinel, the teacher and the friend of Esquirol, wrote much; but it is recorded of him that he was not known to have spoken four consecutive words on the subject of mental disease.

Dr Combe also wrote regarding Esquirol: “We can never forget the advantages which we enjoyed in being admitted to his instructive clinical lectures on insanity at the Salpêtrière, and the very high respect which we felt for the talent, zeal, unwearied interest, and conciliating kindness which characterised his whole conduct towards the unhappy inmates of that vast establishment. His visits and lectures were not only valuable professional but highly important moral lessons. No one could attend them for a season, and witness their effects in soothing misery, cheering despondency, and inspiring hope into the sinking heart, without being improved in his own moral feelings, and impressed with a higher sense of the dignity of the profession” (*Life of Andrew Combe*, 1850).

The great secret of Esquirol’s life lay in that golden precept of his: “To benefit a patient suffering from mental illness, one must love him and devote one’s self to him.”

Sir Alexander Morison lectured till the year 1852, and I have now to describe how it was that on the 7th May 1853 the lighted torch was taken over by David Skae, M.D., F.R.C.S., Physician Superintendent of the Royal Asylum at Morningside. The whole credit of this new departure belongs to the Royal College of Physicians.

When the Mental Hospital at Morningside was founded in 1792 by Dr Andrew Duncan, the President of the Royal College of Physicians, and he was appealing for funds, he held forth that among other claims, which such an institution had upon the liberality of the public, was the opportunity that it would afford to the medical profession for the study of insanity and its treatment. In 1835, when an effort was being made to enlarge the Mental Hospital in order to receive the poor of Edinburgh, a Medical Committee of the Managers was formed, of which Dr David Maclagan, President of the Royal College of Physicians in 1856, was the Convener. A

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meeting was held in the Physicians' Hall, and the following was included in the Report of the Committee: "The new institution may under judicious regulations be rendered most useful as a School of Instruction in the Observation and Treatment of Mental Diseases, and thus contribute materially to diffuse a knowledge of this most important branch of Medicine."

On 7th May 1850, at a quarterly meeting of the College the following motion was proposed by Dr Spittal, seconded by Dr A. Wood and unanimously agreed to. "That in the opinion of the College it is extremely desirable that means should be afforded by which students should receive clinical instruction in the large and important class of mental diseases, and that the College request those Fellows who are Directors of the Royal Edinburgh Lunatic Asylum, Morningside, to bring this subject before the attention of the Managers of that Institution, with a view to the opportunity which that establishment offers being made available for so important an object." The clerk was instructed to send copies of the resolution on the subject to Drs Christison and Taylor as Directors of the Asylum connected with the College.

In January 1853, Dr John Taylor, the Treasurer of the College, at a meeting of the Board of Managers of Morningside suggested the appointment of a committee to consider and report upon whether the asylum should be made available to medical students for clinical instruction. A meeting of this committee was held on 1st April 1853, at which Dr Taylor referred to previous deliberations on the subject, and the desire of the Managers to make the asylum available for purposes of clinical instruction. He pointed out that the subject had now acquired increased importance, in consequence of the regulations of the East India Company, requiring that all candidates for medical appointments in their service should possess a competent knowledge of the treatment of insanity; and that the medical profession was becoming more and more alive to the advantages that would arise from such knowledge. The committee was unanimously of opinion that it was desirable to establish clinical lectures at Morningside Asylum; and rules for these lectures were drawn up and approved of by the Medical Board.

The Medical Board, which drew up and signed these regulations for lectures, consisted of the following Members—

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Dr Thomas Trail, President of the Royal College of Physicians, Dr J. S. Combe, President of the Royal College of Surgeons, James Syme, the great Surgeon, Dr John Scott, and Dr W. P. Alison, Professor of Medicine, both Fellows of the College of Physicians. Professor Trail included lectures on insanity in his course on Medical Jurisprudence—no doubt following the practice of Sir Robert Christison, his predecessor, who, in the year 1820, had attended the fourth course of lectures delivered by Esquirol in Paris.

Professor Alison also included lectures on Mental Diseases in his course of Medicine, and had given evidence before the University Commission in 1826 that a Professorship on this subject should be established.

The Board of the Asylum approved of the proposed scheme on 25th April 1853; and, as has already been said, Dr Skae delivered his first lecture on the 7th May of the same year, and continued to lecture annually till his death, twenty years afterwards, in 1873.

There can be little doubt that the termination of Sir Alexander Morison's Lectures in 1852 was connected with the starting of lectures at Morningside by Dr Skae in 1853. Sir Alexander, when President of the College in 1827, had been a Member of the Medical Board at Morningside, and his lifelong interest in lectures was very well known to the Fellows of the College.

A third departure of another kind occurred in 1859, when Thomas Laycock, Professor of Medicine, gave a special course of lectures in summer on Medical Psychology and Insanity. It is known that both the Professor of Medical Jurisprudence and the Professor of Medicine gave lectures on the subject of insanity; but Professor Laycock took such a profound and special interest in this subject, that he attached even greater importance to it than to his major course on the Practice of Physic. He lectured every year on it from 1859 to 1873, but he had great difficulty in getting clinical material. Morningside Asylum, though desirable as a clinical field, was out of the question, as both he and Dr Skae had so strong a personality that co-operation between them was an impossibility. Professor Laycock used to take his class to Millholm Private Asylum, which was on the main street of Musselburgh, and he also took them for long week-ends to one of the District Asylums, such as Murthly or Lochgilphead.

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In 1873, when Dr Skae died and Dr Clouston was appointed in his place, Professor Laycock at once approached Dr Clouston with a view of making Morningside his clinical field, owing to its great value and convenience for the students of the University. Dr Clouston refers to this co-operation as a private agreement, under which he received a proportion of the fees; but Professor Laycock maintained his position as Professor of the subject.

In 1876, Laycock died and Professor Grainger Stewart was appointed in his place. He and Dr Clouston continued during 1877 the arrangements which had existed previously, but Dr Clouston now found that his position had become a most galling one. It was all very well to act as a subordinate to Professor Laycock, who was a much older man than himself and had been his teacher, who was intensely interested and well read on the subject, and who had a European reputation for his psychological knowledge. It was a totally different thing to be associated with a professor who was of his own age, who had been a fellow-student, who had no special interest in the subject, and whose knowledge of it was limited. Dr Clouston also felt that the professor was poaching on his preserves; and he asked his assistants: "What would the Professor of Medicine think, if I lectured on Heart Disease in his wards?" This state of affairs could not continue and a crisis was reached in the following year, which has had far-reaching results.

When the summer course of lectures on Mental Diseases in the year 1878 became due, by an unfortunate series of coincidences Dr Clouston was not at home, all the medical officers at Morningside were either out or engaged, and the duty of assisting the professor at the clinique fell on the Clinical Assistant, Dr C. E. Douglas, a young graduate who had only entered upon his duties a fortnight previously, and was not yet familiar with the patients that were to be exhibited. The first patient on the list was a man who suffered from the monomania of grandeur and believed himself to be "King James"; and the form his delusion took was due to his real name, which was James King. The simple facts of the case were supplied in the notes handed to the professor who, when the patient appeared, clapped him on the back and said: "Now, my good man, tell us your delusions." The patient, who believed himself to be a Royal personage, was annoyed at the

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familiarity with which he was treated, and was indignant that his most cherished convictions were referred to as "delusions." He glared, but said nothing. The lecturer then thought he might elicit the delusions of grandeur by a more direct question, and asked the patient what his name was. The patient was, however, not to be drawn and still refused to reply.

A more friendly tone was now adopted and an attempt made to start a conversation. "Have you ever seen me before?" asked the lecturer. The reply came promptly: "Yes, I have seen you before. I have seen you in Hell; and I have seen other red-bearded devils like you in Hell also."

From personal experience I know nothing students enjoy more than to see the professor come off second best in an encounter with an insane patient. A roar of laughter greeted the reply of "King James"; and the students rocked with delight at the discomfiture of their professor. The experienced psychiatrist becomes used to these encounters, in which he so often comes off second best, but not so the general physician. He is accustomed to be treated with respect, almost with reverence by his patients. The clinique was abandoned.

Professor Grainger Stewart was a brilliant teacher of medicine, and it is only due to his good sense and judgment to say that he fully recognised the false position in which, through the peculiar interest in psychiatry of his predecessor, he was placed. A few months after his appointment to the Chair of Medicine, and six months before the *contretemps* at the clinique at Morningside, in giving evidence before the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the Universities of Scotland, he stated that he thought there ought to be a professorship of, or lectureship on, insanity. On the whole he thought that a professorship would be better. He said it was his duty to teach the subject at present or to arrange for its being taught. His predecessor had the merit of introducing the teaching of the subject into the University, and had devoted special attention to it in a summer course, as, owing to the extent of the subject of medicine it could not be done in the winter session.

The Commission reported in 1878, a few days after the incident described at Morningside. It recorded that the importance of mental diseases as a distinct subject of study had been brought to their notice, but that none of the medical professors could be expected to devote to it that special attention

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which its acknowledged importance deserved. The Commission therefore recommended that a Lectureship on Mental Diseases should be established in the Universities of Aberdeen, Glasgow, and Edinburgh.

The question of lectureships as recommended by the Royal Commission was brought to a head in the Senatus of Edinburgh University in 1878 by an offer to endow a course of lectures for five years on the Science of Religion; and the Senatus remitted the whole question of lectureships to the Faculties for their consideration.

On 30th November of the same year the Faculty of Medicine—Sir William Turner, then being Dean, recommended that—

“In accordance with the recommendations of the Scottish Universities Commission that a Lectureship on Mental Diseases should be established in connection with the University; they are of opinion that the lecturer to be appointed should be the medical officer in charge of the lunatic wards in an institution in sufficient proximity to the University to enable the wards to be employed as a field of clinical instruction in mental diseases.”

The Faculty recorded the fact that it had been the practice of Professor Laycock, and was also the practice of Professor Grainger Stewart to have associated with them in the teaching of this subject the Medical Superintendent of Morningside Asylum, who received a proportion of the fees.

On the 26th February 1879, on the motion of the Principal, the Senatus of the University unanimously resolved that it was desirable that a Lectureship on Mental Diseases should be instituted, to come into operation during the summer session. Dr Clouston was unanimously appointed to this lectureship—the first “lectureship” ever created in the University. He was, as is well known, a great clinician and one of the most brilliant lecturers we have ever had in the University. At first attendance at his Course of Lectures was optional, but in the year 1892 by Ordinance it was made compulsory for all medical students registering after that date. Sir Thomas Clouston continued to lecture with great success for over thirty years, and published a most popular and fascinating textbook of Clinical Lectures.

The Lectureship on Mental Diseases was the first to be created in the University, but in the following year Dr Argyll

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Robertson was appointed Lecturer on Diseases of the Eye; and since then nearly three hundred lecturers have been appointed in different subjects. What the University would do nowadays without its lecturers, it is difficult to imagine. But how few know that the creation of this useful and important post was largely due to the devastating retort of a lunatic, who not only believed himself to be "King James," but like Dante had visited the nether regions and found professors there.

Sir Thomas Clouston retired from the Royal Hospital at Morningside in 1908, but he continued to lecture in conjunction with his successor for two years longer. In 1910 the present writer was appointed full Lecturer on Mental Diseases by the University.

In the year 1919, in consequence of a Grant to the University of £10,000 from the Royal Hospital at Morningside, the Lectureship was converted into a Professorship of Psychiatry; and the University became permanently attached to the valuable clinical field of Morningside, which is in such close proximity to it.

After Dr Skae died, in 1873, and Dr Clouston became associated with Professor Laycock, a successor to Dr Skae appeared in the Extra-Mural School, namely, Dr John Batty Tuke, afterwards Sir John. He lectured alone from 1874 till 1895. He then became associated with Sir John Macpherson from 1896 till 1898, and with the writer from 1899 till 1908. During these thirteen years the clinical field for this course of lectures was the Stirling District Asylum at Larbert. In 1908, Sir John Batty Tuke retired, and Dr John Keay has since then conducted the course of lectures, the clinical field now being Bangour Village Mental Hospital near Edinburgh.

Lectures on Mental Diseases have thus been given in Edinburgh from 1823—a period of more than one hundred years, and it is doubtful if the subject has been taught for such a long unbroken period in any other medical school in the world. Although Esquirol was the first in 1817 to give regular lectures in Paris, his lectures came to an end about eight years afterwards. It may be said truly that the Edinburgh Medical School and not that of Paris inherits his tradition, and for this no praise can be too great for the perseverance and zeal of Sir Alexander Morison who took him as his prototype.

I will now describe the foundation of the Morison Lectures,

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which is a Course somewhat apart from those already described. In the year 1862, when 83 years of age, Sir Alexander Morison resigned the office of the Visitorship of the Private Lunatic Houses in Surrey, which he had held for fifty-three years. In the same year he decided to make arrangements for a Lectureship, which is now known as the Morison Lectureship. When he first lectured in 1823, in addition to £105 a year which he received for three years from Mrs Coutts—afterwards the Duchess of St Albans—he collected a capital fund of £1031 from friends, relations and admirers, for the payment of the lecturer. He accordingly now made arrangements for handing over this sum to the Royal College of Physicians. He offered to give the College either a sum of money or his house at Larchgrove, with about three acres of land adjoining it, whichever the College preferred. A Committee of the College visited the house on a bright sunny day and were so entranced by the beauty of its surroundings that they had no hesitation in accepting the house and grounds in preference to the other securities. Larchgrove for various reasons was sold in 1891, and the sum of £1150 was obtained for it, and with this for a foundation a Lectureship—termed by the College The Morison Lectureship—was finally instituted in 1864—forty-one years after the first lecture was delivered by Sir Alexander Morison. The lectures were originally given on subjects connected with mental disease; but the scope of these has now been extended to include subjects in other branches of medicine connected with the nervous system.

In conclusion, a brief note of lectures delivered elsewhere may be added.

St Luke's Hospital in London was founded, among other reasons, for the purpose of introducing "more Gentlemen of the Faculty to the Study and Practice of one of the most important branches of Physic"; and "young Physicians well recommended" visited the hospital with Dr W. Battie and were free to observe the treatment of the patients confined there in 1753. He gave occasional clinical lectures to a few pupils at that early date.

After a long interval, Sir Alexander Morison began his annual course of lectures in London in 1826. He gave clinical instruction for the first time to two or three pupils at Hanwell Asylum in 1840, and in Bethlem Royal Hospital from 1842 to 1852. Dr Hood lectured there from 1852 to 1862. His

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successor in office, Dr William Helps, is not known to have lectured, but Dr Rhys Williams did so occasionally. All the physicians of Bethlem Hospital since 1878 have lectured regularly, including Sir George Savage, Dr Percy Smith and others. Dr Conolly gave a most excellent course of lectures at Hanwell from 1842 to 1847. Dr Sutherland also gave practical lectures about this time at St Luke's Hospital. By 1870, however, only Dr Sankey of University College Hospital and Dr Blandford of St George's gave stated courses of lectures in London—the former exhibiting clinical cases at Camberwell House, the course of the latter being without any such advantage.

In France, in 1870, instruction on this subject was even less satisfactory, although Esquirol had introduced clinical lectures in 1817. Laségue lectured successfully from 1862 till 1866, after which official instruction ceased to be given till after the War. (*Journal of Mental Science*, January 1871.)

I am indebted to the manuscript biography of Sir Alexander Morison by his grandson, Dr Alexander Blackhall-Morison, preserved in the library of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, for many of the foregoing facts and also to the diaries of Sir Alexander Morison.