

ROBERT HUNTER STEEN, M.D., F.R.C.P.Lond.,

Late Medical Superintendent, City of London Mental Hospital, and Ordinary Member since 1898.

Dr. R. H. Steen, who died on July 12, at the comparatively early age of 56, was for some years the Hon. General Secretary of the Association, a post involving the performance of onerous duties which were faithfully discharged by him, and that fact alone deserves grateful remembrance in the pages of this Journal.

Dr. Steen was born in 1870, the son of Robert Steen, Esq., Ph.D., of Belfast, in which city he was educated. He there gained a scholarship at Queen's College and took his B.A. at the Royal University of Ireland with honours in 1891. He then went to St. Mary's Hospital, London, gaining prizes in pathology, dermatology, and honours certificates in medicine and clinical medicine, and in 1894 took his M.B.Lond. with honours in medicine. He afterwards became House Physician to Sir William Broadbent, and then House Physician at the Brompton Hospital for Consumption. He commenced the study of mental diseases as a clinical assistant at Wakefield, and subsequently became the Assistant Medical Officer at the Priory, Roehampton. In 1896 he obtained his M.D.Lond., and in June, 1897, was appointed the Senior Assistant Medical Officer at Graylingwell Hospital. Here, from the day of its opening, he laboured for seven years, untiringly and successfully, until he obtained a thoroughly well-deserved promotion in 1905, upon his appointment as the Medical Superintendent at the City of London Mental Hospital. There he quickly established a high reputation. During the 20 years he held office he did a remarkable amount of good and useful work in the hospital and outside.

He was once the President of the Dartford Division of the British Medical Association; always an active member of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association; and Secretary to its South-Eastern Division from 1905 to 1920, and General Secretary in 1915. He was a frequent contributor to the *Journal of Mental Science* and to other medical journals. His writings include reports on cases of ruptured heart, diphtheria, influenza, a rare case of intestinal strangulation, an account of an electro-thermal paraffin bath, which he constructed in 1900; several letters, well to the point, on subjects being discussed in print, and always so polite in tone that one of them (in a somewhat heated Freudian contest) earned from an opponent a tribute to Steen's "exquisite courtesy." There were also three papers read at Association meetings, and published, upon "Principles which ought to control Modern Construction," and dealing with "asylum hospitals." Though these were written five and twenty years ago, it might be useful, in connection with present-day proposals for the "acute hospital," to quote this extract: "In this connection the words of Connolly may be recalled: 'I believe the absolute separation of the curable and incurable to be neither practicable nor desirable; and I know that the incurable patients are generally better companions for the curable than curable patients are.' Dr. Greene in a paper read in 1890 says: 'It is a common observation that association with the quiet chronic has a most beneficial effect on the acute case, more especially if this association can be combined with steady employment of some kind.' When the main attention of the staff is concentrated in the Hospital Block there is a liability that the chronic patient may be neglected. It is feared that there is an idea, much too common, that they should be put into a large building, housed and fed comfortably, and that then one's duty is at an end. The doctor ought, however, to find that some of his best work will be done among these cases—though this work may not bring him prominently before the public with a remarkable recovery-rate." These views are worthy of consideration to-day.

The JOURNAL has also published papers by Steen upon "Mental Disease and Exophthalmic Goitre," "Attitude in Dementia Præcox," "Hallucinations in the Sane," and on "Chronic Hallucinatory Psychosis," which was specially commented upon in the obituary notice in the *Lancet* as follows: "This last essay showed very well Steen's learning as derived from actual experience and sound methods of thought. Psychological medicine has lost in Steen a valuable thinker and worker."

Dr. Steen took his M.R.C.P.Lond. in 1913 and became F.R.C.P. in 1921. He was appointed Lecturer and Out-Patient Physician in Psychological Medicine to King's College Hospital. He became Emeritus Professor on his retirement, when his activities had to be limited owing to ill-health. But Dr. Steen stuck to his work at Dartford as long as possible until towards the end of 1924, when he was obliged

to go into Guy's Hospital for treatment. His Committee reported in February, 1925: "The Medical Superintendent has continued to discharge the duties of his position in an admirable manner deserving of our highest commendation, but we regret to report that for some months we have been deprived of his valuable services owing to his ill-health." In June, 1925, his resignation became imperative, and he retired to Sutherland Avenue, Bexhill; there, during a period of improvement which sadly proved to be but transient, a visit from his Chairman, Sir George Wyatt Truscott, gave him very great pleasure. But after all his strenuous life he was not destined to any quiet enjoyment of rest; a recurrence of cardiac pain and a failing heart confined him to bed, where he was heroically nursed, day and night, by his devoted wife, through sufferings which he bore patiently and uncomplainingly till death came as a merciful release.

Personally, Robert Hunter Steen was a man of sterling character, always bright and cheerful, genial, kindly and courteous. He was fond of cricket and all games, and of yachting; a lover of music and, in his younger days, of acting. He could stage-manage and give a capital performance in farcical plays, providing that best of medicines for the mind—uproarious laughter.

He was a broad-minded, sympathetic and experienced physician, true to his duty, managing with tact, gentleness and firmness, ever striving to improve his hospital and to make it all that a hospital should be. He earned the respect of his staff, the affection of his patients, and the full confidence of their relatives. A man of firm faith and high principle he set forth a good example, and his memory will long live at Dartford.

The *Times* of July 20 printed a contribution by his old and valued friend Dr. Leeson, from which may be quoted: "A man of blameless life, selfless in the highest degree and beloved by all who knew him, he passed his devoted and beneficent life amongst the 'sweet bells jangled out of tune.'" To which it may be appropriately added that he was one "whose faith and works were bells of full accord."
H. A. KIDD.

JOHN JONES GASPERINE, M.R.C.S.Eng., L.R.C.P.Lond., D.P.H., D.P.M.
Ordinary Member since 1922.

A telegram from New York on Saturday, August 14, conveyed the sad news of the tragic death on the previous night of Dr. J. J. Gasperine, who died from the injury received when diving at Long Beach. He was acting as surgeon of the "Tuscania," but up to recently was Medical Superintendent, Rendlesham Hall, Woodbridge, Suffolk.

He was born in co. Tyrone, Ireland, and was 36 years of age at death. He joined the Royal Navy in August, 1914, as a student of Edinburgh University, and subsequently obtained leave to qualify in medicine and surgery, which he did from Bart.'s Medical School in 1916 as M.R.C.S.Eng. and L.R.C.P.Lond., and returned to the Naval Service, where he did good work, chiefly in relation to the prevalence of venereal diseases. He was demobilized in January, 1919, and at once became Clinical Assistant and then House Physician at St. Bartholomew's Hospital until July of the same year. He also was Assistant Pathologist, London Lock Hospital, until November, 1919. After a period of general practice he joined the London County Mental Hospital Service at Hanwell in February, 1921, and was transferred to Horton Mental Hospital in August of the same year, leaving the service for private reasons in August, 1923. He took his D.P.H. in 1921, and his D.P.M. in 1922. He had two periods of special leave in America for family reasons, and on both occasions occupied his spare time working at Manhattan State Hospital. He was very fond of roaming the world, and left his appointment at Rendlesham Hall to return to sea life. The writer was well acquainted with Dr. Gasperine. He was a fearless and adventurous man, a clever clinician and pathologist, and an expert in the modern technique of the investigation of venereal diseases. He did much original work, which unfortunately he was never able to finish. He was a good companion, well travelled, and had had many strange adventures, of which he loved to tell. Needless to say he left many friends, who now mourn his loss. He was most happily married, and our sincere condolence goes out to his widow in her sad bereavement. His body was brought to England for burial, which took place at Hampstead on August 27, 1926.

J. R. LORD.