

# The Life of William Tuke (1733-1822)

A Sketch by Harold C. Hunt

IT is strange that there does not seem to be any separate Life of William Tuke. Among so many Journals and Biographies of lesser men, it is remarkable that a record of the life work of the man who, more than any other, laid the foundation of the Lunacy Laws as they stand to-day, should still be wanting. An ample Memoir of his grandson, Samuel, is available, but almost the only information about William Tuke himself is contained in the first chapter of this Memoir and in two books by his great-grandson, Daniel Hack Tuke: the *History of the Insane in the British Isles* and *Reform of the Treatment of the Insane*. Most of this is repeated in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and in two or three Encyclopædias. There are also two booklets, one, *The Romance of a Great Industry*, by G. H. Mennell, the other, *Tea, an Historical Sketch*, by Robert O. Mennell, which add a few particulars. From these sources and from documents at York Retreat and in the Record Closet at Clifford Street, York, the following sketch is compiled.

I cannot find much about his early years, nor much at all to fill up his four score years and ten. But there was not much variety in his life: it was cast more or less in the mould of the typical Quaker of his day; a round of meetings, "First Day", "Preparative", "Monthly", and "Yearly", but it did not carry him far beyond the limits of the ground he marked out as the scene of his everyday work and social environment. William Tuke's energies were mainly absorbed in the management of a Tea business and in the work and interests of the meetings of the Society of Friends in York, Yorkshire, and the country at large. For nearly sixty years he seems to have been the principal scribe of the York Preparative Meeting, of the York Monthly Meeting for about fifty years, and, for something like forty years, of the Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting. In 1778 William and his son, Henry Tuke, were formally appointed by the Quarterly Meeting to be Cashiers and Keepers of Books, in

place of Nathaniel Bell, deceased. The Book of Sufferings is in William's hand over a long period; a model of clear, virile handwriting, indicative, one would say, of a strong, reliable and upright character.

William Tuke was the son of Samuel Tuke who was born in 1703, the son of William and Rebecca Tuke, whose marriage took place in 1693. Samuel married Ann Ward in 1731, and William was born on 24th March, 1732-3. One incident comes down to us from his boyhood. He had climbed into a tree in a churchyard for a bird's nest, but his grip failed and he fell to the ground, injuring his head and laming himself. In one place, which in after years he pointed out to his grandson, Samuel, on his painful way home he tried to hop, but had to desist on account of the agony caused by this mode of progression. Wishing to keep his accident a secret from his parents, he said nothing about it and wore his hat to conceal his head injuries. But his mother saw something was wrong, and, later, a friend who had seen the fall came to enquire. Then the hat had to come off, and William was, as soon as possible, subjected to the operation of "trephining".

At a good day-school William Tuke acquired a respectable proficiency in reading, writing and arithmetic, and learnt some Latin. He himself said that he was slow in learning, but we may assume that he was sure. At the age of fourteen he left school and was apprenticed to his Aunt Mary Tuke, who in 1725 had set up in York as a Tea Dealer. In 1733 she married Henry Frankland, a Stuff Weaver.

This aunt had shown a considerable share of Tuke combativeness in the conduct of her business. For seven years she defied the York Society of Merchant Adventurers, who disputed her right to trade without their sanction, and in the end came off victorious, having succeeded in wearing down their efforts to restrain her. This conflict might have been more severe but for the fact that she had taken up the freedom of the City of York, a hereditary privilege of the Tukes. Her father, before her, was a freeman, and it is interesting to note that the Tuke family in succeeding generations have continued to avail themselves of their right. Two present day descendants, W. Favill Tuke, Chairman of Barclays Bank, and his son, A. W. Tuke, are freemen of York.

Thus, in 1746, William Tuke was bound apprentice and gave satisfaction. "His assiduity in business, and his kind attentions to his aunt who was quite an invalid, made him a great favourite with her."

Mary Frankland died when William was nineteen years of age, leaving him the business and premises as well as other property. At first he was inclined to give up the tea business and try some other occupation where he might learn more, but his friends persuaded him to carry on. Samuel Tuke suggests that his grandfather never considered this quite the best course, but he followed it, and was now his own master.

Before this time his mind had become "impressed with the supreme importance of Heavenly things". But his position and temperament inclined him to follow his natural bent. Young, and of considerable ability, he was tempted "to launch out and seek after the things of this world, thinking to live somewhat high, and get money, etc. . . . inso-much that in a few years" (he wrote) "I not only most anxiously grasped after the greatness of the world, and to obtain a name amongst men, but my corrupt inclinations so far prevailed as again to push me on to seek delight in forbidden gratifications." He confesses this as coming after an experience in Sheffield Meeting when he was "much broken" and had a clear sense that if he "first sought the Kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness, all other needful things would be added".

At the close of the eighteenth century the Society of Friends was settling into a condition which favoured an almost morbid consciousness in some of its members. A high standard of discipline was demanded, but there was a great diminution of dynamic zeal. Conscious of failure to achieve great things in the religious world, Friends sought compensation in rigid attention to sundry odd "testimonies", and a Spartan attendance at, and attention to, Meetings. The Journals of the period are full of their doubts and fears lest they had not been faithful; one because he had felt drowsy (probably after a plentiful dinner) in an afternoon meeting; another because he had allowed stray worldly thoughts to occupy his mind when it should have been in an attitude of "waiting". "My sister Bevan's visit" wrote one prominent Friend, "has produced a humiliating sensation

in my mind, which still attends it ; being convinced that a closer attention to my inward Guide would not have suffered me to remain in my present dwarfish state". Other Journals supply numerous similar bemoanings. Some of the Friends who achieved most seem to be the most troubled with dubiety and what looks, to a modern reader, almost like mock humility. The Journals of Elizabeth Fry and William Allen are examples. William Tuke, who was clear headed and practical and a man of strong decision, might in the Established Church have been more assertive than he actually was, and, perhaps, have risen to eminence in it. But even he shows occasionally something of the introspective spirit that was in the air. He compared himself to ground wherein wheat had been sown, which came up into greenness and promised for a crop, but winter passing over, and spring approaching, when the husbandman began again to look for a fresh growth of the blade, behold all was become dead.

But though this was the time spoken of as the "Quietist" period, there were Friends who were conscious that the machine of Quakerism was running down and required rewinding. To them belongs the credit of keeping the Society from sinking to a low level. Humanitarian reform is the keynote of this phase of Quaker history. While some were content to exhibit the negative virtues of honest dealing and peaceableness, those who felt the need of something more active and positive turned their attention to missionary work at home and on the continent, and to humanizing the world they lived in. There is no need to do more than mention the causes of Anti-Slavery, Prison Reform, Peace, and Education, in all which fields Friends made their influence felt. In the matter of Lunacy Reform, William Tuke became famous.

In his early business experience, all was not plain sailing. It has already been said that he was a diligent apprentice and a kind and devoted nephew, and that when his aunt died in 1752 he became his own master. He faced the world alone, his father having died four years earlier. This world in which he found himself was a place inhabited by enemies in the form of constables and wardens who invaded the shop with warrants from the Mayor to collect "so-called" Church Rates.

Before William came into the management his aunt had incurred "Sufferings". In 1750 Jno. Nicholson and Leond. Terry, Wardens, came with a warrant from Matt. Lister, Mayor, for 12/7 demanded for Church repairs. They took 12/10 out of the change box and 6½ lbs. of Loaf Sugar. The surplus was, no doubt, for charges.

The first demands made on William Tuke as Master, came in 1753. This time Danl. Bulmer and Thos. Hunter brought warrant from Wm. Coates, Mayor, and James Barnard, Alderman, to satisfy a claim of 4/9 for "Steepehouse" Rates and 5/- charges. They took 9/9 from the Cash Box.

Another enemy to be faced was the practice of smuggling. William Tuke set his face sternly against defrauding the King's revenue. "He consistently refused to handle tea 'suspected to be run' and took a particularly active part in trying to check the practice in respect of all dutiable or prohibited goods," and, no doubt, missed a considerable amount of profit as a consequence. He carried his protest into the Quaker camp, where, sad to say, were to be found young women who wore smuggled shawls.

William Tuke continued to climb the steep hill before him. While still a very young man he began to feel the need of a comrade, and, in 1754, he married Elizabeth Hoyland of Sheffield. She was about his own age and "of very respectable connexions". She "united much that was pleasing in aspect and manners with good sense and sound principles". As a wife "her domestic duties were well fulfilled".

For some years her husband struggled in business without much success, and a family sprang up as quickly as it may have been desired. Then, after only six years of happy married life, three days after the birth of her fifth child, William Tuke was bereaved of this true and sympathetic helpmeet. To keep her memory green she left him three sons and two daughters; Henry, born in 1755, William, born in 1758, John, born in 1759, Sarah, born in 1756, and Elizabeth, in 1760. He has left it on record that he took great pleasure in his wife's company and believed that few husbands and wives enjoyed each other's society in a greater degree.

Shortly before Elizabeth was born her mother seems to have had a strong prophetic sense that she would be taken

from her husband, but he put by this foreboding as due to the natural depression at such a time. When she was taken, he felt all refuge to fail him and that everything in which he had trusted was taken from him. He saw in his loss a divine judgment on him for his sins, but eventually he felt that the Everlasting Arm had been underneath, to support and carry him through in a wonderful manner.

At first he gave himself up to unrestrained grief and threw himself on the bed, with a child in his arms, weeping and sobbing loudly. But in time he conquered this despair and set himself a steady course of attention to business and responsibility for his share in the conduct of Quaker affairs. He was particularly concerned with the position in York, and began to take a more active part in "Meetings for discipline".

The State of the Society of Friends at this time is said to have been very low. The management, says Samuel Tuke, had come to be in the hands of a few dry, formal members, unsympathetic and wanting in tact. William Tuke's indignation was aroused more and more, and, being inclined himself to be a little dictatorial, he criticized severely. "The old men," wrote Samuel Tuke, "sometimes treated his expostulations with contempt, telling the Clerk not to mind what he had said." This attitude of the "die-hards" only made William Tuke more determined, and he stuck to his guns. At last, in 1761, reinforcements came from Headquarters. A Commission from the Yearly Meeting visited York and upheld the young reformer, with the result that some improvement began.

Four years after the death of his first wife William Tuke sought consolation in a second marriage. In the town of Bingley, near Bradford, in the West Riding of Yorkshire there lived a family of the name of Maud who had suffered heavy trials and troubles. One of the sons had been a prodigal and spent, in the course of two years, more than £600. Finding all this money, to save the family honour, had so crippled the father financially that he became involved in difficulties necessitating the loss of hundreds more. The son ran away and the father broke down under the blow, and died, a few years later, "leaving his affairs perplexed beyond description". But he died with his mind strongly impressed that "the Everlasting Arm would be underneath"

and that his eldest daughter, Esther, would experience divine help in bearing the weight of responsibility.

Esther had her temptations to shirk the burden thus laid upon her, one of which was to "join herself to one who had it in his power to free her from many outward sufferings". If she had accepted this offer, she would have had a great position, but Providence, as she thought, preserved her from the utter destruction that she supposed would have been her lot if she had yielded to the temptation of riches. Instead, she shouldered the load, which was made heavier for her by her brothers "getting into company and running great lengths". They threw up the sponge in despair of things ever righting themselves, but she pleaded with them, and at last the younger decided to go to America. By sacrificing £200 worth of property the family enabled the young man to emigrate. Eventually he prospered, and helped his family by sending them money. After a time he decided to return home, but was taken ill and died, leaving his affairs in the hands of a partner who lost everything.

Esther Maud met the situation by carrying on a business, of which she made use to keep her mother's home together. This must have been the situation when William Tuke sought her friendship. About four years after his first wife's death he was corresponding with Esther Maud and comparing notes on religious experience in meetings for worship.

At the same time he must have had in mind something more than mere friendship. The essence of the story is revealed in four letters from William Tuke and one from Esther Maud. The first, dated 9th mo. 14th, 1764, is William Tuke's, in answer to one, not preserved, from the lady. Both evidently followed some confidences, and William Tuke begins by expressing gratification at getting the letter. He proceeds to congratulate her on "getting on bravely" in meetings, and to encourage her in faithfulness and resignation. Having found a sympathetic listener, he makes a full confession of his failures and occasional amendment in spiritual matters, concluding with a hint as to the state of his feelings: "I salute thee in a degree of goodwill, and with the best love I am capable of I remain thy friend."

In the interval between this letter and the next, dated 11 mo. 28, William Tuke must have been to Bradford and presented himself formally as a suitor. He writes that his

mind was filled with a degree of peace and satisfaction with what he had done, and proceeds to lay before Esther Maud his past history and present estate, material and spiritual, thus giving her an opportunity to withdraw if the prospect was not sufficiently alluring. He tells her that on looking over his affairs, a few months before, he found he had about made ends meet and that the "neat" value of his effects was between £600 and £700 and that his present set of customers seemed safe. "I am so circumstanced," he wrote, "that I cannot propose making thee a settlement, but I think it will always be my practice to keep a will by me . . . . And I have long seen a method scarcely at all practised of making a suitable provision for children, without making them independent of their mother." The letter concludes "with the salutation of endeared love".

Five days later Esther Maud responds, doubting whether there can ever be a much nearer connection between them. The reason for this is her mother's dependence on her business and the break up of home involved. The business, through her wise conduct and exertions, was doing sufficiently well, but not amassing a fortune. "Those that would run the risk of taking me," she warns her lover, "must have nothing else so long as my mother lives." She adds modestly, "I am neither calculated for an exalted station nor could I keep my place in it." Her letter ends by leaving him entirely free to withdraw if, on solid consideration, he wishes to, and she assures him that she has his good sincerely at heart, and if he changed his mind she would still rejoice if he found a true helpmeet elsewhere.

William Tuke hastens, three days later, to assure her that nothing she has disclosed could in the least make him alter his mind, for he dare not make money any motive either of his choice or refusal.

He shrinks from the menace of Mammon and confesses his temptation, shortly after his first wife's death, to enjoy "a prospect of too much ease and satisfaction for me, for surely scarce any ever formed greater schemes in idea than I, nor any perhaps more unfit to be trusted with affluence". He assures her that however much he doubted whether he was taking the right course in wooing her, thoughts of her persisted and continually revived, and he was more than ever sure that he desired her as his helpmeet.



As for the obstacles suggested in her letter, he suggests that her brother and sister are now so well placed that it may be better for them to shift for themselves, and it would be satisfactory to him to provide a home for his mother-in-law.

On the third of June 1765 William Tuke and Esther Maud became man and wife.

There is not much outstanding in the succeeding twenty years, but they may be regarded as the most important in William Tuke's life; a period of consolidation and the foundation of his future fame. It was a time of domestic happiness and the welding of a partnership of minds devoted to the betterment of the social circle in which they moved. At the end of it the first fruits appeared.

It is not altogether surprising that the children of the first marriage did not welcome a stepmother enthusiastically with open arms. Probably they had "run wild" to some extent, and Sarah, the eldest, would resent losing the authority she had in a small way established. But Esther Tuke was precisely the woman to overcome prejudice with tact and sympathy and convert opposition into co-operation and love. The stepmother quickly gained the ascendancy requisite as domestic head of the family. Her religion was not superficial. "She was lively and spirited, and had a natural facetiousness which made young persons greatly enjoy her society. There was, at the same time, a dignity of mien, and almost an awfulness of character, when serious, which gave her an invincible influence over the minds of young persons." She was an acknowledged Minister in the Society, and William Tuke was an Elder.

At a later period of her life her dignified carriage compelled an expression of admiration from a prominent member of the Men's Yearly Meeting. In 1784, the Women Friends desired to have their own meeting officially recognized by the Men's Meeting. Esther Tuke headed a deputation from the women, and "the Clerk of the Yearly Meeting felt strongly inclined to address to her the regal enquiry of old: 'What wilt thou, Queen Esther, and what is thy request? It shall be given thee to the half of the kingdom.'"

Her husband left on his grandson the memory of a dignified and judicial figure. Samuel Tuke records his impression in these words: "There was very little of what is now called religious instruction in the family, and religious

doctrines were rarely, if ever, the subject of the parlour chit-chat. The free use of the Sacred Name, and the introduction of deep and mysterious subjects into familiar conversation were very offensive to my Grandfather. . . . He had also a great dislike to the habit of *prosing*, or that of *forcing* of religious subjects and admonition into the ordinary discourse. But when religious subjects arose in a manner which he thought consistent with simplicity no one hailed them more than he did. His home was the resort of most of the Friends who travelled in the ministry and opportunities of religious intercourse in the family frequently occurred during these visits."

William Tuke's second wife provided him with two additional daughters, Ann and Mabel, and a son, Samuel, who died in infancy. William Tuke's grandson, Samuel, gives the following particulars of the family in 1784 :

Henry, with his father in the tea trade.

William, a miller.

John, a land surveyor. (There is at the Retreat a very fine map of Yorkshire in 1816, the work of John.)

Sarah, a girl of talents and spirit, now a minister (i.e. at the time of writing).

Elizabeth, remarkable for prudence and good sense ; also religious.

Ann, a decided character ; melancholy and inclined to meditation and poetry. (It was Ann, who, as the wife of William Alexander, was principally active in founding the Annual Monitor.)

Mabel, the shrewd and lively plaything of her sisters, who, in 1804, married John Hipsley of Hull.

During this period William Tuke developed a yet more active part in the Society's discipline. From about the age of thirty-six until within a few years of his death in 1822, " he attended the Yearly Meeting in London with scarcely an exception " ; a stretch of something like fifty years.

Both William and Esther Tuke adopted pet projects for social reform. First, in order of time, came Esther's : Education. She had for a long time had it on her mind that it was her duty to found a school that should offer Friends' daughters a rather fuller education than was to be had at Ackworth. By 1784 this seed had grown and flourished and borne fruit in the establishment of a Girls' School

in Trinity Lane. The house is now marked by a tablet. For the complete story of this foundation the reader is referred to the History of the Mount School.

When his biographer arrives it will be interesting to be told what various houses were occupied by William Tuke. His Aunt Frankland began business in Walmgate. At the time of her marriage, in 1733, the tea shop was in Castlegate. When Esther Tuke died in 1794 new premises for the school were being built almost under the shadow of Clifford's Tower. The girls moved into the new premises a year or two later. It was for this school that Lindley Murray compiled his Grammar.

The school was not the only Tuke venture to which Murray lent his kindly assistance. Round about this time he was giving help and advice to William Tuke over his pet project, the building of an Asylum for the Insane, especially for the benefit of Friends, in which a milder system of treatment than that generally practised should be the rule.

Here it will not be irrelevant to set down a few particulars relating to William Tuke's business :—

- 1785. Henry Tuke joined the firm, now Tuke & Co. Manufacture of Cocoa and Chocolate introduced.
- 1797. Samuel Tuke apprenticed.
- 1805. Samuel Tuke made a partner.

These last two facts are of interest because it was on Samuel's shoulders that his grandfather's cloak fell. He was born in 1784, and is therefore coeval with the Girls' School, to which he went at the age of seven. He joined the Retreat Committee in 1812, and in 1813 published a "Description of the Retreat". He became Treasurer when his grandfather resigned that office shortly before his death.

It was an incident which occurred in 1790 that led to his taking definite action, but before this William Tuke's mind had been turned to the condition of mentally afflicted people. The incident referred to was the death, under suspicious circumstances, of a woman Friend in a York Asylum.

This painful occurrence created so much concern among York Friends that it was not long before William Tuke was appealed to, as the likeliest leader in the establishment of a Quaker-owned Asylum. The appeal was whole-heartedly

responded to. William Tuke saw the need, and brought his suggestions before a gathering of Friends at the Yorkshire Spring Quarterly Meeting in 1792. In June he succeeded in starting a foundation fund, but it is said that he almost wrecked the project by his *fortiter in re*, raising opposition among some present, and that the tide was turned by his son Henry's *suaviter in modo*, when he asked the meeting, "Well, but isn't my father's suggestion worth considering?"

The fund gradually mounted, and after a few months, when £1,000 had been collected, a Committee was appointed to find a site and buy land. Various Friends co-operated in the purchase of supplies, and bricks, timber, slates and other building necessaries were procured. Several of the invoices for these articles are annotated with calculations of the proportions chargeable respectively to the Retreat and the new building in Castlegate for the Girls' School. Particulars of this building will be found in *The Mount School York* by Winifred Sturge and Theodora Clark.

When at last the new Quaker Asylum was opened in May 1796, William Tuke's brother-in-law, Timothy Maud, was made superintendent, but his death a month or two later, left William Tuke with little choice but to superintend his creation himself. He did so for a year, a year of many trials and difficulties.

In this responsible position he turned for mutual interchange of ideas to his nephew William Maud, son of the deceased Superintendent, a rising surgeon in Bradford. One letter written on December 1st, 1796, is a piteous tale of troubles. Several patients, the cook, and a nurse, were suffering from various illnesses. In the midst of this, Jane King, the housekeeper, insisted "though unwell herself, in imprudent officiousness", on sitting up with a patient and making herself worse. "Thus," comments William Tuke, "thou wilt see the family has been greatly *deranged* indeed."

The troubles at the Retreat were not the only ones that assailed him. At the same time he had a domestic worry. His son John had been taken alarmingly ill after exposure to bad weather. But with characteristic courage and determination he turns to a brighter side: two patients were improving. "If these two", he writes, "should be restored to their right minds the institution will get some credit."

In another letter he expounds the Quaker position with regard to military legislation, and, at the end of January 1797 returns to Retreat affairs. He had now had half a year's experience. The first Charge Attendant or "Keeper" had proved careless and allowed a suicidal patient to strangle himself. This necessitated his retirement and replacement. William Maud had evidently assisted in finding a successor. As Treasurer, William Tuke confesses that the Retreat is short of money at the time, and accepts some financial help offered by his nephew. Then, his mind is burdened by the question whether J. Hipsley will agree to become Superintendent, on one hand, and on the other with the apathy of Friends about the School. "All men seem to desert me in matters essential," he breaks out in a fit of discouragement.

A month later, again, having had a letter from J. Hipsley, declining the Superintendentship, he moots the idea that led, as much as anything, to the early success of the Retreat. He expresses his intention to consider the claims of the man who eventually took the office, George Jepson. He asks William Maud figuratively to feel Jepson's pulse, without saying too much, with a view to giving him a trial.

From this the letter goes on to another perplexity, the finding of a housekeeper to replace Jane King, who had proved unequal to her position. She remained, however, for a time, and in April was the cause of further complaint. One of the patients died, and "Jane King in consequence of this not unexpected event let down her spirits so as to think she was going to be ill, and wished to have leave to go away." This, "considering how little use she was", the Committee agreed to.

In the middle of 1797 George Jepson actually became Superintendent.

The next letter in our collection comes two years later, when William Tuke is planning his annual attendance at Yearly Meeting. "I want thee to go with me to London; my plan is to set out to go to Doncaster on 5th day the 9th instant (evidently proximo, the letter being dated April 21st), on 6th day to Newark, 7th day to Oakham, 2nd day to Wellingborough, stay 3rd day there, and go to Hitchin on 4th. William and Rachel intend going, but it is uncertain whether they will go with me or not. I have proposed

taking John Tuke's wife in the chaise with me, but I find she wants to take one of the children, and I do not chuse to be one of 3 in a single Horse Chaise on so long a journey."

A long interval separates this letter from the last of the series which is the most personally interesting. The writer was, at this time, seventy-nine years of age. His nephew seems to have been interested in his symptoms, and William Tuke reports progress. "I have used so few exertions, that it is difficult to determine whether the complaint in my breast, &c. be better or not, yet I rather hope there is a little improvement. I found on trial of the little mare that a moderate trot after the rate of 5 miles an hour scarcely caused any pain, even with riding about 6 miles, but these rides have been before dinner. A *short* walk after dinner causes pain. About the time or rather after thou was here I took light suppers, as Chocolate, Arrow Root, &c. and found little or no uneasiness in going to bed. One night I inclined to a change, eat a little sausage; a very small piece of Apple Pye and about a mouthful of cheese, and drank a quarter of a pint of Ale well warmed with Ginger. Before I went upstairs, the pain came on and increased on undressing and in Bed, extending to the Fingers," and so on. These symptoms were followed after a time by others, a cold or influenza. The rest of the letter consists of items of family news; the health of his children and grandchildren and their various movements.

The complaints described could not overcome this robust old man. He lived another ten years or more and had strength and energy to take a small part in yet another battle against social abuses, when he was eighty-three years of age. The enemy was his old foe of thirty years before, the mismanagement of York Asylum.

The publication of Samuel Tuke's *Description of the Retreat* in 1813, and the circulation of a notice that Dr. Belcombe had set up a private house for the reception of insane patients, roused the ill-advised resentment of the physician and superintendent of the Asylum, who made an onslaught on Samuel Tuke and the Retreat physician. The details of this grim fight may be read in Jonathan Gray's *History of York Asylum*, and in Milnes Gaskell's *Some Passages in the History of York Asylum*.

The attack merely had the effect of calling attention to flagrant cases of cruelty and neglect, as well as gross immorality, at the Asylum. By a curious coincidence, just at this time, a case quite independent of those alluded to, came before the notice of a West Riding Magistrate, Godfrey Higgins.

He brought his case forward just when the Tukes and their friends were contemplating special measures for compelling reform.

Before this, William Tuke had, in 1809, appealed to the Governors to adopt new Rules and Regulations. But the Governors were easy-going gentlemen, quite satisfied that nothing was wrong; and nothing would have been done but for the insistence of Godfrey Higgins, backed by Samuel Tuke and his friends. Though William Tuke took only a small part in this agitation, it was a greater share than most men of his years would have undertaken.

Finding that the Governors were content to make only nominal and very inadequate enquiry into the abuses alleged, the reforming party decided on a dramatic move. They mustered an army of new Governors, who, by giving a donation of £20 each became entitled, by the constitution, to appear in that character, and bore down upon the Quarterly Court in just sufficient numbers to make a majority in the meeting and force a real and thorough enquiry. Thus William Tuke joined forces with Samuel, and both became Governors.

The sequel was that, after two years of dispute (1813 and 1814) the reforming party got the upper hand completely. The Asylum was reformed and started on a career of usefulness that continues to this day.

But a much more important and far-reaching result was the appointment, in 1815, of a Parliamentary Commission, before which Godfrey Higgins and William Tuke himself, gave evidence. It is no flight of fancy to say that the legislation which followed is the fruit of the seed sown in 1792 by the founder of the Retreat. The full story may be read in Dr. Daniel Hack Tuke's *History of the Insane in the British Isles*.

In 1822 William Tuke died. During his strenuous life he had not merely overcome the opposition to many of his ideas, but had won for himself the respect of all and the love of many. It may be said that he had become the leader of

the Society of Friends in York. The lonely voice crying in the wilderness had made itself heard and the prophet who raised it had come to be regarded as the Father of the flock. When at last he was removed by death, the congregation broke through their custom of allowing their elders to depart in silence, and gave forth a "Testimony" under the title *A Memorial concerning William Tuke*. It was signed by sixty members of York Monthly Meeting. He was worthy of a double honour, say the writers, who testify to his reasonableness of spirit; "In the share which he took in the discipline of the Society, in its various meetings, he expressed himself with firmness, and sometimes with earnestness; but after having fully stated his own views, if the meeting did not concur with them, he submitted to its judgment with cheerfulness; and his example in this respect, became increasingly striking as he advanced in years."

"A man's *life* is his Testimony." These are the words of William Tuke in his blind old age, spoken when his granddaughter, Esther Wheeler of Hitchin, had finished reading a biography aloud.

The lasting memory of William Tuke should be of the virile reformer, seeing, as his great grandson Daniel Hack Tuke put it, not merely that right should be done, but "his creed being that it must be done". It is so he should be remembered. Or better still, perhaps, by a domestic picture of the man at the age of forty-seven, his daughter-in-law's first impression of the family into which she was about to marry: "The family consists of Esther Tuke, her husband, three daughters, a son, and a young maid-servant, with an apprentice. They have, I fancy, no outward dependence but trade and economy; but their liberal notions are not to be described; for they and their possessions are wholly their friends. They are marvellously delivered from this world's wisdom. William Tuke seemed to me to sit in the wisdom and glory of Solomon; and entering a little into it was a treat beyond the natural taste."