PEARCE BAILEY, M.D.

1865-1922

Obituary

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In June, 1918, I heard Dr. Pearce Bailey make a report of the War Work Committee of which he was chairman. It told of what he, working with Dr. Salmon and Dr. Paton, had done during the previous year. It was a record of splendid achievements, and I felt that here was a man who had done something wise and notably worth while. It deepened tremendously my respect and friendship for the man. In this year of war work, methods had been outlined for treating and caring for patients with mental and nervous diseases, plans being made for neuropsychopathic hospitals, their equipment, administration and personnel. Later Dr. Bailey studied the methods that were being pursued in Canadian hospitals, and he utilized in his government service the experience there obtained.

A division of neurology and psychiatry was introduced into the army, and for the first time the importance of this kind of service was recognized at Washington. Dr. Bailey was made chief of this new division. Those who know his work there better than I say: "He built a new department and one of vast importance for the efficiency and morale of the army through the elimination of the mentally unstable and unfit. The ideas he effected in this work later were made a part of the psychological work undertaken by the armies of this country's allies."

Dr. Bailey was successful because of his quick and intelligent grasp of problems, because of his administrative skill, and perhaps most of all because it was seen that he was working unselfishly, and not for any personal gain. Entering the service in July, 1917, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel and finally to colonel, and was discharged from the service in February, 1919, with the Distinguished Service Medal.

He must then have felt that he had developed administrative skill, and his friends knew that he had wisdom, courage, broad vision and initiative. He was therefore urged by some of us to take the position of chairman of the New York State Commission for Mental Defectives, from which Dr. Walter B. James had recently resigned. He accepted the task and he proved again that he possessed the qualities needed for work in this new and difficult field. Governor Miller has given a spontaneous tribute to his efficiency. He said:

"Dr. Bailey was a man who possessed the very rare combination of public spirit, broad vision and practical common sense. And he was

developing a sane and constructive policy in dealing with the problem of caring for and treating mental defectives."

The limited amount of space does not permit me to tell the whole story, but I wish to record that he succeeded for the first time in segregating the defective delinquents and in showing that mental defectives should not be treated with or as criminals any more than should the insane. His commissionership of defectives involved a good deal that was laborious or unpleasant, but he told me after a year of this work that he liked it and was going to continue. His literary skill and imagination helped him in the propaganda of his cause. A short time ago he published an article in a Sunday paper entitled "Shall We Murder the Children?" This was in reference to the fact that two adults of the mental age of 6 years had recently been executed for murder.

But his duties as commissioner took only part of his time, and he proceeded to work out a scheme about which he had long thought and written. This was the problem of the misfit or maladjusted adolescents. He recognized that a marked percentage of maturing lads in the preparatory schools and colleges were not getting on as they should. They were giving trouble to their parents and teachers; they were not, perhaps, bad or defective, but they were not suited to the demands of the ordinary educational schedule. They were dropped or expelled or sent to special schools. No serious and expert study had ever been made of their physical and mental condition or temperamental trends. Dr. Bailey said: "Let us look youth in the face. We will find that among those who are above the level of the moron there are great differences in intelligence and ability. All our boys and girls are not clever. Twenty per cent. of freshmen do not become sophomores; 15 per cent. of sophomores do not become juniors; 10 per cent. of our normal adult population are economic failures." These facts as to the varying capacity of our supposedly normal adolescents led him to organize the Classification Clinic which now exists and functions with a staff of men and women competent to analyze, and to try to solve, the problems of "difficult" children.

So much for the later activities of Dr. Bailey's career. It was during this period that he became one of the editors of the *ARCHIVES OF NEUROLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY*. He had really found himself, and death cut him down just when he was richly equipped for original and beneficent work.

Dr. Bailey was born in New York, July 12, 1865. He received the degree of Bachelor of Arts at Princeton in 1886 and was graduated in medicine from Columbia University in 1889. He studied abroad, much of the time in France. He was adjunct professor of neurology at Columbia from 1906 to 1910; consulting neurologist at St. Luke's,

Roosevelt, New York, Orthopaedic, Manhattan State and St. John's hospitals. He was a member of the American Medical Association, former president of the American Neurological Association, New York; president of the New York Neurological Society from 1903 to 1905, member of the New York Pathological Society and Academy of Medicine. He was one of the founders of the New York Neurological Institute, in East Sixty-Seventh Street, where he devoted himself to hospital work for many years.

He married Edith Black, of New York, who died about ten years ago. He is survived by two sons and two daughters.

Dr. Bailey early achieved a position of distinction in neurology. His bent was toward neuropathology and organic neurology. But he became interested in traumatic problems and wrote, in 1898, at the urging of Dr. Starr, "Accident and Injury; Their Relations to Disease of the Nervous System." This work was well done. The volume might have been much larger and fuller, but I think Dr. Bailey felt that such works are never final and can never be complete. He gave it the amount of space that was due the topic at that time.

Dr. Bailey wrote many articles on neurologic, psychiatric and allied subjects. His most numerous contributions were to organic neurology and to its traumatic and surgical phases. These articles all have value and contribute to our store of knowledge. I think that his articles touching on neuropsychiatry and social problems are now the more interesting, and they can be read with profit for a long time. "Faith Cures," "Crime and Defectives," "Efficiency as a Medical Problem," "Expert Testimony," "War's Big Lesson in Mental and Nervous Disease," "Neurology and Internal Medicine," were some of his themes. His article on "Voltaire's Relation to Medicine" is an interesting and real contribution to history.

It is an interesting fact that Dr. Bailey did so much important work characterized by originality, initiative and facile receptivity of mind after he was 50 years of age.

Dr. Bailey had an acute intelligence and saw quickly the whole of a problem to the very end. In fact, his quickness of comprehension led him to see that certain things which appeared important were really not worth while; this gave him a reputation for taking up and dropping things very quickly. He was, however, tenacious enough in matters which he saw were fundamentally interesting and worth while.

Dr. Bailey did not have a pedagogic mind, and I think he never cared deeply for teaching. He had a clear, convincing style, however, and could present a topic admirably. He was not a controversialist, but he knew well how to conduct propaganda; instead of arguing, he expounded.

His manner was rather reserved; he was one of the so-called "linear" type—a person with strong emotions, held under good control. Dr. Walter James said that Dr. Bailey was the kind of person one liked better at the second meeting. He possessed humor and wit, and though apparently serious, he was always ready to break into merriment. In spite of his reserve of manner, he had many friends because of his cultural interests, his social qualities and his personal worth, and I doubt that he had enemies. Dr. Bailey had that peculiar quality which enables one to love persons one does not altogether like; "He does terrible things, but I am very fond of him," he would say. He was fair-minded and just in his estimate of men and character.

His talents as a writer of imaginative prose were of a high order; he might have been one of our leading story writers and dramatists. His trend was especially to the dramatic, and his tales ended with a thrill. That at least was the style of literature he gave us at the meetings of the Charaka Club, of which he was a charter member, and in whose volumes are some of his best tales.

Dr Bailey had many friends outside of the medical profession, who recognized his talents and social qualities. His prominence and success in his army work, his activities as commissioner, his new and courageous venture into the adolescent problem, all had conspired to give him unusually wide prominence and importance. The sadness of his domestic life, the loss of his brilliant wife, leaving four young children, had also made his friends feel an especial tenderness toward him.

His death is felt widely and keenly and in a way that I cannot adequately portray. At a meeting of the Charaka Club on February 15, Dr. Peterson offered a resolution which expresses with a personal touch what I would like to say in conclusion.

"Pearce Bailey was one of our founders, one of our best beloved members. During many years his intellect, his wit and his humor have lent a charm to our gatherings which will be sadly missed. We respected and admired him for his integrity of character, his fearless independence of thinking and for the quiet courage with which he bore many sorrows. His fine and striking personality always made itself felt. What he wrote for us was unique in its style, in its keen psychologic analysis and dramatic finish. He has an enduring place in our hearts."

CHARLES L. DANA.