

Eighth annual report, &c., of the Belfast District Asylum for the lunatic poor of the counties of Antrim, Down, and County of the town of Carrickfergus, being from 1st April, 1837, till 31st March, 1838 / submitted to the Board of Governors by the manager.

Contributors

Belfast District Lunatic Asylum.
Stewart, Robert.

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EIGHTH

ANNUAL REPORT, &c.,

OF THE

Belfast District Asylum,

FOR

THE LUNATIC POOR

OF THE COUNTIES OF

**ANTRIM, DOWN, AND COUNTY OF THE TOWN
OF CARRICKFERGUS,**

Being from 1st April, 1837, till 31st March, 1838,

SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS,

BY

THE MANAGER.



ORDERED TO BE PRINTED.

BELFAST:

**PRINTED BY FRANCIS D. FINLAY,
CALENDER-STREET.**

1838.

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LIST OF THE GOVERNORS
OF
The Belfast District Lunatic Asylum,

APPOINTED BY
THE LORD LIEUTENANT AND PRIVY COUNCIL.

March, 1829.

MARQUIS OF DOWNSHIRE,
MARQUIS OF DONEGALL,
EARL OF BELFAST,
SIR A. CHICHESTER, BART.,
BISHOP OF DOWN AND CONNOR,
BISHOP OF DROMORE,
SOVEREIGN OF BELFAST,
RIGHT HON. VISCOUNT FERRARD,
HON. GENERAL H. R. PAKENHAM,
REV. A. C. MACARTNEY,
REV. THOMAS HINCKS,
WILLIAM CLARKE, Esq.,
JOHN SUFFERN, Esq.

June, 1829.

SIR ROBERT BATESON, BART., M.P.

April, 1830.

RIGHT HON. VISCOUNT BANGOR,
COLONEL FORDE,
NICHOLAS PRICE, Esq.

January, 1836.

WILLIAM M'CANCE, Esq.,
ROBERT JAMES TENNENT, Esq.,
ROBERT GRIMSHAW, Esq.,

October, 1837.

JOHN SINCLAIRE, Esq.,
EDWARD BRUCE, Esq.,
WILLIAM WALLACE LEGG, Esq.,
JAMES BLAIR, Esq.,
RIGHT REV. DR. DENVIR,
REV. DR. EDGAR,
REV. DR. MONTGOMERY.

MANAGER—ROBERT STEWART, M.D.
PHYSICIAN—SAMUEL S. THOMSON, M.D.
SURGEON-APOTHECARY—J. S. MULHOLLAND.

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THE EIGHTH REPORT, &c.,

OF THE MANAGER

OF THE

Belfast District Lunatic Asylum.

THE Annual Managerial Statement of Cases, with the usual Returns of the BELFAST DISTRICT LUNATIC ASYLUM, are now, for the eighth time, brought under the notice of the Board of Governors; also, the accompanying Report, in reference to the affairs, generally, of the Institution, for the year ending 31st March, 1838.

Relative to the total number of new cases received during the year, it will be observed, that they amount to eighty-six. Sixty of these were admitted in the ordinary way, and twenty-six as urgent cases; being so recommended by three Governors. Of these, 34 were discharged, recovered; relieved, 8; died, 7; still under treatment, 37; total, 86.

Throughout the year, 6 were re-admitted, upon relapse occurring, at longer or shorter intervals, after being discharged, as convalescent.

It may be recollected, that the Governors' special attention was directed, in last year's Managerial Report, to the circumstance of many improper cases being duly certified, as fitting inmates, and, upon the faith thereof, admitted. The following rule was, soon afterwards, adopted by the Board, with a view to check the irregularity complained of, and ordered to be printed, with the other directions, on the face of each form of Certificates, for admission: a rule which Medical Practitioners, doubtless, will not fail in rigidly acting upon; thereby saving much unnecessary trouble to the friends of inadmissible patients, as well as a very annoying inconvenience to the Asylum:—

“As many unfit cases have, from time to time, been sent to the Asylum, particularly of persons far advanced in life, whose mental

malady partook rather of the character of imbecility of mind, than dangerous lunacy, and the chronic nature of which gave no hope of cure, from a residence therein, the Governors, in order to prevent the multiplication of such, which prove a permanent burthen on the Establishment, to the exclusion of proper cases, will require, hereafter, a strict adherence to the *letter* and *spirit* of the Medical Certificate, that the persons recommended are *dangerous* lunatics, and likely, in the opinion of the practitioner certifying, to derive benefit from being placed in the Asylum. Otherwise, cases erroneously recommended, will be immediately dismissed."

The average daily number of patients in the Asylum, throughout the year, has been increased, by 12 above last year's statement; the daily number in that now presented to the Governors being $178\frac{3}{4}$, and the year preceding, $166\frac{3}{4}$; admission having been given, as usual, to every case that came regularly recommended. The Asylum, with the additional building, is now capable of containing, with perfect convenience, so far as room and furniture are in question, fully 250 patients. Though this accommodation may appear sufficiently extensive, and it is hoped, may prove to be so in fact, yet, when it is seen how rapidly incurables increase, this apparently liberal provision for recent cases, will, there is apprehension, be filled up in too great proportion, by the former. This is an occurrence which no foresight can guard against, with effect, unless by the dismissal, should any such emergency arise, of those patients, who, after a certain time, give no hope of obtaining benefit, and who are, at the same time, harmless; or, in other words, whose insanity, in the first instance, bore evidence of a capability of removal, but which had merged into the incurable species. Such dismissal, however, would require deliberation, before being carried into operation.

A great evil experienced in the discipline and proper management of the Asylum, is that which arises from the compulsory admission, from time to time, of criminals, stated to be lunatics, who have been acquitted of capital offences, or felonies, under the plea of being of unsound mind, either at the time of committing such, or at their trial; but who, almost invariably, prove, on transmission to the Asylum, to be in the perfect enjoyment of their mental faculties.—This, it must be allowed, is an abuse of the gravest description, to apply no stronger term—one which is not only most destructive to the ends of public justice, but calculated to lessen the character and utility of Establishments standing so high in the estimation of the community at large, as the Lunatic Asylums of Ireland,—Institutions

wherein are supposed alone to be placed objects, deserving of their especial commiseration, for the purpose of being restored, if possible, to society, by a system of moral government necessarily mild and indulgent in its nature, but in danger of losing that good opinion (which public Establishments cannot be effective without), by being subject, after each general Jail delivery, to be converted into, in point of fact, prisons, or places of secondary punishment, during life, for those who ought to have been far differently disposed of. There is nothing more easily affected than insanity—nothing less difficult, to the cunning and designing, than to feign aberration of intellect, to answer particular ends; but, on a plea of this description being set forth by the friends of culprits, to screen them from the legal penalty attached to crime, Juries cannot be too much on their guard, in sifting its truth or falsehood; and not, through mistaken motives of humanity, be too credulous in believing such a specious line of defence, by which there are just grounds for supposing, they are frequently deceived. John Linn,* the notorious parricide, can fitly

* This criminal, in the Autumn of 1832, murdered his father (a highly respectable individual, and an old inhabitant of the town of Belfast), by plunging, in a moment of ungovernable passion, a chisel into his heart, which caused instant death. For this barbarous parricidal act, he was tried at Carrickfergus, before Chief Justice Bushe, at the ensuing Assizes, in March, 1833. The defence set up was, that he was insane; which, being credited by the Jury, he was accordingly acquitted; and, as a matter of course, forthwith transmitted to this Asylum, where, so far from betraying the least symptom of derangement, he, on the contrary, evidenced all the characteristics of a perfectly accountable being, and that upon the closest observation. The Governors of the Asylum seeing this to be the case, and well knowing how destructive it was to the welfare of the Institution, to have so depraved and reckless an inmate, memorialled the Lord Lieutenant to cause his removal, it being impossible to answer for the safety of the Establishment, generally, whilst he remained therein, he being a terror to all, within its walls. Accordingly, his Excellency, in the following July, ordered his transmission again to the County Jail, where he was detained until August, 1834, at which period, he was re-sent to the Asylum, and continued there till November, 1835, when he escaped, by scaling the wall, under cover of the night.—Nothing was afterwards heard of him, till August, 1836, when he was discovered, by the Police authorities of Liverpool, in that town, on the eve of sailing to America, where, being arrested (but not without the greatest difficulty, he having made a most ferocious resistance), he was brought a prisoner to Dublin, and confined in Kilmainham Jail, for several months, but, ultimately, sent back to Carrickfergus, where he continued, till very recently, if not there still. During his last imprisonment in this Jail, he was discovered to have planned a conspiracy, with upwards of forty other prisoners and convicts, to escape; he having administered an oath, to each, to ensure their co-operation. Luckily, however, the scheme was found out, in time to prevent its accomplishment, which would not have been effected, in all human probability, without the loss of life, Linn and some of his accomplices being armed with dagger-shaped instruments. For this conspiracy he was tried at the late Lent Assizes, before Judge Burton, and, being found guilty, was sentenced to seven years' transportation. He was his own counsel upon this occasion, and every individual in a crowded Court, manifested the greatest astonishment at the remarkably able and astute manner in which he conducted his case,—and yet, this was the person whom a former Jury had pronounced to be insane!

be adduced as an instance how grossly Courts of justice may be imposed upon, and, consequently, how those purely benevolent institutions—the Lunatic Asylums—may be grievously damaged in their usefulness, by having the most atrocious characters sent into them. To bear out the foregoing, it is only necessary to say, that, at the present time, there are, in this Asylum, three females, all guilty of the crime of infanticide, but acquitted of this capital offence, on the ground of insanity, not one of whom has evidenced the least symptom thereof, since becoming its inmate. And, to shew that other Asylums are not free from these most improper cases, a recent Return of the Maryborough District Lunatic Asylum has printed on its pages,—“One Criminal Lunatic, not insane;”—and, doubtless, all these Establishments could adduce proofs of similar abuses.

Just now, there is before Parliament, a Bill, intituled, “Custody of Insane Persons in Ireland.” To be acquainted with its general provisions, before passing into a law, would, for many reasons, be of moment to the Governors and Managers of Lunatic Asylums; more especially, as it contains a clause, empowering Magistrates to transmit, from Jails, all prisoners stated to be Lunatics, to the Lunatic Asylum of the District,—a power of the most alarming nature to the welfare of these latter institutions, as well as to the liberty of the subject.*

The general health of the inmates of this Asylum, during the year, has been, as usual, remarkably good—at least, any deviation therefrom was of very minor consequence.

The deaths that occurred (in all, 22) arose from such ordinary causes as are commonly to be expected in these Institutions, wherein there are always, many enfeebled constitutions, both from age, and from chronic ailments, in which, life, ultimately, terminates rather suddenly. Eight died of general debility, whose average ages were 55—three of apoplexy, average age 42—three of consumption, average age 31—two of paralysis—two of maniacal exhaustion—two of dropsical affections—one of epilepsy, and one of fever: total, 22—the average ages on the whole being 43 years; there was, accordingly, a decrease of eleven, on the deaths, in the year now terminated, as compared

* During the progress of this Report through the press, the obnoxious provision alluded to in the above Bill, there is authority for stating, has been expunged in the House of Lords, on the representation of the Earl of Wicklow, who strongly objected to such a power being given to the Magistracy. Justices of the Peace, it appears, therefore, are, in certain cases (as hitherto), to commit persons, said to be insane, to the County Jails merely; and thereupon, report the circumstances to the Lord Lieutenant, who may direct their removal to the Lunatic Asylum of the District,—which, in itself, is a new power of transfer, now only about to be vested in his Excellency.

with those of last year. During the late extremely harsh weather, several female Patients were attacked, in quick succession, by severe sore throat, conjoined with erysipelas of the face and head ; but, through the efficient assistance of Doctor Thomson, all terminated most favourably.

In order, still further, to increase the health of the Establishment, and to add to the comfort, during the Winter season, of those Patients, in particular, whose imbecility of mind and body precludes them from exertion of any kind, it might be worthy consideration, how far it may be practicable, to adopt a better system of heating the day and sleeping rooms, as well as the corridors, than by the ordinary method, of open-fire grates, which is, to a great degree, imperfect. For the class of Patients mentioned, it would be a high desideratum, to ensure a regular and agreeable temperature, as they suffer much from the effects of cold and atmospheric vicissitudes.

In examining the Returns of Expenditure, it will, it is presumed, be found, that every attention has been paid towards effecting economy, without infringing upon the reasonable comforts of the Patients. The total Discharge, this year, amounts to £2,858 15s, being less, by £240 1s 1d, than last year—a difference, however, not altogether attained by actual saving, but, in some measure, arising from the price of Provisions being more moderate than in 1836-7, when the total Discharge was £3,098 16s 1d, making an average cost, for each patient, salaries, wages, and all other charges of management included, of £18 12s 2d ; whereas, this year, the average, per head, including all charges, is only £15 19s 10d. When advantageous contracts could be procured for the heavier articles of consumption, such were invariably acted upon.

The Farm Return shows a nett profit of £109 3s 10d, on the year's agricultural operations. It was feared the Potato crop (the staple one of the Institution) would have been equally a failure, as in past seasons ; but although such was not the case, in the ordinary acceptance of the term, yet, the product was, by no means, equivalent to the appearance presented over ground, the tubers being very thin throughout the great breadth of land planted. The quality, however, was excellent ; and, from August till February, the Establishment had not to purchase any.

The Oat harvest was an average one, which, after duly supplying domestic purposes, left a surplus to be sold, that produced £17 9s 9d. The Wheat crop was but indifferent ; its sale amounting only to £5 14s 11d : and the crop sown last November, failed altogether.

The increased employment afforded to the Patients, by the additional land, has been most beneficial to their mental, moral, and physical interests; and, what can be more cheering to the philanthropist, than to see such numbers of his mentally afflicted brethern so healthfully engaged, and so comparatively happy, in their allotted pursuits—so tractable, considering the nature of their malady, and so comfortably provided for in every important respect; as, also, to know, that, in every reasonable way, their liberty is increased, and various minor indulgences permitted, so that the idea of confinement, or being under control, may, as far as possible, be effaced from their minds? It is, indeed, at once pleasurable and wonderful, to behold, during the harvest season, some 20 or 30 reapers, all, more or less, labouring under aberration of mind, but all, nevertheless, using the hooks they are provided with most warily; and though, betimes, some may be seen to flourish, around and about them, these weapons, in a rather questionable manner, especially so to the eye of a mere stranger, yet, danger is not to be apprehended; nor has any, even the slightest, ill consequence ever been the result, of their being entrusted with such an instrument, or in otherwise employing these Patients in the same manner as if in their right mind. The truth is, the more the really insane patient can be treated as if he were sane, the more likelihood there is of gaining the mastery over his tormenting and all absorbing hallucinations.

Connected with the local administration of the affairs of the Asylum, seven new Governors were, in October last, appointed, by the Lord Lieutenant and Privy Council, viz:—Right Rev. Dr. Denvir, Rev. Drs. Edgar and Montgomery, Messrs. Sinclair, Bruce, Legg, and Blair.

During the Winter, an abutment, in support of a portion of the old boundary wall, closely adjoining the river, was swept away, by the severe floods; another is in progress of building, it being a matter of much consequence to have the damage repaired at once, the foundation thereat being considerably endangered. Indeed, the old wall, generally, is rather out of repair. It requires pointing, and the coping is in an indifferent condition throughout; having been originally executed in far otherwise than a workmanlike manner. The new boundary wall was only completed, this Spring.

To conclude, the Manager confidently hopes, that the general affairs of the Establishment continue to be conducted in such a manner, as to give satisfaction, not only to the Governors, but, likewise, to all the respective Authorities concerned in its control and super-

vision. It is needless for him, here, to give expression to the deep sense he entertains of the Board's uniform kindness to himself, coupled with its liberality of construction on his ministerial acts, since the Government committed to his charge, the resident superintendency of so important an Institution.

ROBERT STEWART.

Belfast Asylum, 31st March, 1838.

It is desirable for him to have a...
Government committed to the...
of the... by...

ROBERT E. RICHARDSON

...

GENERAL
ANNUAL STATEMENT OF CASES,

IN THE

Belfast District Lunatic Asylum,

Being from 1st April, 1837, till 31st March, 1838.

	<i>Males.</i>	<i>Females.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
In Asylum, 1st April, 1837,	78	88	166
Admitted from do. till 31st March, 1838,	34	52	86
Re-admitted, having relapsed, in above period,	2	4	6
	114	144	258
Discharged, recovered, in above period,	17	32	49
Discharged, by desire of friends, relieved, and on trial,	2	7	9
Died,	10	12	22
Remaining in Asylum, 31st March, 1838,	85	93	178
	114	144	258

Admitted from each County, in same period.

	<i>Males.</i>	<i>Females.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
Antrim,	14	27	41
Down,	22	28	50
Carrickfergus,	—	1	1
	36	56	92

Discharged to each County, in same period.

Antrim,	10	26	36
Down,	19	25	44
Carrickfergus,	—	—	—
	29	51	70

Number of Cases from each County, remaining in Asylum, 31st March, 1838.

Antrim,	45	49	94
Down,	39	41	80
Carrickfergus,	1	3	4
	85	93	178

State of Cases remaining in Asylum, 31st March, 1838.

Convalescent,	8	14	22
Considered Curable,	18	17	35
Considered Incurable,	59	62	121
	85	93	178

Number of Patients generally Employed.

Cultivating the Ground,	42	—	—
Weaving Linen, Calico, &c.,	7	—	—
Winding for Weavers,	3	—	—
Warping for ditto,	1	—	—
Shoemaking and Mending,	2	—	—
Pumping Water,	6	—	—
Sweeping Yards, Carrying Coals, &c.,	6	—	—
Breaking Freestone,	4	—	—
Spinning,	—	28	—
Knitting,	—	4	—
Making and Repairing Bedding, Clothing, &c.,	—	14	—
Quilting,	—	6	—
Washing,	—	12	—
Assisting Servants,	—	10	—
	71	74	145

RETURNS.

An Account of the Receipts and Disbursements of the BELFAST DISTRICT LUNATIC ASYLUM, for one year—being from 1st April, 1837, till 31st March, 1838, inclusive.

THE CHARGE.

Received from the Lords Commissioners of her Majesty's Treasury,	£2,450 0 0
Balance in favour of the Public, 31st March, 1837,	328 1 4
Received for Linen Yarn Sold,	37 0 10
Do. Oats do.,	17 9 9
Do. Wheat do.,	5 14 11
Do. Vegetables do.,	0 4 0
Do. An old Bedstead do.,	0 6 0
Do. Two old Gates do.,	1 15 0
Do. Fines from Servants for misconduct,	0 2 0
Total Charge,	£2,840 13 10

THE DISCHARGE.

Provisions,	£1,197 4 3
Clothing,	206 8 3
Bedding,	65 2 2
Furniture,	59 0 1
Stationery, Advertising, and Printing,	17 11 3
Coals, Candles, Soap, &c.,	227 19 7
Drugs, Medicine, &c.,	14 12 7
Repairs on Building, Alterations, &c.,	227 10 6
Farm and Garden Expenses,	71 9 2
Incidents,	56 7 10
Insurance,	21 17 8
Salaries, Wages, &c.,	693 11 8
Total discharge,	£2,858 15 0
Balance against the Public,	18 1 2
The Charge, as above,	£2,840 13 10

Average number of Patients, daily, during the past year, 178 $\frac{3}{4}$.
 Average cost of each Patient per annum, including all Charges, £15 19s 10d.
 Average cost of Diet per head, per diem, 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.

*The following Articles were Manufactured and Made by the Patients,
during the year :—*

3,140 Hanks Linen Yarn,	36 Vests,
62 — Thread,	34 Quilts,
1,403 Yards Linen,	149 Shirts,
137 — Ticken,	106 Shifts,
305 — Druggett,	172 Aprons,
639 — Twill Calico,	36 Petticoats,
683 — Plain do.,	126 Wrappers,
85 — Camlet,	48 Day Caps,
28 — Chequer,	74 Night do.,
162 Pairs Stockings,	21 Bed Ticks,
48 — Leather Shoes,	16 Bolsters,
48 — Listen do., (soled.)	130 Handkerchiefs,
54½ — Sheets,	55 Towels,
60 — Suspenders,	5 Table Cloths,
6 — Linen Trousers,	7 Sets Bed Curtains.

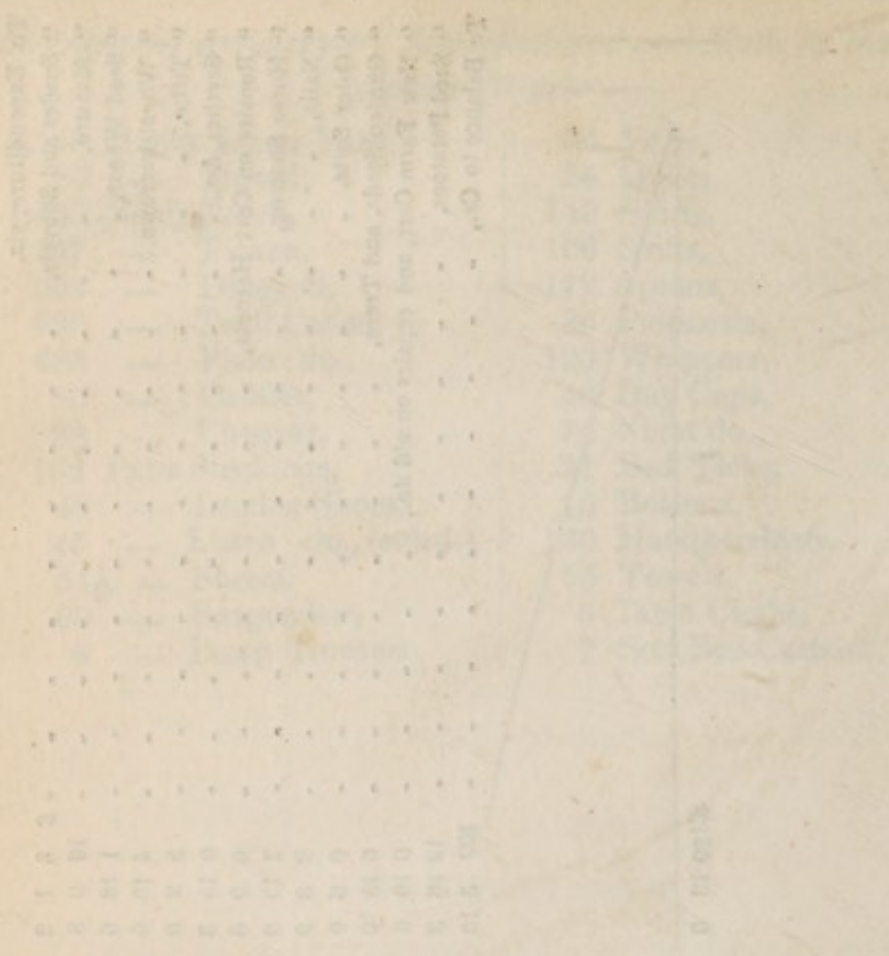
Dr. Farm and Garden, (from 1st April, 1837, till 31st March, 1838.) Contra, Cr.

To Expenditure, viz.		£ 8 1 2
" Spades and Shovels, - - - - -	16 9 8	
" Manure, - - - - -	1 18 6	
" Seed Wheat, - - - - -	4 16 0	
" Wheel-barrows, - - - - -	5 2 0	
" Tithing, - - - - -	0 15 3	
" Scythes, &c., - - - - -	0 9 6	
" Repairs on Cart Harness, - - - - -	1 13 9	
" Horse Shoeing, - - - - -	2 3 9	
" Nails, - - - - -	0 6 0	
" Oiler Salts, - - - - -	6 15 10	
" Garden Seeds, and Trees, - - - - -	9 19 6	
" New Farm Cart, and repairs on old do., - - - - -	12 18 3	
" Seed Potatoes, - - - - -	109 3 10	
To Balance to Cr., - - - - -	£180 13 0	

£180 13 0

By Produce, viz.

" Potatoes, 981cwt., (used in Establishment), rated at 1s 6d per cwt., - - - - -	£73 16 0
{ Oats, - - - - -	17 9 9
{ 59cwt. 0qrs. 14lbs. (used in Establishment), rated at 5s 9d per cwt., - - - - -	16 14 2
{ 5s 9d per cwt., - - - - -	5 14 11
{ Less weighing and turnpike, - - - - -	0 2 1
" Wheat, 12cwt. (Sold), at 9s 9d per cwt., - - - - -	£5 17 0
Less weighing and turnpike, - - - - -	0 2 1
" Hay, 220cwt. (using in Establishment), rated at 2s 8d per cwt., - - - - -	29 6 8
" Vegetables (used in Asylum), rated at - - - - -	£29 5 0
" Do. (Sold), - - - - -	0 4 0
" Oat Straw, 150cwt. (used in Establishment), rated at 1s per cwt., - - - - -	7 10 0
" Wheat do., 15cwt. (used in Establishment), rated at 10d per cwt., - - - - -	0 12 6
By Balance, - - - - -	£180 13 0
	£109 3 10



The Project ...

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