

Fifth annual report of the directors of James Murray's Royal Asylum for Lunatics. 1832.

Contributors

James Murray's Royal Asylum for Lunatics.

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FIFTH

ANNUAL REPORT

OF

THE DIRECTORS

OF

JAMES MURRAY'S

ROYAL

ASYLUM FOR LUNATICS.

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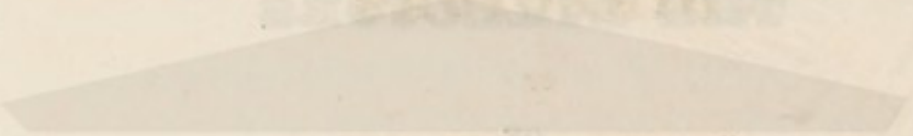
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FIFTH

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

ROYAL SOCIETY



FOR THE YEAR 1883

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LONDON
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FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
DIRECTORS
OF
JAMES MURRAY'S
ROYAL ASYLUM FOR LUNATICS.

DURING the year which has elapsed since the last Report was presented to the Public, the Directors are happy to state, the Asylum has been conducted with uniform success. It is now established on a permanent and satisfactory basis; and the prosperity which it has all along enjoyed, seems to justify the most sanguine anticipations as to its future utility.

It is too well known, that at a period not very remote, Lunatics were regarded as beings unconscious of mental enjoyment, or of bodily pain, and were accordingly consigned, without feeling or regard, to mad houses, in the contrivance of which nothing seems to have been considered but how to shut up the unhappy victim in a secure, however dismal,

cell, and to conceal his misery from the light of day. But, fortunately, for humanity, and for this unhappy class of our fellow mortals, a great change for the better has now taken place, and it has been demonstrated by experiment, that all the apparatus of gloom and confinement is not merely unnecessary, but highly injurious. It is, accordingly, most gratifying for the Directors to state, what the experience of this Institution proves, with irresistible force, that the enormities to which the insane were formerly exposed are utterly inexcusable, as the mildest treatment of these unhappy persons has been found to contribute most effectually to their cure.

The beneficial result of the regulations adopted for the management of the Institution has been still more completely proved during the past year. The great object of these is, to secure the proper classification of the Patients according to their rank and the nature of their malady ;—due discrimination in regard to dress, diet, and medical treatment,—and, above all, strict attention to cleanliness, ventilation, exercise, and humane conduct on the part of the Attendants to the unhappy objects of their care. Much advantage has resulted from a close adherence to this system. It gives the Directors much pleasure to state, that, during the past year,

the patients have been treated with all possible care, attention, and humanity; and that no instance whatever of neglect or cruelty has fallen under their notice.

At the time of the last Annual Report the establishment contained 55 male, and 28 female patients. The admissions in the course of the year have been 16 male, and 14 female patients. During that period, 5 male, and 5 female patients have been cured; 3 male patients, and 1 female patient have been removed by their friends, more or less improved; and 6 male patients, and 1 female patient have died. Although the mortality among the patients has this year been greater than in previous years, this has arisen from obvious causes. Of the patients who died, two were suddenly cut off by apoplexy,—other two had been long afflicted with paralysis, while another had suffered many years from spasmodic asthma, which alternated with insanity. The only other male patient who died, was a gentleman who had not tasted food or drink for six days before his admission to the Asylum, and who died shortly afterwards, from the effects of exhaustion, after every effort had been made to save him. The female patient who died, was a woman who had long been in a bad state of health, her illness having originated in child-birth.

In short, all the patients who died were persons whose constitutions were broken down previous to their admission to the Institution, and who were victims of other fatal diseases besides insanity.

All the patients who have been dismissed cured have returned to their friends, and resumed their former situations in Society.— Some of these, at their admission, appeared to be in a hopeless state. In particular, one young woman, with a strong hereditary tendency to mania, seemed to be completely bereft of reason, and unconscious of every thing passing around her; she would neither eat nor speak, and no hopes were entertained of her recovery. But in a short time her bodily health improved, she gradually became convalescent, and finally was restored to the complete possession of her mental faculties. At her own urgent solicitations, she was engaged as housemaid in the Asylum, and served for six months in that capacity, to the entire satisfaction of the Matron. Another young woman, whose malady was of a wild and furious character, was also soon dismissed, cured. The only other case worthy of notice, was that of a woman who was affected with puerperal insanity, which is perhaps more susceptible of cure than any other form of mental disease, although it is necessary to

guard against its recurrence, by avoiding every thing which may cause undue excitement. It is here proper to bring under the notice of the Public, a fact which cannot be too often repeated, and which is fully confirmed by the experience of this and every other similar institution in the kingdom, that recent cases of insanity are far more easily cured than those which are of long standing. Next to that of dissecting the thinking principle into a thousand members, no mistake appears more prevalent upon this subject, than that of regarding insanity as a distinct and specific malady, composed of ingredients so exclusively its own, that they can never exist where it is absent. As it is generally understood it is considered a peculiar, and almost hopeless derangement of the thinking principle. The insane are regarded as labouring under a strange and anomalous bereavement, as severed from society by some signal dispensation of misfortune, which rightfully exclude them from the privileges, and almost from the sympathies of humanity. The leprosy was never more esteemed a judicial infliction among the Jews, than madness is with us. The leper and maniac are equally avoided, equally outcast, equally treated with a repulsive feeling of aversion ; and the day has not long gone by when mental derangement, un-

der every form, was ascribed to the presence of some demoniacal influence. It is a fact however, as indisputable as it is important, that the idiot, the lunatic, and the madman, are nearly allied to the man of prudence, the man of talent, and the man of high and varied erudition. Eccentricity is seen every day, and therefore it passes without observation, but eccentricity is only one form of derangement. The difference between eccentricity, and mono-maniasm is merely a difference of degree, and any other difference than in extent between mono-maniasm, and confirmed madness it were difficult to specify. Mind is seldom found in a state of unexceptionable integrity, and the degrees of derangement which it suffers are so infinite that in the largest receptacles of lunatics, no two of its inmates shall be discovered, who are in all respects similarly crazed. “The peculiar character of “insanity in all its modifications appears to “be, that a certain impression has fixed it- “self upon the mind in such a manner as to “exclude all others, or to exclude them from “that influence, which they ought to have on “the mind in its estimate of the relation of “things. This impression may be entirely “visionary, and unfounded, or it may be in it- “self true, but distorted in the applications “which the unsound mind makes of it, and

“the consequences which are deduced from
 “it. Thus a man of wealth fancies himself
 “a beggar, and in danger of dying of hunger.
 “Another takes up the same impression, who
 “has in fact sustained some considerable loss.
 “In the one the impression is entirely vision-
 “ary, like that which might occur in a dream.
 “In the other it is a true and real impression
 “carried to consequences which it does not
 “warrant—*Abercromby on Intellectual Powers.*

Notwithstanding the number of persons who have been previously dismissed, cured, the Directors are happy to state, that during the currency of the bygone year only one of them has been sent back to the Asylum for further treatment. This was a man of indolent habits, who hoped, by feigning his former disease, to get comfortable food, clothes, and accommodation in the Asylum, without working for them. The imposition in this case was soon discovered, and the impostor, after being detected, was glad to be removed.

During the past year the Directors have thought it right to add three feet to the height of the boundary wall of the grounds. By this arrangement the patients enjoy the advantages of privacy, and complete seclusion from the public gaze; while the security of the establishment is such as to enable its officers to afford to those under their charge more

freedom and recreation than they formerly enjoyed, and it is found that nothing contributes more to their happiness, or tends more to their recovery. It may also be mentioned, that Mr Burn, Architect, has, at the request of the Directors, furnished plans of buildings for washing and drying houses upon a suitable scale for the establishment, embracing all the modern improvements which have been devised: and they are now in progress of contracting for the execution of this work. When these buildings shall have been completed, the present Washing-house and Laundry, which are situated in the centre of the building, will be removed, and the rooms appropriated to other purposes; and this the Directors regard as no inconsiderable improvement upon the comfort of the house. The Directors are also happy to say, that the state of the funds have now enabled them to reduce the rate of board on the first or lowest class of patients, from 7s. to 6s. weekly.

The Annual Reports bear testimony to the admirable manner in which the Superintendent and Matron have discharged their important duties; and the Directors are satisfied that no similar institution in the kingdom can be conducted by persons better qualified than they are in every respect for the charge. Their unremitting vigilance and at-

tention to the cleanliness and comfort of the house, are only equalled by the kindness and tenderness which they uniformly bestow upon the patients; and while due care is taken by them that every article necessary for the establishment is supplied in the best condition, the most praise-worthy economy is uniformly observed.

In concluding the Fifth Annual Report of this Institution, the Directors may be allowed to congratulate the Public on the uninterrupted prosperity and success which has marked its progress. When they reflect upon the difficulties and embarrassments—the accidents and the misfortunes, which are too apt to befall every infant establishment, and consider how free from these the present Institution has been preserved, and the eminence which it has attained among the Asylums of this great nation, they cannot but entertain feelings of the deepest pleasure and thankfulness.

The Directors will only now bestow their annual tribute of thanks and gratitude upon their able Physician, whose attention to the interests of the Institution continues unabated; and to the Superintendent and Matron, of whose conduct the Directors have already expressed their warmest approbation.

TABLE FIRST.

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Number of Patients remaining in the Asylum, 13th June, 1831,.....	35	28	63
Number of Patients admitted, from 13th June 1831 to 11th June 1832,.....	16	14	30
	51	42	93

TABLE SECOND.

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Cured from 13th June 1831 to 11th June 1832,.....	5	6	11
Removed by Friends,.....	3	1	4
Died,.....	6	1	7
Remaining, 11th June 1832,.....	37	34	71
	51	42	93