

Twelfth annual report of the directors and physician of James Murray's Royal Asylum for Lunatics. 1839.

Contributors

James Murray's Royal Asylum for Lunatics.

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TWELFTH

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

DIRECTORS AND PHYSICIAN

OF

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Royal Asylum for Lunatics.

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ANNUAL REPORT
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DIRECTORS AND PHYSICIAN
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ROYAL ASYLUM FOR LUNATICS.

JUNE 1839.

THE Directors and Physician have now to lay before the public the Twelfth Report of their proceedings; and it affords them much pleasure, in doing so, that they are enabled to state that, during the year which has now elapsed, the Institution has experienced the greatest success. Two years ago it was the misfortune of the Directors to report a calamity of a very serious nature which befel the building, by the great fire which took place on the 9th of May, 1837; and although it must be confessed that, in consequence of this event, much inconvenience was for some time felt in the proper management of the patients, and in conducting the Institution

in that quiet and comfortable manner which is so exceedingly desirable, they are happy now to be enabled to report that the whole building has been completed in every respect, and that it affords a retreat of the happiest kind to many an individual labouring under the most dreadful malady which can afflict the human race.

At the date of the last Report, there remained in the Asylum 116 patients,—60 males and 56 females. In the course of the year which has just elapsed, there have been admitted 39 patients,—22 males and 17 females; while there have been dismissed cured, 15 patients,—8 females and 7 males. There have been removed by their friends five patients, more or less recovered, three males and two females, while three patients have died,—two females and one male. There thus remain in the house 131 patients. It is almost unnecessary to state that this result is particularly gratifying, especially in the number of cures; and it will be seen from the steady and progressive increase in the number of patients that the Institution continues to receive the confidence of the public. At the end of the first year of the Institution, there remained 32 Patients.

Second year, 43 —

Third year, 57 —

Fourth year, 63 —

Fifth year,	71	Patients.
Sixth year,	80	—
Seventh year,	89	—
Eighth year,	90	—
Ninth year,	100	—
Tenth year,	104	—
Eleventh year,	116	—
And at the end of the present year, there remain, as al- ready mentioned, . . .	131	—

It will thus be seen that the Institution has gone on, progressively improving in its public usefulness, and that it has enjoyed the steady and increasing approbation of the public.

Many of the cases of individuals in the Institution appear, from the Reports of the Physician, to be of a very hopeless description, and some of them, indeed, in which, at their admission, he never anticipated a cure, but still it is delightful to observe in how many instances individuals have been restored to society and to their friends, enjoying perfect health, and, what is far more valuable, a sound mind, who at one time were regarded as lost to the world. The Directors find, by looking into the records of the Institution, that no less than 333 individuals have enjoyed its benefits. Of these, 128 have been dismissed completely cured of their respective maladies, while 67 have been removed by their

friends, after experiencing more or less relief, and 35 have died. It is impossible to reflect upon these important facts without entertaining a feeling of gratitude towards the benevolent founder of an Institution fraught with so many advantages to the community; and this feeling is immeasurably increased when we reflect upon the state of improvement to which Asylums for the insane have advanced;—that they are no longer dungeons for the mere reception and careful custody of the patient, to screen him from public view, or to prevent him from injuring his fellow creatures; but that they are comfortable homes to their unfortunate inmates, and provided with every thing which can soothe and comfort them;—that, in place of being subjected to the growl and lash of an angry keeper, they are watched over with all the tenderness and all the anxiety which benevolence can suggest.

But, while the Directors are thus enabled to congratulate the public upon the success of the Institution in these various respects, they lament to think that, like every thing terrestrial, it is doomed to suffer by the loss, in the course of Providence, of its warmest friends. It is well known with what care and attention Mr. David Beatson, of Kirkpottie, the Chairman of the Directors, watched over the interests of the Asylum. He was one of the two Trustees to whom

Mr. Murray, the Founder, had entirely confided the management of the Institution. His much respected colleague, Mr. Peddie, was removed by death in the year 1826, before the Constitution of the Asylum was adjusted. Mr. Beatson being then deprived of the able concurrence and advice of Mr. Peddie, felt that his responsibilities were increased, but he brought increased vigilance and attention to the discharge of his duty, and, after taking advice of the most eminent lawyers of the day, he framed and executed the Deed of Fundamental Regulations which formed the ground-work of the Royal Charter under which the Asylum is now incorporated. Under that Charter the first meeting of Directors was assembled on the 28th of May, 1827, when Mr. Beatson surrendered into their hands the trust which he had previously so worthily discharged. He then laid before the Directors the whole Accounts and a State of the Funds belonging to the Institution, and gave them a minute history of the origin and progress of the Trust from the time of its foundation to that period. The Directors, it is almost unnecessary to say, were so highly satisfied with the manner in which every thing had been conducted, that it was moved and unanimously carried that, as a mark of respect and approbation, a Tablet of Marble should be placed on a conspicuous part

of the building, with a suitable inscription, containing the name of the Founder and of Messrs. Beatson and Peddie, his Trustees, as a token of the warmest gratitude due to the Founder for his benevolent and humane bequest, and to his Trustees for the anxious attention, faithfulness, and strict integrity with which they had fulfilled the trust committed to them. Mr. Beatson felt thereafter that he had the benefit of much able assistance, but he never suffered his vigilance to relax. He was for eleven successive years elected Chairman of the Directors, and during the whole of that period he watched over its interests with undiminished vigilance. He seemed to regard the Institution as a child of his own, and he watched over it with more than a parent's care, but at last the Institution suffered the loss of its benefactor and friend, who died on the 15th December last, and the feelings of the Directors on this melancholy event cannot be better expressed than in their Resolution, which was moved by Mr. Sheriff Anderson, at their meeting on 14th of January last, and which was in the following words:—"That it is proper for the meeting to record the deep feeling of regret for the severe and irreparable loss which the Institution has sustained in consequence of the death of the late Mr. Beatson. That, from the commencement of the Institution until his

death, he watched over its interests with the most anxious and unremitting attention, and that, in being deprived of his invaluable services, the Asylum has lost one of its truest friends and greatest benefactors ; and the Directors the co-operation of an able adviser, and a man of sterling worth and uprightness of character." These were the sentiments recorded in the minutes of the Directors, and they feel satisfied that they must be acquiesced in by every one who had an opportunity of knowing the worth of Mr. Beatson's character.

The Directors, however, must now turn from this melancholy circumstance, and very shortly revert to the management of the Institution. They have found the happiest effects attendant upon the appointment of Mr. Pierides, the House Surgeon, who is resident in the Asylum night and day, and who is consequently ready at all times to render assistance at a moment's warning. He has discharged his duties very much to the satisfaction of the Physician and Directors. They have also now had an additional twelve month's experience of the exertions of the Chaplain, and they are happy to state that they have every reason to believe that his services have been of much advantage. It will readily be believed that it is only to a certain class of patients that the labours of any

minister of the gospel can be at all either profitable or acceptable ; but among the 131 individuals whose lot it has been to become inhabitants of this Institution, it will as readily be believed that there is a class to whom the deprivation of religious ordinances would perhaps be the bitterest attendant on their unhappy situation ; while there is another class to whom the administration of those ordinances had become so much a part of their habitual life, that, apart altogether from the existence of any true religious feeling, the want of the dispensation of ordinances would be felt as a severe loss. Accordingly, it has been found with what cheerfulness and cordiality the patients who are at all fit for their engaging in religious exercises congregate and join in praise and prayer to Almighty God for the blessings they enjoy, and for relief from those ills which beset their present condition ; and the Directors feel no hesitation in now pronouncing their decided approval of the institution of this office.

The Directors and Physician will now make a few observations on some of the points of medical practice in insanity which experience has shewn to be right, and which are therefore proper to be laid before the public. In some of the

former Reports allusion has been made to the subject of separating the insane from their friends and former modes of life, and of placing them in an Asylum, where they can not only be managed with more care, but with more gentleness and less restraint than at home. The morbid chain of ideas is also more likely to be broken, and a feeling of strangeness engendered, which hinders the person from giving vent to his hallucination in coarse language and violent actions. Unexpected and new impressions are given to the mind, which excite the attention, and render him more accessible to that advice which is likely to bring him back to his senses. How often are seen the affectionate parent, the loving husband, and the kind brother changed, by this deplorable malady, into beings in whose bosoms nothing but the vilest passions, the most violent hatreds, the most blood-thirsty purposes, and the most cruel jealousy, are predominant? and so long as the objects of their former affections, or the scenes rendered familiar to them by the presence of those once loved objects, are before their eyes, those passions and hatreds increase in force. But, separate them entirely from those persons and scenes, and a new and more healthy train of thought is brought about. Partial separation from friends does little if any good, and an entire change of scene and atten-

dants is at all times recommended in cases of insanity, and this change can be effected much more completely in an Asylum than any other place. Objections have been made that the associates met with in an Asylum may be detrimental to the patients. But this is not the case. There is no part of the treatment of the insane of the benefit of which the Directors and Physician are more confident, than that the intercourse of the insane with each other has a reciprocal good effect on all. If capable of reflection at all, the first thing that strikes a patient, on coming to an Asylum, is the hallucinations and chimeras of the others; and on no point can a medical man attack a patient with greater chance of success than by pointing out to the person, on whom he wishes to make an impression, relative to his own aberrations, the insane ideas of others. In a house adapted to the treatment of the insane, the rooms are more suitably disposed than in a private one, and, with less restraint, the patient is better watched. What can be done with a furiously insane person in a private house? It becomes necessary to tie him—to bind him down in his bed, and to keep him there. This, of course, increases his fury and delirium, whilst in an Asylum he is left free to indulge in his vagaries, care being taken that he does not hurt himself or others. Then the servants of

those Establishments are so perfectly accustomed to the management of the insane, that no violence is necessary to control them. The arrangement of those buildings also admits of the patients being changed from one part to another, according to their state and improvement.— These observations, of course, must only be understood to apply to Asylums as at present constituted. It is believed that none of those advantages could be formerly derived from any of the old mad-houses. But now, the order, the cleanliness, the food, the clothing, and even the little luxuries of the insane are so minutely attended to, that in a short time the most furious is impressed with the order and silence which reigns around him, restrains himself against his violent impulses, and ceases to indulge in his vagaries.— Even the most obstinate and distrustful monomaniac finds himself on his entry to an Asylum forced to abstain from his chimeras, and is carried away by the example and the whims of those around him.

With regard to relapses in insanity, although it can by no means be denied that these occur, yet it is thought that they are not so frequent as is generally imagined; and the Directors and Physician are rather disposed to classify many of the cases which are attributed to relapse, as new accessions of the disease. In

the larger and older establishments for the treatment of the insane, the closest calculation has only made out that one-tenth of those who recover from insanity have had relapses. Among the rich the danger of relapse is not nearly so great as among the poor. This it is considered may be owing to the greater care taken to avoid exciting causes which their means so easily afford them; whereas the poor, from their more limited circumstances, are forced to return to those scenes and those wants which first brought on insanity.

It is well known that persons who have had fevers, inflammations, &c. are more predisposed to contract these diseases, because an organ once affected is *a fortiori* more liable to be similarly affected again. Physicians do not give the name of *relapse* to this class of diseases,—why, then, should it be given to insanity? How often do Physicians of Hospitals see individuals return to them with the same diseases which they had cured before? They consider it and treat it as a new disease, and not as the one they had previously cured. It is not denied, as before observed, that the insane are subject to relapses: They are even more exposed to them than other diseased persons are to their former maladies,—1st, Because the exciting causes of madness are more numerous, and present themselves in all

the circumstances of life :—2dly, Because the crisis of this malady are rarely complete ;—and 3dly, Because many persons, though cured, are not very careful in avoiding those causes which first excited the disease. But because men are imprudent, is medicine powerless ? The Physician is satisfied from experience that a relapse can almost always be foreseen, and often prevented. The number of those who have had returns of their malady, and have been treated more than once in Murray's Asylum, is fifteen ; and in many instances the recurrence of the disease can be clearly and distinctly traced to the imprudence or vice of the individual so affected. Seven of those relapses have been from intoxication ; and it is the opinion of the Physician, founded on what he has so often witnessed, that a person who has once had *delirium tremens*, from drinking, never gets quit of this odious and degrading habit.

In conclusion, the Directors have to vote their warmest thanks to the Physician for his very able and successful management of the patients during the past year, and for the skill and unremitting attention he has devoted to the duties of his office, as well as to Mr. Pierides, the resident surgeon, for the able and satisfactory co-operation he has afforded the Physician ; and to

the Superintendent and Matron for their strict attention and exemplary conduct.

TABLE FIRST.

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Number of Patients remaining in the Asylum on 11th June, 1838.....	60	56	116
Number of Patients admitted from 11th June, 1838, to the 10th June, 1839...	22	17	39

TABLE SECOND.

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Cured from 11th June, 1838, to 10th June, 1839.....	7	8	15
Removed by their Friends,.....	3	2	5
Died.....	1	2	3
Remaining 11th June, 1839.....	—	—	131