

Sixth annual report of the directors and physician of James Murray's Royal Asylum for Lunatics. 1832.

Contributors

James Murray's Royal Asylum for Lunatics.

Publication/Creation

Perth : Printed by order of the directors by R. Morison, 1833.

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OF THE
DIRECTORS AND PHYSICIAN
OF
JAMES MURRAY'S
ROYAL
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MDCCCXXXIII.

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SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT
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DIRECTORS AND PHYSICIAN
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JAMES MURRAY'S
ROYAL ASYLUM FOR LUNATICS.

IN presenting to the public their Sixth Annual Report, the Directors and Physician of this Institution have once more the satisfaction to announce that during the past year it has been conducted with the same success which has hitherto uniformly marked its progress; and that its great public utility has now come to be acknowledged by every one who has attended to its prosperous state and the many advantages it possesses.

In an age of advanced civilization, like the present, which, while it multiplies our pleasures, no less increases our crosses and misfortunes, nervous and mental affections of every kind are, unhappily, seen to be extremely prevalent; and although our know-

ledge of these diseases is still very limited and imperfect, it is gratifying to reflect on the marked improvement which has recently taken place throughout the kingdom, in the medical and moral treatment of the insane; and with reference to the immediate object of this Report, the Directors feel that every additional year's experience, gives them still greater reason than before to congratulate the City and County of Perth, on possessing an Asylum which may vie with any similar institution in the kingdom, and in which it may be safely said that the best means which modern skill and philanthropy have devised are constantly employed, in affording relief to a class of persons, who may justly be regarded as at once the most helpless and unfortunate of the community.

At what period places of reception for the care and cure of lunatics came first to be erected, it is difficult, or rather impossible to determine, but we know that it was not till within these thirty or forty years, that the houses, destined to receive the most unfortunate of our fellow creatures, could be considered as ranking above the den of the wild beast. So horrible and so infamous were they, (and at the same time so totally neglected by the legislature), that they furnished a theme for the speculative moralist, or the novelist, who,

wanting to indulge his reader with a picture of the terrific, had only to withdraw the veil which concealed the secrets of each such prison house. The Quakers at York were the first to shew to the world that humane treatment, and medical skill, could and should be applied to the cure of this disease, and "The Retreat" exhibited the triumphant display of science and humanity, over ignorance and brutality. The account of this institution by Samuel Tuke, is one of the most graphic and interesting publications on the subject of insanity that exists. At once the whole system of chains, dungeons, whips, and cells, was changed, and the insane for the first time were treated as human beings labouring under a curable disease. In the year 1813, Parliament instituted an enquiry into the treatment of this unhappy class, and the system developed in the course of that enquiry was such as might well make the blood curdle in the veins. Compared with the unfortunate insane, the greatest criminals were treated with a gentleness and care which rendered the contrast frightful. Those entrusted with the care of such, seem to have proceeded on the idea, that the insane were for ever bent on mischief, like so many tigers or wild animals. Never for once do they seem to have imagined, that many, nay the greater number of such

persons, by having the subject of their hallucination kept from their view, were capable of feeling kindness or the contrary, or of engaging in any kind of employment.

It is but justice, however to state that the Spanish nation, at an early period, employed the insane, in out-of-doors labour, and even published the fact, that those who were thus engaged oftener recovered, than persons in a higher station in life, who, inmates of the same hospital, were not, and could not be asked to undertake manual labour. Still, even with such recorded experience before them, English medical men, seem never to have thought of adopting a similar experiment, but still persisted in the same vicious mode of treatment. It is right to state, however, that few *medical men* were employed in the treatment of the insane. They were generally placed under the care of keepers of private Mad-Houses, men of limited, or rather of no education, and whose only supposed qualification for the trust, consisted in their having been at one time or other employed as keepers in St. Luke's or Bedlam.

It is not pretended, that medicine unaided has wrought many cures in this malady, yet many things may occur to a medical man, tending to facilitate a cure, which are not likely to suggest themselves to him, who has

not been regularly trained to the profession. The enquiry instituted by Parliament at once called the attention of the public to the fact that insanity was a *disease*, and a disease moreover, which as it was *curable*, so the sooner it was brought under the treatment of experienced men, the greater the chance of recovery. Asylums arose in every direction, built either by Counties assessing themselves for the expense, or from private subscriptions, or by donations, or legacies from benevolent individuals, and the system now may be said to be as perfect, as in the cure of any other disease. During a recent visit paid to the Asylum here by Dr. Zeilor of Stutgard, the Physician of this Institution had a long conversation with him on the subject of the treatment of the insane. He is Physician to the Asylum there, and in speaking of the employment of its inmates, he stated that they employ every patient in the house in manual labour, and as an instance of the universality of the practice, he mentioned, that the nephew of a German Prince was a patient at Stutgard, and obliged, like all the others, to labour daily. He strongly urged that every patient here should likewise be employed in a similar manner, and upon a doubt being expressed how far the laws of this Country would authorise us to compel people to work, he stated that he thought our

laws could present no obstacle, as manual labour was one of the curative means prescribed, and as necessary to be followed out, as any other prescription.

Since the opening of this Institution, no fewer than 164 patients have been admitted, Of these 53 have been cured, and it has been ascertained that almost the whole of those, are now supporting themselves in their respective vocations, and filling their places in society with credit, and advantage to their families and the community.

Since the last annual meeting 25 persons have been admitted, of whom 8 have been cured, and there are several who bid fair to increase the list of those who have benefited by the practice of the Institution. In detailing the list of cures, the first worthy of notice was that of a Gentleman who had resided in the West Indies for a number of years. Of the symptoms which preceded his malady, no account whatever could be got, and the first intimation which his friends had of him, was that he had arrived at Greenock in a most deplorable state. The Captain of the Ship who accompanied him to Perth, stated that he was put on board his vessel, bound hand and Foot, in a furious state of derangement, and had been kept in the same state of coercion during the whole voyage. The

only thing which had been done for him, was to give him certain simple medicines. His wrists and ancles were cut and lacerated by the ropes with which he had been tied, and his back and other parts of his body, bruised with his struggles and violence. He was in a state of distinct raging mania without one lucid idea. He raved incessantly about ships, negroes, and assaults from various quarters, and was constantly roaring, and screaming—night and day. Although a robust young man, he had become thin and emaciated, from the violence of the disease, and his own strugglings, and exertions. Still it was necessary to do something to subdue the malady, else it was obvious it must soon subdue him. The remedies applied gradually overcame the extreme turbulence of the disease; yet so easily was he excited, that for months he had to be kept in a room by himself, or (when the weather permitted) in one of the airing yards by himself. Even when thus isolated, if any of the other patients gave a loud cry, it unhinged this poor fellow as much as ever. By a continued application of the same means, and keeping him perfectly quiet, in the space of nine months he completely recovered, and left the Asylum in June last. He continues quite well up to this date. Upon his recovery he recollected every thing

which had occurred to him from the first of his seizure, the only thing which perplexed him was his not understanding what place the Asylum was to which he had been brought, although he perfectly remembered his coming to it. He attributed his malady to a *coup de soleil*, and too much wine.

The second case was that of a young man, in whose family, both by the father and mother's side mania is strongly hereditary. It was the opinion of the Physician that he had assisted his own predisposition to the malady by intemperance. Be this as it may, he was brought to the Asylum very insane. He was about seven months in the Institution. His disease seemed to intermit for a long while, so that at times he would be perfectly well for two days, after which the disease would return, and he would then be very insane and violent for a week. Gradually the lucid intervals became longer, and the hallucinations of shorter duration. He would be well for ten days, and insane for three. In this way he continued to improve, with lucid intervals of a month, and the hallucination not lasting above a couple of days. Latterly he was aware of the fit coming on, struggled and took medicine for the purpose of keeping it off, and in this he succeeded. The Physician has seen him frequently since he was dismissed,

and he has never since had an attack of the disease, although it is very nearly twelve months since he left the Asylum.

The subject of the third case was a Painter, and the disease seemed intimately connected with disordered bowels. He was exceedingly thin and emaciated, but after clearing the bowels well out, a very nourishing diet, and light work seemed all that was necessary for him. He continues well.

The subject of the next case was a Blacksmith; and a more restless, impudent, and mischievous patient never was in the House. He had had a quarrel with some one about a love story; and his state of irritability exceeds description. The disease was also very obstinate, and he was nearly ten months in the house before he could be considered altogether well. His natural manner when recovered, was very different indeed from that by which he was characterized under the malady. He became modest and quiet, and expressed himself very grateful for the attentions shewn him.

The other cases were good cures, but as the disease arose from drinking and irregularities, they scarcely merit any minute notice or detail.

Three persons have died in the course of the past year, two of them worn out by their

malady, conjoined with palsy, and the insanity having been of long standing. The third was a Gentleman who was brought to the Asylum, in the last stage of exhaustion from the violence of the disease, and his having refused food. It had existed sometime before it was observed; and as he lived in lodgings alone no attention had been paid to his taking food in proper quantities to support nature. He only lived three days in the Asylum.

The cases before alluded to, are selected from those admitted during the year which has just elapsed, but in publishing the sixth Annual Report, it may not be uninteresting to look back, and take a general review of the number of cases and cures in the Asylum since it was first established. It was opened for the reception of patients on the 1st of July, 1827. Since that time there have been admitted, as already mentioned, 164 patients. Of this number upwards of 90 had been insane for a considerable period, varying from one to twenty years and upwards, thus leaving only about 70 cases where the disease was of recent origin. The number of patients who have been completely cured amounts to 53,—a result which, in every view, must be considered as highly gratifying. It is somewhat remarkable that during all this time, there has not been a single instance of death

by suicide, within the walls of the Asylum, notwithstanding the great degree of personal liberty which all the patients enjoy, and the extreme proneness of many of them to commit self-destruction. The Directors believe that so remarkable a fact has not been recorded, in respect to any similar institution, during so long a period; and although it would ill become them to make a boast of their exemption from a calamity, which, but for the kindness of Providence, might have occurred, notwithstanding the greatest vigilance, and best management, they yet think that it affords a pretty convincing testimony to the fact of every possible precaution having been adopted, and every practicable care employed to avert so distressing an event.

When the last Report was published, there were in the Asylum 37 male, and 34 female patients. In the course of the year the admissions have been 15 male, and 10 female patients. During that period 8 male patients have been dismissed cured, and 3 have died, and 4 female patients have been removed by their friends, more or less improved.

It would be out of place here to enter into any general investigation of the causes and symptoms of insanity; but it may not be improper to give a brief description of some remarkable cases of patients who are now in the house.

Insanity may arise either from phisical or from moral causes. It has been often observed that there is no passion in the human heart which more frequently peoples a mad-house than inordinate pride. The mania arising from this source generally discovers itself by the patient assuming the character of a King, a Prince, a Nobleman, or some other distinguished personage, and in such cases there is generally "a method in his madness," for his conversation and demeanour are found to be in perfect keeping with the character assumed. Several patients of this description are now in the Asylum. Of these, the first in imaginary dignity is an old soldier, who was severely wounded in the head, and who fancies himself a Duke, and Commander of the Forces, and struts about with all the imposing air of nobility. He is haughty and reserved, keeping aloof from the other patients, and scarcely deigning to speak to those around him. The Asylum is his palace, and he has contrived to convert a common hat into an imaginary coronet. To see the marks of care upon this man's brow, while he walks in solemn mock-nobility, apparently overwhelmed with his grandeur, and the extent of his command, might easily lead one to believe that wealth and consequence, even in imagination, as in reality, are not always productive of

happiness. Another patient, an elderly man, aspires to the inferior dignity of Lord Provost of Perth. He fancies that the Asylum is his property, and that all the attendants are his servants. In his conversation and demeanour he always plays the part of Chief Magistrate, and shews great care in preserving a brass chain, as the emblem of his civic dignity; he bears the fatigues of office with cheerfulness and composure, and does not seem distressed with those cares which oppress others who have assumed a more exalted rank. There are several other patients whose malady points in the same direction.

It is well known that there are many insane people whose general perceptions are sufficiently sound and acute, but who, upon some particular subjects, are liable to the most strange and unaccountable illusions.—There is a female patient in the house upwards of 40 years of age, who fancies that she is an infant of six weeks old. It is in vain to attempt to convince her of the absurdity of this hallucination. On one occasion, when a child of three years old was placed beside her, she acknowledged that she was much taller, but persisted in the delusion that she was much younger than the child. Although it is generally to little purpose to reason with patients of this description, yet a cure is some

times the effect of mere accident. A remarkable case of this description is mentioned by Professor Pinel of Paris, in his treatise on mental diseases.—“One of the most eminent Watch makers in Paris became deranged, from prosecuting the idea of perpetual motion. His derangement was characterised by this singularity, he believed he had been guillotined, that his head had been mixed with those of some other victims, and that the Judges, repenting of their cruel verdict, had ordered the heads to be replaced on their respective bodies. By some mistake he conceived that the head of one of his unfortunate companions, had been placed upon his shoulders, and this idea haunted him night and day. A convalescent of a lively and jocular turn, was engaged to play the following trick upon the Artist. Their conversation was directed to the celebrated miracle of St. Dennis, who carried his head under his arm, and kissed it as he went along. The Watch maker vehemently maintained the possibility of the fact, and endeavoured to confirm it by an appeal to his own case. His companion burst out into a loud laugh, and said to him in a tone of mockery—why you fool, how how could St. Dennis contrive to kiss his own head? was it with his heel? This unexpected repartee struck the lunatic forcibly; he retired quite confused amidst the laughter

which it produced ; and he never afterwards spoke of the misplacement of his head."

The greatest care is taken in this Institution to ascertain exactly the tempers, habits, and disposition of the patients, as the only sure means of treating them successfully.—Insanity assumes so many deplorable forms, that any attempt to enforce a uniform system of treatment applicable to all cases, would of course prove utterly unavailing. The melancholy hypocondriac requires constant cheering, and his mind to be kept occupied with some favorite amusement or employment, to give the spirits time to rally. Those afflicted with religious melancholy, must have the benefit as far as practicable of the cheerful company of those patients whose spirits are more elevated, and all books of a gloomy cast, on the topics which distress the patient, kept out of the way. Music and dancing are also found beneficial. The chief art of managing maniacal patients, consists in administering consolation. They must be spoken to with kindness, and sometimes it is necessary to give evasive answers, to avoid enraging them by a refusal. At the sametime it is absolutely necessary to impress them with a certain degree of awe, although it is at all times more desirable to get the better of their obstinacy

by stratagem than by any thing approaching to violence.

The Directors are happy to state that the building for washing and drying houses, according to the plan of Mr Burn, upon a suitable scale for the establishment is now nearly completed, and seems particularly well calculated for these purposes. The rooms in the centre of the building formerly occupied as a Washing-house and Laundry, will now therefore be converted to other uses, which will add very much to internal comfort. During the past season a spacious bowling green has also been formed chiefly by the labour of the patients, near the south eastern extremity of the grounds, and thus additional scope is provided for their recreation and amusement.—The Directors have no doubt, this will tend greatly to soothe the minds of the irritable, and cheer those of a melancholy cast ; for it is a truth verified by experience, that amid the numberless shades and degrees of insanity which mark the cases of individuals, the greater proportion are enabled to join in such amusements with spirit, and evident enjoyment, and that the more the patient is kept occupied by any such favorite amusement, the greater is the chance of the mental delusions gradually becoming weaker ; and the nervous

system, invigorated by exercise, in a similar ratio, regains its former elasticity and vigour.

Plans have also been obtained for the proposed addition to the building, by which accommodation will be afforded for 52 patients of the lower class, and for 8 of the highest, being in all 60 additional patients, besides a Director's Room, and many other minor conveniencies. After this addition shall have been completed, the Directors feel persuaded that the Asylum may almost be pronounced perfect. Its local situation amid the beautiful scenery of one of the most interesting landscapes of this part of the country, can scarcely be surpassed: neither can the excellence of its internal arrangement which continues to excite the marked approbation of every new visitant; while the facts already detailed, afford the most satisfactory evidence of the superiority of its management.

In closing this Report of the proceedings of an additional year's management of the Institution, the Directors have sincere pleasure in feeling it to be once more their duty to offer their grateful thanks to the Physician, for the ability, zeal, and indefatigability with which, during that period, he has continued to discharge his important duties; and to the Superintendent and Matron,

for the unceasing vigilance and care, which they have ever displayed. The Directors are also happy to state, that all the other Officers, and Servants of the Institution, have conducted themselves with the utmost propriety.

TABLE FIRST.

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Number of Patients remaining in the Asylum, 11th June, 1832,.....	37	34	71
Number of Patients admitted, from 11th June, 1832, to 10th June, 1833,.....	15	10	25
	52	44	96

TABLE SECOND.

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Cured from 11th June 1832 to 10th June 1833,.....	8	0	8
Removed by Friends,.....	0	5	5
Died,.....	3	0	3
Remaining 10th June 1833,.....	41	39	80
	52	44	96