

Thirteenth annual report of the directors and physician of James Murray's Royal Asylum for Lunatics. 1840.

Contributors

James Murray's Royal Asylum for Lunatics.

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THIRTEENTH

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

DIRECTORS AND PHYSICIAN

OF

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

JUNE 1840.

THE Directors and Physician have now to present to the public the Thirteenth Annual Report of their proceedings. They are happy to be enabled to state that this Institution, which has hitherto been attended with such remarkable success, has, during the last twelve months, continued to prosper. With one exception, consisting of the loss, by death, of another of its warmest and most devoted friends, it is the gratifying duty of the Directors again to bring under the notice of the public the great good which continues to be achieved through its instrumentality.

The time has happily now gone by, when those who were afflicted with insanity were regarded as affected with a malady, which, if it was not presumptuous, it was thought, at least, as hopeless to attempt to cure. Then, the insane were too generally either allowed to wander at large, neglected and uncared for; or, if confined at all, it was not for the purpose of having soothing appliances administered to a "mind diseased," but only because it might have proved dangerous to the community were they permitted to enjoy their liberty. The scourge and the whip were employed to subdue their supposed ungovernable passions and propensities; and thus a class of our unfortunate fellow-creatures, who claim our sincerest sympathy and tenderest care, and whom humanity ought to have exempted from the responsibilities of reasonable creatures, were exposed to severities which could scarcely be justified in the case of the most obstinate criminals. Now, very different views have come to be entertained regarding the diseases of the mind. Equally with those of the body, they are generally traced to some superinducing cause; and means are used for restoration, according to the circumstances, in the one case as well as in the other, and with as great confidence of success. Founded on these views, a system has been introduced for the management of the insane, by

which every comfort which can be desired is afforded to them, and every exertion which human ingenuity can suggest is made for the alleviation of their sufferings and the removal of their maladies. The efficiency of this system will appear from what is immediately to be mentioned.

In last Report, the Directors gave a *vidimus* of the gradual and progressive advancement which this Institution has experienced from its commencement in the encreasing number of its patients. During the last twelve months, they have had occasion to remark that the same improvement has taken place. At the date of the last Report, there remained in the house, 131 patients—consisting of 69 males, and 62 females. Since that time there have been admitted 39 patients—consisting of 17 males, and 22 females. There have been cured, during the past year, no fewer than 24 patients—consisting of 10 males, and 14 females. There have been removed by their friends, more or less recovered, 7 patients—3 males, and 4 females. Four patients have died—2 males, and 2 females; while one male patient has been dismissed by order of the Committee. There thus now remain in the house, 135 patients—71 males, and 64 females. It will thus be seen that, during the past year, the number of cures has been unusually great.

It is particularly gratifying to reflect upon the great good which has thus been accomplished in affording relief, not merely to a most wretched class of society, but in imparting comfort to their afflicted relatives.

The generality of cures in an Asylum do not offer sufficient interest to make the record of them desirable, and other obvious reasons exist for avoiding publicity as to some of the cases. A few of what are considered the most remarkable will only therefore be mentioned. The first case to be noticed, is that of a person who had been insane for 14 years. His malady was brought on by a fright when out herding deer. For years, after coming to the Asylum, he never exchanged words with any one, but walked about moping and dull. His bodily health became weak, and he was emaciated almost to a skeleton. The first symptom of recovery which the Physician observed about him was, that if any children happened to be at the house, he always came up to them, touched them with his hands, laughed, and seemed pleased with them. Time, however, wore on, and still the poor man continued insane. He was unable to work from bodily weakness, but the Physician arranged to have him sent out at the regular hours with the other patients, when he occasionally employed himself in herding the cows, and also in assisting the other men.

His body never became strong or robust, but, by and by, his mind got calm, and finally well, and he was restored to his friends. It is gratifying to be enabled to add, that the Physician, having recently had occasion to pass through that part of the country where this man now resides, heard, with pleasure, that he is in active employment, and much respected by his employers and neighbours.

It is well known that, during the last winter, a considerable degree of excitement existed in Perth and the country around, on what are called revivals of religion. It is foreign to the object of this Report, and the Directors and Physician do not intend to notice the subject of these revivals farther than the same is forced on their attention, as connected with some cases about to be mentioned. Without wishing in any degree to disparage the subject referred to, it is the duty of the Directors to state, that at least the more immediately exciting cause of the derangement of three patients brought to the Asylum was some forcible and alarming appeals to which they had listened under the ministry of a certain preacher. The three patients alluded to, were all melancholic; all deeply impressed with the enormity of their sins, and two of them suicidal.

By a careful attention and judicious management, the whole three gradually improved and

ultimately recovered. They were advised not to expose themselves again to an agency which, before, had operated so prejudicially on their minds. Two of the three attended to what was said, and have hitherto continued well; but the third, on his leaving the hospital, returned to those associations which had induced his malady. His health became disordered; he has imbibed frightful and delusive impressions, and has had a complete relapse. As usual, the second attack is more obstinate than the first; and the Physician entertains faint hopes of being able to do him much good.

The Physician always looks with considerably more distrust of recovery on the case of a person who has been melancholic, with tendency to suicide, than on one who has been furiously insane; and it is only after a lengthened trial of such cases that they can be pronounced safely and completely cured. Unfortunately, it is not often in the power of the Directors to dismiss persons of this description; for, not only are they the worst, and create the greatest anxiety, but they are the least frequent cases of cure. One woman, however, who, for years, had so strong a tendency to suicide that her hands had to be kept in gloves, and herself carefully watched, has happily recovered, and been dismissed cured to her friends. This happened

some months since, and she has since conducted herself well. For nearly a year before her dismissal, she was assisting in the laundry and kitchen of the Asylum, and behaved with great propriety.

As is usual among the admission of persons into an asylum, numbers have brought on the malady by their own intemperate habits, which, being persisted in after many threatenings, induce either idiocy or death. It has already been mentioned that four persons died in the course of last year. Two of those were admitted into the House, *in articulo mortis*, and did not survive many days.

It is indeed extremely interesting to remark the great variety in the characters of the inmates of such an Institution as the present. Scarcely two individuals exhibit the same disposition or eccentricities. One is of a sullen and morose disposition, another is cheerful and happy; one is vindictive and outrageous, another peaceable and humane; one is timorous almost to childishness, while another has the boldness of a lion. It may, therefore, readily be conceived that it requires no little management with materials so discordant to make the whole harmonize in the same prosperous manner which has invariably been the case in this Institution. There are certain rules enforced among the keepers which

tend greatly to accomplish this desideratum,—the leading one of which is, that every patient shall, on all occasions, be his temper, or his disposition, or his follies, or his vices, what they may, be treated with the greatest gentleness and kindness. It is no doubt necessary that all the patients should be taught to regard the keeper as possessing power and authority over them; but this is rather accomplished by a display of firmness and decision, particularly at the beginning, than by any continued system of severity or harshness. And although there are many instances where individuals, especially from the upper ranks of life, are apt to complain of the confinement as an abridgment of their accustomed liberties, there are others who regard the Asylum as a comfortable home, and reckon it a high privilege to be permitted to reside within its walls. At this moment, indeed, there is a patient who regards it so much his interest to remain, that when he commits any slight irregularity, it is only necessary for the Superintendent to threaten to dismiss him to ensure better behaviour for the future. Perhaps a stronger proof that the Institution is not generally regarded with dislike by the patients can scarcely be given than was furnished by the recent conduct of a patient who had left the Institution for some months, but who, upon feeling the

returning approach of her malady, escaped from her friends, and arrived at the Asylum door, imploring admission. Her friends were doubtless very anxious about her departure, and were only relieved when the Superintendent wrote them saying where she had arrived.

The Directors have spared no expense in rendering the Institution as complete as possible; and they are happy to say that, by the extension of the grounds around the Asylum, the most ample scope is now afforded for the employment of the patients, and a powerful auxiliary supplied towards accomplishing the grand object of the Institution. Indeed, in consequence of the condition of certain parts of the grounds, the Directors have found the sphere for employment rather too much for the number of patients fit to be employed; but so soon as the grounds are put into good order, they have no doubt that the number of hands will be quite adequate to keep them in high condition.

Last annual Report contained a just tribute of respect to the memory of Mr. David Beatson of Kirkpottie, who was long the Chairman of this Institution, and the last of the two original Trustees. It is with the deepest regret that the Directors feel themselves called upon to notice the death of Mr. Thomas Beatson, his brother,

and successor in the office of Chairman of the Directors, which happened on the 3d day of April last. Mr. Beatson's amiable character, and his devotedness to the interests of this Institution, were so well known, that it seems unnecessary to do more than to transcribe the motion which was made by Mr. Belshes of Invermay, at the General Meeting of Directors, on the 11th May last, and which was unanimously and cordially concurred in by every gentleman in the Direction. That motion was in the following words :—" Before proceeding to the business for which the present Meeting was called, Mr. Belshes moved, That the Directors do now express their deep regret for the very great loss this Institution has now sustained by the lamented death of their Chairman, Mr. Thomas Beatson. A very short time ago it became the painful duty of the Directors to record their sentiments upon the much-lamented death of Mr. David Beatson, who so long and so honourably filled that situation ; and little did they imagine that they should so soon have been deprived of the services of his brother, who was so deservedly appointed his successor in the Chair of this Institution. It has thus been the will of God, in less than two short years, to deprive the Asylum of two of its earliest and most devoted friends ; and the Directors feel

it due to the character of Mr. Thomas Beatson to record their sense of the ability, zeal, honour, and uprightness, with which he discharged the duties of a Life Director from the commencement of the Institution, and that of Chairman while he acted in that situation. The unassuming nature of his character, his urbanity and kindness, and his true benevolence and Christian charity, endeared him to every one, and will make his memory live long in the remembrances of his friends, and particularly of those more immediately connected with this Institution."

These were the sentiments recorded in the Minutes of the Directors as to this worthy man, and they feel satisfied they will be acquiesced in by the public at large.

Two very opposite opinions have been entertained concerning the nature of insanity, which may be shortly stated in the words of a writer on the subject:—"Some will have it that it is a disease entirely of mind, a disease, not of our *physical*, but of our *moral* constitution. As a proof of this, they adduce the absence of any characteristic phenomena exhibited by post-mortem examinations, as connected with insanity, and bring forward cases where, after death, no alteration in the natural texture of the organ could be discovered. These persons are of opinion that madness is occasioned by such circum-

stances as influence the mind,—joy, grief, care, violent passions, &c., and that it is cured by *moral* treatment suited to the disease of the mind, often, too, without any measures adapted to the physical disorders. Of this opinion the most zealous advocate is Professor Heinroth, who will have it that moral depravity is the essential cause of madness—with him, guilt and sin are its real sources.” In opposition to the opinion now mentioned, it is said that Professor Heinroth’s doctrine is “contradicted by those cases where insanity is observed in persons remarkable for their moral and religious lives. To the advocates of the moral and anti-physical nature of insanity, it may be answered, that every other deviation of the faculties of the mind from their natural state, with which we are acquainted, is admitted to be caused by bodily disease—thus, the delusion of the nightmare, the delirium of fever, different forms of hysteria, are all referable to bodily disorder, and all remediable by medicines affecting the frame.”*

Correct views on the question just stated are evidently of no secondary importance, involving, as it does, the consideration whether the treatment of the insane ought to consist in *moral* or *physical* applications. The Directors avail them-

* Introductory Essay by D. Spillman, M.D., to “A Treatise on the Medical Jurisprudence of Insanity, by J. Ray, M.D.”—1839.

selves of this opportunity to state, that it has been the study of those in the management of this Institution to combine to the utmost of their power both of those descriptions of treatment, and they have found from experience that this is attended with the happiest effects. They have already alluded to the arrangements made for the physical amelioration of the patients, by the extension of the grounds around the Asylum, by which ample scope is afforded for their employment, and they may now refer, in one word, to what has been done for their moral training.

The Directors have to express their continued approval of the appointment of a Chaplain to the Institution. The worship of God is now regularly observed every Sabbath within the Asylum, and all those patients whose maladies will admit of it, have the privilege of attending the Chapel. The number who do constantly attend, and the seriousness and fervour with which they join in the praise of God, sufficiently indicate that this exercise must be attended with the happiest consequences.

In conclusion, the Directors have to vote their warmest thanks to their able Physician for the skill, vigilance, and activity he has devoted to the patients and the general management of the Institution during the past year, as well as to Dr. Pierides, the House Surgeon, for the active

and zealous manner in which he has co-operated with the Physician, and to the Superintendent and Matron for the faithful and correct discharge of their duties.

TABLE FIRST.

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Number of Patients remaining in the Asylum, 11th June 1839.....	69	62	131
Number admitted from 11th June 1839, to 8th June 1840.....	17	22	39

TABLE SECOND.

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Cured from 11th June 1839 to 8th June 1840.....	10	14	24
Removed by their friends.....	3	4	7
Died.....	2	2	4
Dismissed by order of Committee.....	1	0	1
Remaining 8th June 1840.....	71	64	135