

**Twentieth annual report of the directors of James Murray's Royal Asylum for Lunatics. June, 1847.**

**Contributors**

James Murray's Royal Asylum for Lunatics.

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

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JUNE, 1847.  
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PERTH:  
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# R E P O R T.

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JUNE, 1847.

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THE time having arrived for the Directors of this Institution to present their Annual Report, they have much pleasure in announcing, not only its continuing, but also its increasing prosperity and usefulness. The fact that this is now the Twentieth Annual Report, while it shows that the Asylum has passed safely through the testing stages of its infancy and childhood, encourages also the belief that its utility is fixed upon a sure foundation, that of a well-tried and approved system of management.

So far as the ordinary internal management and working of the Institution is concerned, nothing of a very special kind has occurred during the past year. The same general system of treatment continues to be pursued, and with the same beneficial results as heretofore.

By the Annual Report for 1846, the total number of patients then stated to be in the House was 151—88 males and 63 females. At present there are in the House 160 patients—90 males and 70 females.

The accommodation for the poorer class of patients is now fully occupied, so that room for subsequent admissions can only be found by the occasional removals and dismissals occurring amongst the present inmates; and it may probably soon become necessary



to consider the propriety of annexing another wing or addition to the present building. The high price of labour, however, at present, renders it proper to postpone the prosecution of such a work, even were it ascertained that the state of the funds of the Institution would admit of it.

The number of cures during the past year is 17, which is rather a small proportion to the number of admissions—44. This the Physician can only attribute to the fact, that very few of the persons admitted were recently affected, but almost all had been so for a considerable time before admission.

The Physician has frequently mentioned in his reports the injury done to insane persons by the injudicious postponement of friends and relatives in applying, on their behalf, for admission into an asylum, and who, in place of this, from misdirected and false affection, continue to have them treated at home so long, that the disease becomes worse, and, from the lapse of time, frequently incurable. Further experience on this point, it appears, more strongly shows the Physician that this evil is rather on the increase than otherwise; and that it is very difficult to persuade those connected with the insane of the propriety and necessity of sending them timeously to an asylum where the means of cure are known and practised, and where, from the structure of the house, and the appliances at hand, less harshness or restraint is made use of, because less is required, than in a private dwelling-house, where, from its construction and ordinary management, the many risks render excessive precaution and coercion necessary. But this is not all. The sight of accustomed objects and intercourse with the person's own family or servants, in many cases, keep up irritation and delusion; and the very time thus lost often renders the complaint chronic, and consequently more difficult of cure.

It is very satisfactory to know, that many of the cures which have occurred in this Asylum promise to be permanent, and that



many persons who were once inmates of this House may now be seen occupied and employed in the business of the world, and discharging all the relative duties of life like other persons.

The Physician encourages his former patients to call upon him frequently, and especially if they have any premonitory symptoms of their malady recurring. By this means he has it in his power to watch the effect of their first entry into the bustle of society; and should they become any way unsettled, by timely advice, and the administration of proper remedies, to avert, as far as possible, the threatened relapse.

The removals during the past year have been 12 in number, and these have proceeded from various causes—all of a private nature. Several of the patients so taken out were incurable—indeed, almost the whole. They have, however, acquired habits of order and regularity whilst in the Asylum which must render them more easily managed in the localities to which they have gone.

The deaths during the past year have been 9. The first patient who was admitted into the Asylum at the opening of the House, and who thus spent twenty years of his life within its walls, died during the currency of the past year at the advanced age of 85. Another man died aged 70, another aged 68, one 57, and the others all considerably above 40. One woman came into the House moribund, and one man died of consumption at the age of 45.

The advantages of a well-conducted Asylum for the insane are not to be estimated merely by the amount of cures which it effects; for it confers other benefits both on the insane themselves, and on society at large, scarcely less valuable. When, for example, the father or mother of a family unhappily becomes affected with a disordered mind, it is of the greatest consequence, however painful the separation, to have the parent removed, for a season at least, from the family circle, where his presence, while it must harrow the feelings of all who behold him, and render home the abode of



gloom, might also endanger the health or even the sanity of the other inmates ; and this all the more from the very circumstance of the relationship which exists between them. The same observation holds true where the party affected is one of the children of a family. Unless a separation takes place, prejudicial effects in many cases at least are likely to follow.

But the benefits secured to the insane themselves are very many. Within the walls of an Asylum there are many patients who enjoy, comparatively speaking, much happiness, peace of mind, and occasional exemptions from their peculiar delusions, who, if exposed to the bustle of society, and left without proper restraint, and the comforts arising from good food, and a quiet home, would wander through the community inflicting terror and anxiety on others, and enduring intensest misery themselves. There are patients at present in the House of whom this is true. There is one man, for example, who enjoys good health, is quiet and respectful, and makes himself serviceable within the Asylum, and who evidently enjoys, in a great measure, an exemption from his peculiar mental trouble, who, if sent abroad on the face of society, would be the most miserable of human beings, and would, in all probability, terminate his existence by suicide. This individual, when out of the Asylum, is haunted with the feeling that he is to die for want of food, and this induces such mental misery that life becomes an intolerable burden ; but while in the Asylum, this delusion is dissipated, from the persuasion that his wants will be supplied—and hence the happiness he at present enjoys, compared to the suffering which would inevitably be experienced on dismissal. What has already been stated is further corroborated in the case of those patients who, after experiencing the advantages of a quiet and soothing retreat from the world, and having recovered, on feeling the premonitory symptoms of a relapse, of their own accord, entreat to be re-admitted within the walls of the Asylum.



As in bodily so in mental disorders, suitable occupation, amusement, and exercise are of incalculable benefit as restoratives. In the Report of the Metropolitan Commissioners for 1844, it is remarked, that "there is no difference of opinion as to the importance of occupation in insanity; improving the bodily condition, and diverting the mind from painful or delusive trains of thought. In most instances it is desirable that the patient should be enabled to follow the occupation to which he has been accustomed, or if he has not been brought up to any regular pursuit, that he should be instructed in one, to engage his attention. Gardening and agricultural labour should be provided, as they combine employment with out-door exercise; but as regards Pauper Lunatics, their health should be the sole consideration, and not the profits of their labour; and thus moderate labour, only to strengthen and not to fatigue the body, is desirable, and such as will afford amusement without harassing the mind. A farm and extensive garden should be attached to every large Asylum. Music, dancing, and games (especially in the open air) are useful, except where the patient is too excitable; and books are important helps in promoting a serene and happy state of mind, and especially those of a cheerful kind where the patient is melancholy. . . . 'By amusing books (as Bishop Butler says) time even in solitude is happily got rid of without the pain of attention.' This, though it may be an objection to the inordinate use of amusing books by the healthy, is an argument in their favour for the insane, who are incapable of much attention, but who need some amusing occupation which requires no great mental effort." Nothing can be more true than this; and, happily, the garden and beautiful grounds connected with our own Institution afford ample scope for carrying out these views so far as out-door amusement and exercise is concerned; and in reference to the use of books, every encouragement is given, and facility afforded, to those who show any desire or taste for reading. Several of the patients, who are



tradesmen, work at their trades; but the Physician is rather disposed to employ them in some way to which they have not been accustomed, as more likely to induce a healthy state of mind, and by introducing a new train of ideas, to break the morbid chain of thought to which the patient is habitually subject. Besides other means of amusement, there are occasional meetings in the evenings for music, singing, and dancing, where the Patients, of both sexes, meet and enjoy themselves for two or three hours with a hilarity and buoyancy of spirit which it is most pleasing to behold.

The Directors, while humbly submitting to the Divine will, do at the same time deeply regret that it has fallen to their lot, in recording the history of the Institution for the past year, to notice an event of a painfully afflictive character, namely, the demise of Alexander Mackenzie, Esq. their late much-respected and efficient Secretary. Although his death was noticed at the last quarterly meeting, it will not be deemed improper in this, the Annual Report of its proceedings, again to record that event; and they cannot do so more appropriately than in the terms employed at the meeting referred to, as stated in the minutes:—"On the motion of Mr. Belshes of Invermay, seconded by Mr. Smythe of Methven, the Directors, at this their first quarterly meeting after the melancholy and sudden death of Alexander Mackenzie, Esq. their respected and lamented Secretary, deem it their duty to enter on record an expression of their deep feeling of the very great respect they ever entertained for his long, talented, and unwearied exertions for the Institution in which he filled the onerous office of Secretary. They feel assured that not a little of the excellent management and success of the Institution is justly attributable to the superior business habits and patient attention he uniformly brought to the discharge of the various duties of his office. The Directors feel assured that they have personally lost a faithful friend and able counsellor, and that the Institution has been deprived of a most efficient officer. He was



perhaps the last of the Board of original managers of the Establishment, and who, until their deaths, ceased not to take a lively interest in its success."

In conclusion, it affords the Directors sincere satisfaction to know, and to report, that the different officers of the Institution have, during the past year, discharged their respective duties with zeal, fidelity, and attention; and they trust that the reputation which the Establishment has already obtained, will, through their exertions and the Divine blessing, continue to be maintained for the future.

TABLE I.

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Number of Patients remaining in the Asylum 8th June, 1846, .....	88	63	151
Number admitted from 8th June, 1846, to 14th June, 1847, .....	20	27	47

TABLE II.

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Cured from 8th June, 1846, to 14th June, 1847, .....	5	12	17
Removed by their friends, .....	5	7	12
Died, .....	6	3	9
Remaining 14th June, 1847, .....	90	70	160



# LIST OF OFFICE-BEARERS,

1847-8.

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WILLIAM PEDDIE, Esq. of BLACKRUTHVEN, *Chairman.*

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## DIRECTORS.

### I.--EX-OFFICIO.

The Right Honourable the EARL of KINNOULL, Lord-Lieutenant of the County of Perth.

ROBERT WHIGHAM, Esq. Sheriff of the County of Perth.

HUGH BARCLAY, Esq. Sheriff-Substitute of the County of Perth.

CHARLES G. SIDEY, Esq. Lord Provost of the City of Perth.

ROBERT SANGSTER, Esq. Dean of Guild of said City.

ROBERT GREIG, Esq. First Bailie of said City.

JAMES M. PATTON Esq. President of the Society of Procurators.

ALEXANDER FRASER, Esq. Convener of the Trades of Perth.

The Rev. JOHN MURDOCH, Minister of the Middle Church, Perth.

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ALEXANDER H. M. BELSHES, Esq. of Invermay.

ROBERT SMYTHE, Esq. of Methven.

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### III.--ANNUAL DIRECTORS.

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DAVID L. JOLLY, Esq. Banker, Perth.

DAVID BOYTER, Esq. M.D. Kinnoull Cottage.

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J. B. BELL, Esq. of Glenfarg.

Dr. F. THOMSON, Crescent, Perth.

JOHN CONNING, Esq. Writer, Perth.

ALEXANDER STODDART, Esq. of Ballendrick.

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WILLIAM MALCOM, Esq. M.D. *Physician.*

Dr. PAUL PIERIDES, *Surgeon.*

Mr. WILLIAM GLOAG, Commercial Bank, Perth, *Treasurer.*

Mr. DAVID MACKENZIE, Writer, Perth, *Secretary.*

The Rev. JOHN BELL, *Chaplain.*

Mr. CHARLES WALSH, *Superintendent.*

Mrs. WALSH, *Matron.*

Miss SHAW, *Housekeeper.*