

Eighth annual report of the directors and physician of James Murray's Royal Asylum for Lunatics. 1835.

Contributors

James Murray's Royal Asylum for Lunatics.

Publication/Creation

Perth : Printed by order of the directors by Whitett and Cumming, 1835.

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/e6j4xfvx>

License and attribution

This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights and is being made available under the Creative Commons, Public Domain Mark.

You can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission.



Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

8

EIGHTH

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

DIRECTORS AND PHYSICIAN

OF

JAMES MURRAY'S

ROYAL

ASYLUM FOR LUNATICS.

1835.

PERTH :
PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE DIRECTORS,
BY WHITETT AND CUMMING.

MDCCCXXXV.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2018 with funding from
Wellcome Library

EIGHTH ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
DIRECTORS AND PHYSICIAN
OF
JAMES MURRAY'S
ROYAL ASYLUM FOR LUNATICS,
JUNE, 1835.

TO the Directors and Physician of this Asylum, it has been a source of much satisfaction to announce, from year to year, the success which has attended the Institution, and the great benefits which it has conferred upon the community. On the present occasion, they are happy to say every thing connected with the Establishment continues to prosper ; and, in the course of the past year, arrangements have been made for rendering it still more extensively useful.

From the Table annexed to this Report, it will be seen, that, in the course of the past year, there have been admitted to the Asylum 20 patients—nine males

and eleven females, and that the total number under treatment in the course of the year has been 109. Of these, eleven have been cured, eight have been removed by their friends, more or less benefited, and one has died. There now remain in the house 90 patients—46 males and 44 females. From this account, it will be observed, that the number of admissions during the year which has just closed, has been less than in former years; but this has arisen from the inability of the Directors to afford additional accommodation, although this inconvenience is now about to be removed by the erection of a large and elegant addition to the building, sufficient for the admission of a number of additional patients, and affording appropriate accommodation for certain classes, whose maladies are of such a nature as to render it advisable to keep them apart, and for whom suitable arrangements had not formerly been made. This addition is now nearly ready for reception of patients.

With regard to the number of cures, it will be found that they exceed those of last year, and, as they bear a proportion of more than one-half of the whole number admitted, the result must be regarded as in every view highly satisfactory. Nor should it be

forgotten, that vast relief has been afforded to many patients who are not ranked in the list of cures, but who have been, more or less, improved and restored to tranquillity and comfort, from the kind and tender treatment which they have received within the walls of this well regulated Institution.

There was nothing very remarkable in the cases of those patients who were dismissed cured during the past year. One of them was a man, who suddenly became extremely jealous of his wife, without any apparent cause, as her conduct had always been irreproachable. For some time, he made her life quite miserable, and treated her in the most brutal manner. At length, he became quite furious, and committed the greatest excesses, so that no doubt remained of his insanity. He was then sent to the Asylum, and, by proper treatment, he was restored to the possession of his faculties within the short period of eight months. Cases of this description are not of unfrequent occurrence, and they exemplify, in the most striking manner, the advantages which flow from early treatment. Another patient suffered from religious melancholy, with a strong determination to commit suicide. He attempted to destroy himself by leaping out of a win-

dow, from a great height, but was fortunately prevented by his friends. On being brought to the Asylum, he exhibited symptoms of the most gloomy despondency, and almost constantly exclaimed that there was no hope for him in the next world; at other times, he was exceedingly furious—and frequently attempted to assault his keeper—so that it became necessary to place him under temporary restraint. After a time, he was induced to engage in some employment about the house and grounds, in company with one of the keepers, and, for a considerable period, no change appeared; but, at length, his distemper gradually yielded, and he was restored to the complete possession of his reason.

Insanity exhibits itself in forms infinitely diversified. There are several patients, now in the Asylum, who labour under religious despondency, and have their minds filled with the most fantastic ideas. One of the patients imagines himself a skeleton. This man affords a striking instance of the cunning which has frequently been remarked to be a concomitant of insanity. He had attempted to kill his brother and sister, and nearly succeeded in killing his mother; and he had been about three years, in a state of con-

firmed lunacy, before he was brought to the Asylum. On his arrival, he appeared a furious maniac ; and the Superintendent, on making the usual examination, found concealed about his person two watches, which he had contrived to secrete, unknown to his friends, although they had looked after him with the utmost vigilance.

One of the cases treated during the last year, offered to the Physician an opportunity of applying a mixture of medical and moral treatment, which happily proved successful. The subject of it was a poor young lad of about eighteen years of age, who had received the advantage of a religious education ; but, having lapsed from the paths of virtue, he suffered bitter remorse, and, in the end, his mind gave way under the pressure. When brought to the Asylum, he was exceedingly high and noisy—subject to occasional flushings, and raving indifferently on various subjects, but chiefly on his sins. Being seemingly pre-disposed to commit suicide, he was placed under a medical regimen, and a strict watch kept over all his actions. Notwithstanding every attention was paid to him, he was long in the House before any signs of amendment became apparent—subject to

violent rushings of blood to the head—on the occurrence of which he had every appearance of verging towards a state of idiocy. He began slowly, and at long intervals, to exhibit symptoms of improvement, and advantage was taken of those occasions to get him to work and amuse himself about the grounds. He thereupon, gradually and completely, recovered, and has been seen frequently, since his dismissal, earning his livelihood by his own industry.

The daughter of an insane mother, when brought to the Asylum, appeared to be dying. She was thin and emaciated, to the degree of her bones cutting the skin. Her mind seemed gone. Although she swallowed food when it was given to her, she never asked for any—was insensible to the calls of nature—and did not seem sensible of any word that was spoken to her. By the end of six months, she recovered completely; became a stout, plump, good-looking young woman, and a most neat-handed, excellent working servant. She is now employed at service, where her attention and diligence give great satisfaction to her employers.

In almost all the cases that have been treated in the Asylum, it has been found, that, after medicine has

done its part, by subduing violence, and partially restoring reason, manual labour is the best mode of perfecting a cure ; and it is supposed that this operates by restoring the general health, and producing that state of body which creates appetite, and causes sleep, and induces the retaining, or restoring, the *mens sana in corpore sano*.

Having enumerated such of the occurrences of the past year as seem deserving of notice in this shape, it seems proper to advert to a rather peculiar form of insanity, or *mono-mania*, which made its appearance in one of the patients in the Asylum. This is the case of a gentleman, who applied to the Physician, some months ago, stating, that he was anxious to be sent to the Asylum, because he was apprehensive that he was becoming mad. Upon being asked what were the prominent symptoms of his malady, he answered, that they hinged very much on religious subjects, of which he had taken a gloomy view, and, to such an extent, that he considered the enormity of his sins would preclude him from any chance of salvation. He admitted that he had entertained thoughts of suicide ; and, that the feeling was occasionally so strong, that he experienced great difficulty in resisting the propensity.

As on all other topics he appeared sensible, he was advised to make every exertion to conquer this feeling; to go into company; and subject himself to a course of laxitive medicine. Upon this, he looked anxiously in the Physician's face, and said, "Will you not order me into the Asylum after what I have told you?" The Physician informed him, that this could not be done without an application by his friends to the Directors, in the usual manner, who would thereupon determine on his case. Upon this he said, "I have something besides to tell you, which may induce you to give an order for my immediate admission. I have, also, an unconquerable wish to commit murder; and no sooner do I see any one near me, if I also see a lethal weapon, than I wish to murder them." He admitted, that he had no ill-will to any particular person, or to young rather than to old people, but that it was an universal feeling, and he shuddered when he thought of it. He left the Physician, at this time, but, in the course of five or six weeks afterwards, he was brought by his friends to the Asylum, where he now is. This patient is very fearful of his state of health—thinks himself very weak, and still entertains the same gloomy views of religion which he had at first. He has been informed that he is likely to get better, and

he has confidence that he shall. There has been no recurrence of his propensity to suicide; and he has even gone so far as to promise to inform the Physician, if he should, at any time, experience any recurrence.

The grand and fundamental principle on which the Asylum has been conducted, is a strict adherence to a mild and humane system of treatment. No coercion is ever employed, except in cases of violent *mania*, where the patient, if left at liberty, would infallibly do mischief to himself or to others. All the keepers are enjoined to treat the patients with the utmost kindness and attention. This system, aided by cleanliness, nourishing and wholesome food, with abundance of exercise in the open air, has been found to be productive of the most beneficial consequences. The cures which have been effected since the Asylum was opened, afford the most satisfactory proof of this fact, and encourage the Directors to persevere in the same plan.

Nothing tends, more remarkably, to promote the recovery of the patients, than out-door work; and all of the patients are encouraged to engage in it who are at all able. The success of this system is abun-

dantly manifest. One of the patients, who was formerly a labourer, is frequently heard to congratulate himself upon getting into so good a situation. He states that the Asylum is a capital place—that he has no trouble in seeking employment, as Mr SIMMONDS, the Superintendent, always provides something to do. Formerly, he says, he had much trouble “seeking a job,” but now the case is quite different. This individual walks in the morning with the cows to Muirhall, in the neighbourhood, and brings them back in the evening; and the best proof that he likes his present abode is afforded by the fact, that the Superintendent is in the habit, on occasion of any fault, of threatening to dismiss him, which is sure to produce amendment.

In reference to the great chance of recovery of the patients by employing them at out-door work, the Directors have entertained a suggestion of the Physician, of extending the grounds of the Asylum. Their main object, in the management of the Institution, is, to do every thing to improve its eligibility as a receptacle for patients, and thus render it more useful and beneficial to the distressed, and to the community at large. There are, within the walls of the Institution, twelve

imperial acres of ground ; but, as a considerable proportion of this extent is covered with buildings and airing yards, not more than about eight acres are left for gardening, and agricultural purposes. Seldom are there fewer than from twenty-two to twenty-eight patients, who are constantly employed on the grounds, which it requires no small degree of ingenuity to torture—if the term may be used—into forms of usefulness, for the occupation of these patients, from one year's end to another. The expression, “ forms of usefulness,” has been used, because the insane are perfectly alive to the difference between *useful* and *useless* labour, and would feel hurt and affronted, at being put to work at any thing, the use of which they could neither see nor value.

Before concluding their Report, the Directors feel it to be their duty to state, that they have been highly satisfied with the conduct of all the Office-bearers during the past year ; and they have felt it incumbent upon them to return their warmest thanks to the Physician, for the ability and attention with which he has discharged his important trust, and to the Superintendent and Matron, for the zeal and vigilance which they have always exerted in the execution of their

arduous duties. This is the first occasion on which they have had to notice the services of the Matron, and the Directors have sincere pleasure in stating, that during the short time she has filled the situation, her conduct has been every thing that could be desired.

TABLE FIRST.

	MALES.	FEMALES.	TOTAL.
Number of Patients remaining in the Asylum on 9th June, 1834.....	49	40	89
Number of Patients admitted from 9th June, 1834, to 8th June, 1835.....	9	11	20
	58	51	109

TABLE SECOND.

	MALES.	FEMALES.	TOTAL.
Cured from 9th June, 1834, to 8th June, 1835.....	8	3	11
Removed by their Friends.....	3	4	7
Died.....	1	0	1
Remaining 8th June, 1835.....	46	44	90
	58	51	109