

Ninth annual report of the directors and physician of James Murray's Royal Asylum for Lunatics. 1836.

Contributors

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NINTH

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

DIRECTORS AND PHYSICIAN

OF

JAMES MURRAY'S

Royal

ASYLUM FOR LUNATICS.

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Royal Asylum for Lunatics.

JUNE 1836.

IN COMPLIANCE with the established custom, the Directors and Physician of this Asylum have now to submit to the public a brief report of their proceedings during the past year.

They are happy to say that the Institution continues in every respect as successful and prosperous as heretofore, and that various improvements have been recently introduced, which are calculated, in a very material degree, to extend its usefulness, and increase the benefits, which it has already conferred on the community.

Of late years, the Directors have had occasion to lament that suitable arrangements were not made in the Asylum to accommodate a class of patients whose maladies are of such a nature as to render it advisable to keep them apart, viz. Epileptics and Idiots; and, while it must be confessed that doubts were entertained how far this fell within the intention of Mr. Murray, the testator, they felt satisfied that the Institution could never be deemed complete until such accommodation was provided. Happily, this inconvenience has now been removed, by the erection of an extensive addition to the building, sufficient for the reception of patients of this description, who are unfortunately now very numerous. By this new erection, the Asylum has been rendered complete in every department.

In consequence of the increase in the number of patients, arising from the extension of the building, the Directors have deemed it advisable to secure the assistance of a respectable and skilful Surgeon, to reside in the Asylum. This arrangement the Directors deemed absolutely necessary, from the new description of patients who are now accommodated in the building.

For some years past, the only supply of water to the Asylum has been from a well situated at the north-west extremity of the grounds, and by means of a force pump; but it will be readily conceived that such a supply of water was altogether inadequate to the wants of the increased number of patients, and particularly of that unfortunate class who require an almost constant flow of pure water. In the course of the last year, however, the Directors constructed within the grounds an extensive reservoir, which is calculated to contain 100,000 gallons of water, from which an abundant supply of pure water can at all times be procured; than which nothing can be more conducive to the health, cleanliness, and comfort of the patients. The digging of this reservoir furnished labour for a considerable number of patients. While the work was in progress, the patients, under the directions of the Superintendent, formed, within the grounds of the Asylum, a curling pond, which promises to afford a source of amusement and gratification to them, at a season of the year when they are prevented, by the inclemency of the weather, from being employed at out-door work, and when it is therefore of essential importance to devise some means of engaging them in healthy recreation. For it is an

observation which cannot be too frequently repeated, that nothing contributes more to the general health and recovery of the patients than out-door work, and active and agreeable exercises in the open air.

From the Table subjoined to this Report, it appears that thirty-two patients have been admitted during the past year—seventeen males and fifteen females; and that the total number under treatment in the course of the year has been one hundred and twenty-two. Of these, thirteen have been cured; six have been removed by their friends, more or less benefited; and three have died. There now remain in the house one hundred patients—fifty-three males, and forty-seven females. From this account it will be noticed that the number of admissions during the year which has just closed has exceeded that of the year preceding by upwards of one-third, and there is little doubt, that, now that the addition to the Asylum is completed, the number of admissions will increase still farther.

The number of cures, it will be seen, exceed those of last year; and, when there is added to this number such of those removed by their friends as have proved

convalescent, the result must be regarded as eminently satisfactory. With regard to the deaths, it is scarcely necessary to observe, that, in such an institution, individuals required to be admitted in every state and condition; and it so happened, that during the past year, in most instances, the deaths happened in the case of individuals with whom no other result could have been anticipated at their admission to the Asylum.

The Directors have now had repeated opportunities of explaining to the public the nature of their management, and the system pursued at this Asylum; but they feel assured, from the success which has attended that system, that a short recapitulation of it will not be deemed either tiresome or out of place.

The treatment of the Patients is founded on a system of uniform kindness and tenderness, with which no deed or action of theirs is permitted to interfere; and this system, which has been found so eminently successful elsewhere, is equally beneficial here. The whole of the rules which have been promulgated by the Directors have had this in view as a primary object, and they have had the happiness to be assured by

the Physician, that their views have been faithfully carried into practice.

The separation of patients from their friends has been found to operate favourably, from several causes which more immediately tend to promote a cure among the insane. Among these may be mentioned, that the necessity which even the most insane feel of controlling themselves in the presence of strangers is a first and most important step towards breaking the chain of morbid ideas engendered in their minds. They come to think of what brought them to such a place among strangers—they become more anxious on the subject of their immediate relations and friends—their health—the reason for leaving them there—and the system by which they find that they are under special direction in all they do. This gives a turn to their thoughts, and a check to their former proceedings; when surrounded by their friends and servants, their most ridiculous whims and fancies were complied with readily, or, at farthest, after a feeble attempt at contradiction, which rather served to irritate than to calm. The experience of all those who have had anything to do with the treatment of the insane, proves that the association of invalids, under similar

circumstances of removal from their connections, and ordinary occupations, is a most important instrument of cure, and this is a fact, which, although well established, yet speculative reasoning could scarcely have anticipated. Once, however, clearly ascertained, it may admit of explanation, and, from the unfortunate prevalence of the malady, the inquiry is most important. In partial insanity, which is the usual form of mental derangement in the chronic stage, the judgment is mostly unimpaired on subjects not connected with the prevailing illusion; and the feelings, at the same time, instead of becoming obtuse, are more frequently excited, and rendered highly acute. From this it follows, that where numbers are associated together, each individual soon becomes aware of the errors of others, however slow to suspect his own; and this discovery, which, among the *sane* is too apt to call forth supercilious contempt, seems, in a community of the *insane*, only to awaken feelings of indulgence and commiseration. In many cases, the delicacy observed towards each other is such as will only be credited by those who have witnessed it. Now, while this kindness tends, on the one hand, to soothe the irritation of the invalid, the continual

observation of each others illusions has a tendency to awaken in the mind of each a doubt regarding the soundness of his own views ; for, notwithstanding the delicacy shown to himself, he cannot fail to perceive that his own notions on certain points are esteemed erroneous by those around him. This doubt, if once raised, naturally leads to self-examination, and this, if preceded by a restoration of the bodily organs to a healthful state of feeling and action, often terminates in conviction, and proves the first step to convalescence. To effect this return to a healthful state of feeling, requires, however, the combined influence of physical and moral treatment—the physical, requiring knowledge and experience in the Physician—and the moral, uninterrupted kindness and discretion in the other attendants. The moral treatment demands, first, entire seclusion from relatives and friends ; thus breaking through former trains of thought and feeling ; then perfect acquaintance, in the Physician, with the character, temper, and disposition of each individual, which can only be gained by close attention with the opportunities which an Asylum affords. To this must be added constant occupation or amusement of the patient, to prevent his mind from dwelling on its own

morbid impressions. The good effects of the association of the insane occur frequently—indeed it may almost be said, daily. For instance, a man is brought to the Asylum, who, being in reality a poor man, fancies himself possessed of great riches, nay, even that he is a king. On coming to associate with the other patients in the house, he finds one who imagines himself to be God—another, that he is Jesus Christ; he instantly sees the hallucination of these two, and gradually coming to make a self-examination into his own claims to Royalty, finds out the absurdity of his own imaginations, renounces his error, and, if his bodily health has been recovering, his mind gets quit of the fancies which possessed it, and the man is well.

Seclusion from the world and from those scenes familiar to the individual, at once removes him from various causes of irritation, throws him on his own resources, makes him feel his utter helplessness, and disposes him to think on the circumstances, and review the events which brought him to an Asylum. Those, by giving a new stimulus to the mind, operate favourably on the insane. The desire which they almost all feel to return to the bosom of their family, and the society of their friends, is another advantage gained from

seclusion ; for this desire will in many occupy the mind, often to the exclusion of their own heated and fantastic thoughts, and hastens their cure very much ; indeed, the Physician of this Institution has known many instances where this desire, amounting in the individual to that disease described by Nosologists under the name of Nostalgia, has seemed to impair the appetite, prevent sleep, and bring on a general drooping of the whole frame of the man, and he has found it necessary to bring the family or friends of the person to visit him before he could convince him they were alive. He has always taken advantage of this feeling to assist him in the cure, by saying, that, as soon as he was well enough, he would be permitted to return to them,—has pointed out to him the course which he ought to follow, in order to attain this, to him, so much desired consummation, and he has always seen that they were thenceforward most obedient patients, and many of them have recovered.

The Directors and Physician will briefly recapitulate some of the circumstances connected with those patients who have been cured, and shall begin with the case of a woman. She was alarmed one night, when in bed and fast asleep, by the cry of murder and

fire proceeding from a house of bad fame, in the street opposite to the room in which she slept. She got up and opened the window, when she saw a number of men and women fighting together in the street; perhaps she may have caught some cold at this time, for, on returning to bed, she felt feverish and sleepless, and was generally unwell, without anything in particular being the matter with her. Shortly thereafter, her husband was seized with rheumatic fever, and, after suffering a good deal, he was removed to the hospital for the benefit of being more immediately under the eye of the Surgeon. At this time, many neighbours were dying, and this poor woman, in anxiety for her husband, fancied that every funeral which took place was his. She became irritable, ill-used her children, of whom in her usual health she was very fond, and finally became outrageously insane. On her admission to the asylum, she had not one sane idea; at one time asserting that her husband or children were dead,—that she had been the cause of their death, and at others saying that she herself was dead, and that she was now sent to expiate those sins which she had committed in the body—with various other notions of the same sort. Her bodily health was bad; sleep had left her, and she ate little or

nothing ; her bowels were confined. The first efforts of the Physician were in connection with her bodily health, which, under the careful and mild treatment she experienced, partially recovered. She still raved of her husband and family ; he was now luckily so much better as to be able to walk the distance of the Asylum, and was sent up to her, along with her children. This wrought like a miracle. She at once confessed that she was wrong in her notions, and that she was aware she had been insane, or, as she expressed it, "out of her mind," and, in three weeks from her admission, she was dismissed cured.

The person of whom mention is made in pages 9 and 10 of last year's Report, and whose malady was accompanied with some symptoms which were considered strange and peculiar, was removed by his friends cured. He had given up all thoughts of either suicide or murder, but, in the opinion of the Physician, he was still peculiar in his mode of thinking. This, however, it was said, was his natural manner, and that even when a boy he was eccentric.

The next case was that of a man who was brought here, his friends fearing that he would commit suicide,

at which he had made two or three attempts. He was very melancholy and dull, often in tears, and walked about with his eyes fixed on the ground. This was for the loss of his sweetheart who had died, and whose image was never absent from him night or day. He was perfectly aware of the nature of his disease, and anxious for its removal—was most obedient to any orders given, and willingly adopted any suggestion which might be made for his recovery. He got quite well, wrote from the Asylum to procure work for himself, and stayed till he received an answer favourable to his views.

Another patient had got imbued with many of the doctrines of a class of enthusiasts who have been making a great noise in the world of late, and became at last insane. He was exceedingly violent, striking at all who came within his reach, tearing his clothes with his teeth after his hands were tied, and walking about with a scowl of hatred at all who approached him. The Physician, indeed, did not know that he ever saw a more inveterate case of mania, or one which, from the obstinacy of its symptoms, and the length of its duration, seemed less likely to offer any hopes of a cure. For many months he certainly had no expec-

tation of such a termination to it, and, indeed, it was some time before he could believe the amendment to be real. He wrote to the patient's friends about it, and they came over to see him. He was afraid, however, of exciting him, and therefore had them taken to a place where they could hear him converse, and observe his actions and mode of behaviour in this (to him) new character, without his being aware that any one was watching him. They were much pleased with his manner, which they said was his natural manner. He was then got to write to his mother and ask her to answer him, and thus was gradually accustomed to the world and its bustle. He then became so well that his mother visited him, and finding him perfectly sane, took him away with her.

The next case was that of a lady who had been insane for more than a year before she was sent to this Asylum, and had been treated for the disease at home. Her malady ran on the treachery of her relations, who, she supposed, had cheated her out of her money and property. She was restless, dissatisfied, and very incoherent on every point, and, at one time, had every appearance of becoming idiotical; indeed, the Physician had given up all hopes of ever seeing

her well. At the end of about two years, after she became an inmate of the Asylum, a brother, who had been abroad for twenty-two years, came here and visited her. The effect of this unexpected sight of one whom she had not seen for so many years operated upon her in a most extraordinary manner. Her mind at once became tranquil, she was rational, conversed on every subject in a most consistent manner, dressed herself well, and evinced, by her words and actions, that some great change had taken place in her whole frame. She continued thus for a whole fortnight, when she again experienced a return of her old symptoms. She was then got to write to her brother, and he answered her letter, and, encouraging this correspondence, her faculties seemed again to recover. Finally, she got well, and was taken away by her friends, with whom she has resided ever since.

The Physician considered this recovery an extraordinary one. It was certainly unlooked for by him, as he had considered the mind entirely gone for some time. She remembered every thing that had been done for her from the time she came to the

Asylum, and every word that had been spoken to her.

The next was the case of a man who, without any known cause, cut his throat one day, but fortunately not so effectually as to cause death. The wound was dressed by a medical gentleman in the neighbourhood, and he was brought to the Asylum. He shortly recovered, without any bad symptom, under the usual treatment, and, what is remarkable, could never give any account of, or any reason for, the deed he had done. He was easy in his circumstances, had met with no slight from man or woman, and his employer was well pleased with him. All the account he could ever give was, that he had been impelled by some irresistible impulse, which had tempted him to what he had done.

The next case was that of a lady who lost a relation for whom she had a great affection; and, some friends not behaving so well as she wished, she became gloomy and distressed, and then lost her reason. She had false and perverted views of religion. Her friends tried what could be done for her, for

some months before they could make up their minds to send her to an asylum, of which they had a great horror, but she became so unmanageable that they were at last compelled to overcome their scruples. The good effects of this last resource were soon apparent, for in a few weeks she got perfectly well, and went home. This was a case where the love of home and children contributed greatly to promote a cure.

It has been stated that six patients were removed from the Asylum. They were all incurables excepting one, and were removed from pecuniary considerations. One lady was taken away because her friends were leaving this part of the country. The Physician regretted the removal of the sixth, (a woman,) as he thought she shewed favourable symptoms, and would have got well. The Physician has inquired after her since she left this, and he is sorry to say she is just the same as when she was removed.

It is necessary now to record the most unpleasant part of the events of the year, viz. the deaths.

The first of those was a man who had been insane

from infancy, and was far advanced in life. He died three days after his admission. He died of water in the chest, which seemed to have been of long standing. The second patient was a paralytic and worn-out old woman, and nature seemed incapable of prolonging existence any longer in so frail a tenement. The third case was that of an individual who died the day after his admission.

For patients in the higher ranks of life the Directors have ample accommodation. Those accustomed to the elegancies of polished life and manners often retain a fastidious taste, and a proud sense of their own superiority. One patient to whom this observation applies, lately exhibited a degree of dullness and melancholy which the Physician was apt to attribute to the loneliness of his situation—thinking that he preferred solitude to too great an extent; but no sooner was it proposed to mix him up with a class of other patients, than he spurned at the proposal with perfect horror—promised never to be melancholy again, if he could help it—and entreated that the Physician would permit him to remain where he was.

It may perhaps be expected by some, that, in this

Report, the Directors ought to give some account of the various causes of lunacy. They have touched on some of those in former Reports, and there is one which they cannot help now noticing, that is, the influence of erroneous impressions of religion. It is quite unnecessary to say that mental derangement can never be produced by just views of the truths of the Gospel; but a long and gloomy pondering on doubtful points of doctrine, and remorse on account of supposed unpardonable sins, have unfortunately been too frequently the causes of insanity; and parents and others cannot be too careful in checking the first appearance of any thing of this tendency.

Insanity, taken in all its bearings, must be considered as one of the most mysterious, as well as the most distressing of calamities that befall the human race. If we look at the Monomaniac fancying himself a king or a god, or that he is destined to perform some great action, the mind is struck with wonder at seeing the erroneous idea so firmly fixed, and, at the same time, the mind of the patient so affected. But what appears still more interesting, is, that on every other topic, his mind is perfectly sane. This species of insanity is, perhaps, the most difficult of all to eradicate.

The patient feels certain that he is right in his fancies, consequently, to argue with him, is worse than useless. It makes him entertain unkindly feelings towards the person who does so. Such is the case with a lady at present in the House. She has been afflicted several years with partial insanity. She thinks she is nearly related to the Royal Family, and is in the habit of writing letters to them, urging them to take the proper steps towards reinstating her in the rank to which she says she is undoubtedly entitled. Her time is almost constantly taken up in either writing or talking to her attendants about her rights. She says there is a band of conspirators who are constantly thwarting her. Sometimes they cause a pressure to oppress her when in bed, and also cause a great heat to be diffused through her body, but particularly her hands; and, to counteract this, she is in the constant habit of applying wet cloths round them. This lady, on many other subjects, appears to be quite sane: her retention of memory is quite astonishing. She thinks she is possessed of immense property, and has taken a particular dislike to a lady who was in the habit of attempting to persuade her that she had no right to her Royal title. She supposes her one of the band who torments her — she

never mentions her name without execration. This patient, notwithstanding these fancies, joins cheerfully in the dances that take place in the Asylum.

Self-esteem is a very prevailing cause and concomitant of insanity. Whether the corresponding cerebral organs are larger in insane persons than sane, may be matter of doubt, which may be safely left in the hands of Phrenologists; but certain it is, that self-esteem predominates very largely in their character. There is at present, in the Institution, a man who possesses this idea in a very extraordinary manner. He thinks he possesses every good quality that adorns human nature, and that he is the greatest man the world ever produced. He says Alexander was a fool to him—that the fame of Hannibal, Cæsar, Pompey, and the other heroes of antiquity, will sink into insignificance when compared with his glory, although, he admits, that his time is not yet come. He remarked, one day, “ I know you think me *daft*, but in the course of time it will be seen that I am right. I know I am in the minority in opinion on this point, but, when I am in the majority, they will then build Lunatic Asylums to confine those who at present think differently.” Yet this man, with these fancies constantly

on his mind, is able to argue, very clearly, on many subjects, such as politics, agriculture, history, and is very fond of music and dancing.

The Directors, during the past year, have had under their consideration the subject of the rates of Board to be chargeable for the patients. They are sorry to think that experience has shown that there have been too many of the pauper class of patients, and that, whether from the fame of the Institution, or from whatever other cause, there has been an immense influx of pauper patients from counties other than that of Perth. Now, the Directors were of opinion, and, indeed, it was contemplated by the Royal Charter, that a preference should be given to patients from the county of Perth, and they saw no other way of checking the increase of the number of patients from other counties than by an increase in the rate of board. They therefore fixed that the rate exigible from pauper patients belonging to the county of Perth, should be 6s. sterling weekly, and from all other counties 10s. 6d. per week.

The Directors had also under their consideration the rate of board to be exacted from epileptic patients,

who require more attention in every way than ordinary lunatic patients, and the care of whom is attended with more than ordinary expense to the Institution. The Directors, therefore, after careful consideration as to the rate of board which ought to be exacted from them, were of opinion, that it would be wise to give effect to the declared wishes of the late Mr. Murray, in so far as regards the parishes of Perth, Dumbarnie, and Rhynd, and they, therefore, fixed that the board for epileptic patients belonging to these parishes should be—for the lowest class 7s. sterling, and 12s. as to all other parishes. As to the patients in the higher grades, the Directors remitted that matter to the weekly Committee, who will take into consideration the circumstances of each patient, and fix a suitable rate of board accordingly.

It remains for the Directors, in concluding their Report, to express how highly they have been satisfied with the conduct of all the Office-bearers during the past year ; and they take this opportunity of returning their warmest acknowledgments to the Physician for his skill and attention in discharging his important duties, and to the Superintendent, and Matron for the unceasing zeal and ability which they

have uniformly exerted in the execution of the important trust committed to them, and upon which the success of the Institution so materially depends.

TABLE FIRST.

	MALES.	FEMALES.	TOTAL.
Number of Patients remaining in the Asylum on 8th June 1835.....	46	44	90
Number of Patients admitted from 8th June 1835, to 13th June 1836.....	17	15	32
	63	59	122

TABLE SECOND.

	MALES.	FEMALES.	TOTAL.
Cured from 8th June 1835, to 13th June 1836,	6	7	13
Removed by their Friends.....	2	4	6
Died.....	2	1	3
Remaining 13th June 1836.....	53	47	100
	63	59	122