

Fourth annual report of the directors of James Murray's Royal Asylum for Lunatics. 1831.

Contributors

James Murray's Royal Asylum for Lunatics.

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FOURTH

ANNUAL REPORT

OF

THE DIRECTORS

OF

JAMES MURRAY'S

ROYAL

ASYLUM FOR LUNATICS.

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PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE DIRECTORS.

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FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT
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ROYAL ASYLUM FOR LUNATICS.

AMPLEY ENDOWED by the munificence of its founder, this Asylum was established at first on a permanent basis, and has been attended by the most uniform and complete success. After the experience of another year, the Directors are happy to state, that nothing has occurred to interrupt its prosperity or disappoint those favourable anticipations which were formed of its usefulness. Already it has afforded a comfortable retreat to many unhappy individuals, who might otherwise have been left in a state of miserable neglect, while it has been the means of restoring not a few to the exercise of reason, and the stations which they formerly filled in society. Such a result cannot fail to prove extremely gratifying to every benevolent mind, as

furnishing a happy omen of the important benefits which the Institution will yet confer on the public, by affording relief to a class of our fellow creatures who are now unhappily too numerous, and who are at once the most unfortunate in the community.

When the last Annual Report was published, there were in the Asylum 57 patients.— Since that period 28 have been admitted, while 13 have been dismissed cured, and 8 have been removed by their friends, some of them in a state of convalescence, and one has died. It is almost unnecessary to remark, that this statement affords a peculiarly favourable view of the success of the Institution, comparing the number of cures with the number of admissions, and keeping in view that in many cases the disease with the patients had been of long standing, and of such a nature as almost to preclude the hope of recovery.

The Directors and Physician feel persuaded, from what has fallen under their observation, that it is impossible to say too much of the vast importance of early application in cases of insanity; for notwithstanding the most violent symptoms, if the disorder is of recent occurrence, it generally yields to proper treatment, and the recovery of the patient is almost completely secured. This important truth, which prejudice, ignorance, and false delicacy, are too apt to over-

look, is most forcibly illustrated by a variety of cases detailed in the Reports of the Physician, but the Directors and Physician will be pardoned for referring in particular to one of those cases. The patient alluded to was a farmer, who became deranged in consequence of severe pecuniary losses, and was brought to the Asylum soon after the attack. During the short period he remained with his friends, his hands and feet were tied with ropes to restrain his fury ; but as might be expected, this harsh and injudicious treatment aggravated his disorder, and if continued much longer, must have been attended with the most fatal result. Although, at his admission, he was in a high state of frenzy, his malady assumed a favourable appearance in the course of a few days thereafter, and one of the first indications of returning reason, was an expression of regret at the harsh treatment which he had received from his friends, which he said if continued much longer must have rendered him insane for life. In this case, the symptoms of lunacy speedily disappeared, and his recovery was as rapid as it has been complete. The Directors cannot pass over the recital of this case without remarking, how forcibly it illustrates, not merely the great importance of early application, which they thus deem it their duty to recommend ; but also the imprudence, they had almost said cruelty,

of the friends of such individuals, in trusting, for any period, an unfortunate relative to their own unexperienced, and too often injudicious management, for it is one of the most melancholy attendants on this disease, that it almost invariably destroys and disregards the ties of nature, and that a patient never can be more unhappily placed, than in the circle of his own dearest friends and relatives.

The Directors and Physician have to report thirteen cases of cures of patients during the past year, a number which they are proud to say equals the success of any similar institution; and when the number of old cases, which they began with, and have continued to admit, is taken into consideration, it gives this Institution a status inferior to none in Scotland.— They may also, in this place, state, that they have made it their business, not only to enquire after those persons at a distance from this, who have gone out cured from the Hospital, but have seen several who reside in Perth or its vicinity, and are happy to state, that with the exception of two individuals, they have all kept perfectly well, and are earning their livelihood, or managing their families, in a proper and becoming manner. It may be premised with regard to these two unfortunate individuals, that they both were of families where insanity is strongly hereditary. Yet it was not till after the lapse of

three years, in both instances, that insanity came on again ; and in the case of one of them, he had been so well as to learn the trade of a Shoe-maker, he having been a Weaver when first admitted, about three years and a half ago. The utility and benefit of this Institution then must appear still more obvious, when we consider, that two persons who, in all probability, had they never been in a house of this kind, would all this time have been raving madmen, or drivellers and idiots, have been enabled, by their restoration to intellect, to take their several places in society for so long a period. The other person was dismissed cured, more than three years ago, during all which time he was working as a day labourer. It is a curious fact regarding this man, that he once voluntarily called on the Physician to say, that he did not feel well, and thought the insanity was recurring on him ; he received some medicine and advice, and he remained from Saturday morning till Monday morning in the house, when feeling well he went away and resumed his labour.

The total number of Patients admitted into the Asylum during the year was 28, whereof 4 were re-admissions, 2 of the latter have been alluded to, a third was the case of a lunatic of upwards of 20 years standing, who so far improved whilst in the Asylum that for

the last six or eight months, she was constantly employed about the Kitchen or Laundry, and for that period was quiet and orderly. Thinking she might be kept at less expense to the Parish, and being an old woman, the Physician recommended her being taken out. Scarcely however was she home in her own house, when she commenced abusing every one, and breaking furniture: she was again reported insane, and by a new application re-admitted. Some surprise at this Patient's hallucination coming on so very soon after her leaving the Asylum, was excited. This however was soon removed when it was found on enquiry that she had been kept in a constant state of intoxication by her friends, whether with the intention of again getting quit of her or not, the Directors cannot take upon themselves to say, but they certainly think that this must have been the motive of so unheard of a proceeding. The fourth case of re-admission, was that of a young woman who was brought in, in the course of the Winter. Her friends seemed to think that it was only necessary that she should be brought to the Asylum, and an immediate cure ought to be the result. This not taking place so fast as they had anticipated, they took her away, but very soon found they could not keep her. She was brought back, and, after two or three months shewed favourable symptoms of amendment; and there is no

doubt she would have recovered, but again the impatience of her father interfered, and she was again removed. She has not been heard of since.

The Directors and Physician have further to report, that a pauper patient from the Parish of Scone, died in the Asylum. This man's insanity arose from palsy; he was received on Saturday, and on the Monday following, whilst putting on his clothes fell down in a state of apoplexy and died in a few hours. This must be considered an unfortunate circumstance, as but for it they would have had to boast, that no death had occurred, but indeed the man was so short a time in the Hospital, that he could scarcely be considered as a Patient. The Patients in general have been remarkably healthy, and with the exception of another paralytic patient, no case attended with danger has taken place. This gentleman has been plagued with bad sores arising out of an imperfect circulation.

It now becomes the pleasing task of the Directors and Physician to enumerate some of the cures, and they would beg to begin with two cases of puerperal insanity, or insanity following child bed. This disease may occur at any period from the birth of the child to the last hour of suckling it, neither is it necessary that women hereditarily disposed to insanity, should be more liable to it, than women exempt from this evil, nor is it more likely to occur to those

once affected by it, in subsequent confinements. In the two ladies who were the subjects of the attack of puerperal insanity, the hereditary tendency to the disease was very strong, and in one it was brought obviously strongly into action, by the poor woman being left a widow about a fortnight after the birth of her child. Her husband died in debt and the creditors seized the furniture of the house, all she had in the world was sold off, and she was left with two infants in the most abject poverty, without so much as a bed to lay down upon, and entirely dependent on the charity of some well disposed neighbours. She was in a state of complete apathy when brought to the Hospital, and continued so for some months. The other lady had had the disease gradually coming on whilst pregnant, but it was not till six weeks after her delivery that it reached such a height as to induce her friends to send her to the Asylum, and then their reason for so doing was, that she had made more than one attempt at suicide. They were both about the same length of time in the Asylum and both went away perfectly well. The next case to which the Directors and Physician would beg to refer, is one in which the peculiarity consists in the alternation of the symptoms of insanity with pulmonary consumption. So long as the patient is insane, he is strong and acquires flesh, sane he has cough, purulent ex-

pectoration and emaciation. The two diseases, it is feared, will eventually wear him out. At the time of his discharge he had been sane for nearly two months, and the Hospital being for the reception and treatment of the *Insane*, he was not considered a proper person to be retained in the Asylum. The Directors have not heard of him since he was discharged.

The Directors and Physician would deem it unnecessary to enter farther upon a detail of the peculiarities attending the cure of any of the other patients, during the year which has just elapsed. They may, however, state, that all of them have been treated on the same principles as formerly. They have been allowed the utmost degree of liberty, consistent with their own safety, and no coercive measures have been employed, but such as were absolutely necessary: every attention has been paid to their comfort, and no exertion has been wanting to promote their recovery. Mildness forms the most prominent feature in the management of the Institution, and the salutary effects which it has produced are exemplified by experience, since it has been highly instrumental, not only in promoting the comfort, but in securing the recovery of the patients.

What has also contributed very much to promote the cure of the patients, is a continuance of the admirable system of exercise and employ-

ment in the open air, which has been adopted in this establishment. The extensive grounds surrounding the house,—the cheerful airing yards, and well constructed verandahs, afford the greatest facilities for these means of cure.—Many of the patients are, as usual, employed in digging and working in the gardens, thereby acquiring habits of industry. Others, who are not disposed for such employment, walk at large through the grounds, or engage in various amusements, such as music, reading, and other favourite pastimes. The female patients are employed in various appropriate occupations, which are highly conducive to their recovery.—By such occupations and amusements, the feeling of confinement is alleviated, the mind is diverted from its favourite illusions, while the happiness of the patient is promoted, by the same means which are most conducive to his restoration.

During the past year, the weekly Committee have had the greatest reason to be satisfied with the general superintendence and management of the Superintendent and Matron, who are now assisted by a zealous and accomplished Housekeeper; and the conduct of the Keepers and Servants has been most exemplary. All the regulations which enjoin cleanliness, regularity, and gentle behaviour towards the patients, have

been implicitly observed, and have been attended with the happiest consequences.

Notwithstanding the painful frequency of insanity in this age of refinement, there is perhaps no subject connected with the medical art which is surrounded with so many difficulties, or in which extensive information and experience, on the part of the Physician, are so essential to successful treatment. Under this impression, the Committee of Management, after mature deliberation, suggested to the Physician, the propriety of his visiting the most celebrated Hospitals for the Insane in England, and upon the Continent. This proposition having met his approbation, arrangements were made, in the autumn of last year, to obtain proper medical attendance to the Asylum during his absence. After this, he proceeded to visit the Institutions in England, and then passed over to the Continent, where he inspected the Salpetriere and Bicetre, in Paris, and the Asylum at Antwerp. In the course of his tour, he examined minutely all the arrangements made for the accommodation of insane patients, and made the most sedulous enquiries with regard to the system of treatment employed in alleviating and removing their disorder. Much valuable information was freely communicated on these points, and the objects for which the journey was undertaken were thus completely realized. Upon his return, a full

Report on the subject was submitted to the Directors, which is highly satisfactory, not only from the faithful picture which it exhibits of the Asylums visited by the Physician, but also from the valuable suggestions which it contains for the improvement of the Institution with which he is immediately connected. It is gratifying to add that the Physician has expressed a clear and decided opinion, that, in its construction and general arrangements, this Asylum is not inferior to any which he visited in the course of his tour, and as far as his observation goes, possesses advantages which are rarely to be found in similar Institutions.

Notwithstanding the great accommodation which the Asylum contains, and the facilities afforded for a proper classification of the patients, there are two classes for which, from the peculiarly distressing nature of their maladies—that distinct and separate accommodation, which would be desirable, has not yet been provided—viz. insane persons affected with epilepsy, and patients reduced to a state of Idiocy. The condition of such patients is so distressing, that, from the arrangements necessary to secure their comfort, and prevent cause of annoyance to the other patients, nothing short of a separate wing to the building would completely answer the purpose. As the Funds of the Institution will, fortunately, enable the Directors to accomplish

this object, they directed Mr. BURN, Architect, a considerable time ago, to turn his attention to the subject, and provide them with plans of such an addition : but although it is understood Mr. BURN has devoted a good deal of attention to the matter, the plans have not yet been furnished ; and however desirable it is to have the addition built with all practicable despatch, the Directors are sensible of the importance of allowing proper time for digesting and preparing a plan, which, while it will suit the purpose intended, will, at the same time, be kept in harmony with the present building. After this addition shall have been completed, the Directors venture to hope, that the Institution will be far advanced to perfection. As it is, they feel satisfied, a more quiet, secure, and comfortable retreat for the insane, is nowhere to be found.

The Directors will only farther congratulate the public and themselves, on now possessing an Institution of such unspeakable value. Here is an Asylum for a class of our fellow mortals afflicted with the most appalling and humiliating dispensation of Divine Providence—bereft of those feelings and intellectual endowments which alone constitute the superiority of our species. For individuals enduring every variety of mental suffering—for the monomaniac—the infuriated madman—the gloomy and silent melancholic—not huddled into mere concealment

from the public eye, or immured without care, or without distinction, into a dismal cell, but all accommodated according to their various and ever varying wants and conditions. Those who have been liberally educated, and accustomed to the elegancies of polished life, are soothed, and comforted, and gratified, by indulgence in their favourite amusements and pursuits; and those who have left a less exalted circle of society, equally accommodated to their inclinations and humours; and thus there is afforded to the friends of this unfortunate class of our fellow creatures, some degree of relief from that bitter grief which the presence of their hapless relatives must have produced, and the consolation at least of their receiving all the sympathy, and the kindness, and the care, which it is possible to afford them.

In conclusion, the Directors have only the pleasing duty of tendering their warmest grateful thanks to their able Physician, for the unremitting attention, vigilance, and enthusiasm, displayed by him in his attendance upon the Institution; and to the Superintendent and Matron, for an undiminished continuance of that admirable conduct which has so often called for their most unqualified approbation.

TABLE FIRST.

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Number of Patients remaining in the Asylum, 7th June 1830,.....	34	23	57
Number of Patients admitted, from 7th June 1830, to 13th June 1831,.....	11	17	28
	45	40	85

TABLE SECOND.

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Cured, from 7th June 1830 to 13th June 1831,.....	4	9	13
Removed by Friends,.....	5	3	8
Died,.....	1	—	1
Remaining, 13th June 1831,.....	35	28	63

