

**Eighteenth annual report of the directors of James Murray's Royal Asylum for Lunatics. June, 1845.**

**Contributors**

James Murray's Royal Asylum for Lunatics.

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EIGHTEENTH

# ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

## DIRECTORS

OF

JAMES MURRAY'S

ROYAL ASYLUM FOR LUNATICS.

JUNE, 1845.

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BY ROBERT MORISON.

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# **EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT**

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**JAMES MURRAY'S**

**ROYAL ASYLUM FOR LUNATICS.**

JUNE 1845.

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It has now become the duty of the Directors of this Asylum to present the Public with their Eighteenth Annual Report.

It has all along been to them a source of great satisfaction, from year to year, to announce an almost uninterrupted course of prosperity, both as regards the Institution itself, and the benefits which through its medium have been conferred on the public. In this respect the present is no exception to former Reports. The Directors are happy to know, that the benefits which this Institution is calculated to confer, are more and more



appreciated by the community, and they feel no doubt that the confidence of the public in the Institution will increase in proportion as they become acquainted with its management, and the number of cures annually effected within its walls.

The daily routine or management, or what may with sufficient propriety be called the *machinery* of the Institution, has now for a long time been so uniform and systematic, and so often explained, that the Directors will not be expected to repeat any thing upon that head. All those connected with the management have been long familiar with their various departments, and although some of these require continued vigilance, prudence, and occasionally no small exercise of ingenuity, yet, by a proper division of offices, and the daily increasing experience of the functionaries, every thing is managed with a facility, regularity, and precision, to which neither this, nor any similar Institution, could reasonably expect to attain, until it had passed the earlier stages of its infancy.

The Directors consider it their duty, from time to time to assure the public, that in this Asylum no effort is left untried by which the comfort of the patients can be increased. Nothing but the most urgent necessity ever induces the officers of the Establishment to exercise restraint. Every



thing has been provided to facilitate the patients participating in such out-door and in-door recreations as have been found by experience most salutary to their physical and mental health.— Similar Institutions in other countries have been visited and examined, and some of their improvements, modified so as to suit the climate and social habits of this place, have been introduced into this Asylum, and every thing which has been found to be objectionable in other Institutions, or calculated in any degree to give the Patients unnecessary annoyance, has been carefully avoided.

By referring to the Table annexed to this Report, it will be found that the proportion of cures to the admissions, during the year now expired, has been much of an average with preceding years. During the past year there have been admitted into the House *thirty-three* patients, viz. fifteen males and eighteen females. In the course of the year *fourteen* have been cured, eight males and six females ; *nine* have been removed by their friends, more or less recovered, three males and six females ; and *five* have died, one male and four females. In June last year, there were in the House in all, one hundred and forty-five patients, eighty-three males and sixty-two females ; while at the same period this year, the total number of patients is one hundred and fifty, eighty-four males and sixty-seven females, shewing an increase of



five patients this year as compared with the preceding.

Notwithstanding the great advances that have of late years been made in the knowledge of insanity, in its various phases, forms, and modifications, and the great improvement which has latterly taken place in the treatment of the insane, it is to be feared that this knowledge is still in too great measure confined to those who have given the subject a considerable share of attention, and that many of the old, crude, and absurdly superstitious notions, which our ancestors entertained in regard to lunacy, are still far from being totally eradicated.

Very many still retain the erroneous opinion, that diseases of the mind are widely different from diseases of the body, both as respects their origin, and the possibility of effecting cures through the instrumentality of medical treatment. The old notion is widely prevalent that insanity is generally the effect of some immediate and direct visitation of Providence—the result of some supernatural and inscrutable agency—that it were folly and presumption in man to attempt, by his limited skill, its removal; hence, that it is his duty patiently to wait till the same power which inflicted the calamity, shall think proper to remove it. Acting upon this antiquated and exploded idea, it is feared that many exercise their patience too



long ; and when at last prevailed upon to send their unfortunate relations to an Asylum, it is unavailing. The Physician is called when the disease has reached its acmè—when its ravages have indeed gone too far to be checked by human skill.

How great the service to society, were these delusions thoroughly dispelled, and men brought to view distempers of the mind in the same light as diseases of the body ! for, true it is, that, although there are many diseases of the physical frame which do not affect the sanity of the mental, yet, never is there a distempered mind without an accompanying disarrangement or disorder in the physical constitution. Sometimes physical disarrangement, arising from a sudden violation of the laws of organization, such as an accident which results in a severe contusion or wound, or from what may be considered chymical laws, such as contagion and indigestion, produces mental alienation. This arises from the disordered part of the system communicating with, and acting injuriously upon, the brain ; sometimes from moral causes, such as fear, enthusiastic impressions, and undue excitement, occasioned by disappointment, grief, and sometimes even joy. In this case, however, the organism of the brain is always found diseased, and no sooner is the corporeal system restored to its former healthy state, than



reason again assumes her ascendancy, and the various faculties of the mind operate in their wonted harmony and order.

As corroborative of what has been now stated, it may not be out of place to make the following quotation from a publication by Amariah Brigham, M.D. entitled "*Remarks on the influence of mental cultivation and mental excitement upon health*:"—

"If the mind could be deranged independently of any bodily disease, such a possibility would tend to destroy the hope of its immortality, which we gain from reason; for that which is capable of disease and decay may die. Besides, it would be natural to expect that mere mental derangement might be cured by reasoning and by appeals to the understanding. But attempts to restore the mind in this manner generally prove useless and are often injurious; for insane persons feel that their understandings are insulted whenever opposition is made to their own hallucinations, and to the evidence of their senses. It is fortunate for them that the true nature of mental derangement has of late been acknowledged in practice, and that, in all attempts to benefit and cure this unfortunate class of beings, *they have been assigned to the Physician, and treated for corporeal disease.*"

\* \* \* "It is true that moral and mental causes may produce insanity, *but they produce it by first occasioning either functional or organic*



*disease of the brain.*" \* \* \* "Dr Haslam says, that insanity is always connected with organic alterations of the brain. Greding has noticed thickening of the skull in 167 cases out of 216, besides other organic disease. Spurzheim says, he *always* found changes of structure in the heads of insane people. M. Georget dissected a great number of brains, and his experience is conformable to that of the authors above mentioned. Mr Davidson, House Surgeon to the Lancaster County Lunatic Asylum, examined with great care the heads of 200 patients, who died in the Asylum, and he scarcely met with a single instance in which traces of disease in the brain, or its membranes, were not evident, even when lunacy was recent, and a patient died of a different disease."

As a farther proof that insanity observes the same pathological laws, another authority, viz. *Ray on Insanity*, may be here quoted. This author observes that "Notwithstanding the air of mystery which ignorance and superstition have thrown around this disease, it cannot be said to present anything very strange or peculiar; nor are the discussions concerning it involved in the obscurity which is generally imagined. It arises from a morbid affection of organic matter, and is just as much, and no more, an event of special Providence, as other diseases; and to attribute it



to the visitation of God, in a peculiar sense, is a questionable proof of true piety, as well as of sound philosophy."

It has been thought proper to be thus full and explicit, that the Public may be made fully alive to the need of medical treatment, in all cases of insanity, and this immediately on the first symptoms of mental derangement becoming apparent, for these are nothing more than signs of internal disease. And it would just be as preposterous to attempt to cure a malignant fever by reasoning or moral suasion, as to cure a Lunatic without the application of remedies to his physical system. It would just be as wise to let the patient alone, and leave him to the natural ravages of the disease, in the one case, as in the other. But as it is now established beyond all doubt, that the physical system, and generally the cerebral organs, are affected with disease in every case of mental aberration, can it for a moment be doubted that Lunatics are proper and legitimate subjects of medical skill and treatment? That they are so, let the many cures annually effected in this, and other Asylums, bear unanswerable testimony.

As may be seen by a reference to the tables of cure and admission, annually published by this Asylum, the Directors have much pleasure, and feel themselves justified, in stating, that this Institution has hitherto been successful to a degree



that enables it with all safety to stand a comparison with any other in the kingdom.

Some of the foregoing remarks, if duly attended to, besides shewing that insanity naturally falls within the province of the Physician, like other diseases, may have a beneficial tendency in another respect. They may tend in some degree to remove a feeling very prevalent in society, that there is, in some way or other, a kind of disgrace connected with insanity; so that, in general, people feel a sort of shame in confessing, even to medical advisers, that any of their relations are affected with such a disease; whereas, no such feeling exists in regard to other diseases not affecting the faculties of the mind. No doubt this feeling arises from want of reflection, for the faculties of the mind are disordered only through some morbid affection of the cerebral organs, just as the sense of sight, or of hearing, is hurt or destroyed by the physical organism being injured; and no more in the one case than in the other, should either the patient or his friends attach any degree of shame to the misfortune, or feel any delicacy in applying for assistance, except indeed the calamity has been occasioned, as unfortunately it too often is, by vicious and reprehensible conduct. Even in this case, however, a sense of duty should be allowed to master every other feeling, and that course should be followed, with all



expedition, which is most likely to prove restorative to the patient.

By neglecting these considerations, more particularly in the present day, when so many Asylums exist in the country, furnished with most ample accommodation, and conducted on the most approved principles, many are not aware what heavy responsibility they incur by not making application to these sources on behalf of their unfortunate relations. There cannot be a doubt, that in so far as moral responsibility is withdrawn from those suffering under mental alienation, just so far will that responsibility devolve upon those, who, by their relationship, or otherwise, should become their guardians. This consideration alone should act with the strongest influence, on all persons of correct feeling and sound moral principle, and lead them, without hesitation or delay, to take advantage of any Asylum within reach which may bear such character and respectability as to entitle it to public confidence. Whatever then may be the fate of the patient, friends or relatives can have no cause for self-reproach, which, it is feared, would be too often the case under private treatment.

The Directors, in former Reports, have had occasion to contrast the violent and coercive system, till of late, generally followed in Asylums, with the milder treatment usually adopted at the



present time, and all experience goes to satisfy them, that the latter of these methods is entitled to a decided preference. Hence, they cordially acquiesce in the views expressed on this subject by the writer of a small work recently published, entitled, "*Illustrations of the Law of Kindness*," who observes, that "There is still another scene in human life where the law of kindness is producing the most extraordinary results—results which are contrary to all former experience, I mean those unfortunate beings whose light of reason becomes quenched in madness, and the mode by which they are now generally governed." The author then proceeds to cite some interesting illustrations of cures effected under a mild system of treatment, which it is unnecessary to quote, and then proceeds—"And how did it effect this? It reared no chilly dungeon, gloomy with filth and damp straw; it threw no chains upon the limbs of those who came under its charge; it uttered no threats, it wielded no lash, it cast the oil of gentleness upon the raging waves of violence, it wove its web of silk around the bitter and blighted soul; it threw its light into mental darkness, and it knocked gently for admittance into the fleshly house which was deprived of its lamp of reason. And lo! not only did insanity bow to its holy influence, but, in almost every instance, it succeeded in re-arranging the disturbed brain, and



in replacing the light of reason in its socket, to fit and prepare its subject once more for the varied duties of human life."

The friends of the insane are often desirous to treat them with all the kindness in their power, but too generally they take a wrong way of shewing it. Instead of having recourse to an Asylum, where the patient would enjoy ample opportunities of taking air and exercise, without danger or inconvenience either to himself or those around him, the practice too often is to confine the patient at home; by which the disease is almost invariably aggravated, and it is only after this has become too painfully manifest, and the patient has exhausted the patience of his friends without any symptoms of recovery, that, as a last resource, they seek the aid of an Asylum. Such a practice cannot be too severely reprobated, and surely needs only to be pointed out, in order to be relinquished by every person of common intelligence.

In connexion with this subject, the Directors feel it their duty to give an Extract from the last Annual Report of the Physician—"I have to repeat my often expressed regret, that notwithstanding all that has been said or written for these twenty years on the subject of insanity, and of the superior advantages of early treatment in it, as in most other diseases, yet great delay is still practised by the friends and relations of the insane



in sending them to an Asylum, a delay which, in many cases, is fatal to the prospects and chances of recovery, the disease having in almost every case acquired so great a hold on the mind as to make it difficult, if not impossible, to eradicate it. It is next to an impossibility for any medical man to treat an insane patient properly, whilst that person is surrounded by familiar objects, familiar faces, friends, and servants. The morbid chain is never broken, nor, under the circumstances, is it likely or easy to be so. And it is an extraordinary thing, that the patients themselves often tell me they are sure that nothing but the Asylum will do them good. This I am often told by persons whom I am called in to visit; and this is so far a remarkable fact, as shewing that, in the beginning of the disease at least, all the faculties or reasoning powers are not diseased, and I would argue from this, even were I not supported in my opinion by the experience of all who have turned their particular attention to the treatment of insanity, that early isolation, with seclusion in an Asylum, is the best, safest, and most judicious way of managing the disease, and leading it to a satisfactory issue. Among the thirty-three patients whom I have stated as admitted during the past year, only two recent cases occur."

Another observation of the Physician also deserves consideration—"The impatience of friends



in some instances has much interfered with the number of cures, for, while they are dilatory in bringing the insane into the Asylum, they are no sooner there, than they expect a miracle to be wrought, by the immediate cure of the person, who may perhaps have been labouring for years, or even for life, under insanity."

The same system continues in use which was begun at the first opening of the Asylum, of allowing the patients dancing and musical parties during the winter months, and it is found to have a most beneficial influence on the health, comfort, and contentment of all; and they look forward with much eagerness and pleasure to the night when a party is to be given, as they are sure to enjoy themselves exceedingly on such an occasion. It is most gratifying to see the order, politeness, and hilarity with which all conduct themselves.—There are some good Piano-Forte players among the ladies, performers on the Violin among the male patients, Singers of both sexes, and nearly all can dance; the consequence is, that the evening passes pleasantly, and when it is time to retire the patients go to their several apartments contented and happy. Music is a favourite occupation with many of the patients, and the Physician gives it every encouragement. It soothes the violent, elevates the depressed, and comforts all.

The general health of the patients has been



exceedingly good during the past year. No infectious disease or fever has ever shewn itself in the House, and the few deaths which have occurred were very much in the course of nature, and life seemed preserved for a longer period than it would otherwise have been, by the care taken of the individual, and the regularity, cleanliness, and comfort of the Establishment.

The Directors feel themselves called upon, before concluding this Report, to express their continued unqualified satisfaction with the conduct of all intrusted with any charge in the Asylum, during the bye-past year; who are entitled to the Directors' best thanks, as they well know how much the Institution is indebted to them for the confidence of the Public, hitherto; and they have no doubt that a sense of this will prompt them to maintain their exertions with unabated zeal.



**TABLE FIRST.**

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Number of Patients remaining in the Asylum, on 10th June, 1844,.....	83	62	145
Number admitted from 10th June, 1844, to 9th June, 1844,.....	15	18	33

**TABLE SECOND.**

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Cured from 10th June, 1844, to 9th June, 1845.....	8	6	14
Removed by their Friends.....	3	6	9
Died.....	1	4	5
Remaining 9th June, 1845.....	86	64	150