Skating on Duddingston Loch by Charles Altamont Doyle (1832–1893)

Charles Altamont Doyle, the father of Arthur Conan Doyle, was a Victorian painter and illustrator. He spent his last years in Scottish asylums where he continued to paint and sketch. In the biographies of his famous son, Charles is usually portrayed as a gentle unworldly man whose fondness for the bottle led to him being shut away in a mental institution. However, recent research (Beveridge, 2006) suggests that Doyle suffered from memory impairment as a result of heavy drinking. This, combined with his generally unmanageable and violent behaviour when drunk, led to his eventual admission to a home for inebriates and then to an asylum. Charles Doyle was born in London in 1832 into an Irish Catholic family. His father John Doyle was a prominent political cartoonist and his brother Dicky became a celebrated illustrator for *Punch* and a noted exponent of the Victorian fairy genre. In 1849 Charles was sent by his family to Edinburgh where he met Mary Foley, whom he later married in 1855. They had nine children, the third child being Arthur, who was born in 1859. Charles was employed by the Scottish Office of Works and, in his spare time, he pursued his art. The above picture, which is a scene from Edinburgh life, was painted before Charles became institutionalised. The two subsequent issues of the *Journal* will feature work he completed while an inmate of Montrose Asylum.


Picture by permission of National Museums of Scotland.
Psychiatry in pictures
ALLAN BEVERIDGE
Access the most recent version at DOI: 10.1192/bjp.191.4.A14

This article cites 1 articles, 0 of which you can access for free at:
http://bjp.rcpsych.org/content/191/4/27914#BIBL

To obtain reprints or permission to reproduce material from this paper, please write to permissions@rcpsych.ac.uk

You can respond to this article at /letters/submit/bjprcpsych;191/4/279-a14

http://bjp.rcpsych.org/ on June 25, 2017
Published by The Royal College of Psychiatrists

To subscribe to The British Journal of Psychiatry go to:
http://bjp.rcpsych.org/site/subscriptions/