

REPORT ON THE LUNATIC

A vote having been passed by the Provincial Council for the erection of a telegraph wire to the Christchurch Fire Brigade and Police Stations, I venture to urge on the General Government to order their officers here to put this work in hand as promptly as possible.

I have, &c.,
J. W. HAMILTON,
Inspector, "Sunnyside" Lunatic Asylum.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

No. 13.

Mr. HARMAN to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Superintendent's Office, Christchurch, 23rd August, 1872.

I have the honor to forward herewith a report by the Inspector of the Sunnyside Lunatic Asylum, of an inspection made by him on the 20th instant.

I have, &c.,
R. J. S. HARMAN,
Deputy Superintendent.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Enclosure in No. 13.

Mr. J. W. HAMILTON to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

(No. 23.)

SIR,—

Christchurch, 20th August, 1872.

I have the honor to report that I inspected "Sunnyside" Lunatic Asylum this day, complying in every respect with the directions of "The Lunatics Act, 1868."

1. The books were found all closely written up to date, including the "Case Book" (clause 25), which, on my last inspection, I had noticed was a good deal in arrear.

2. The number of patients was: Males, 76; females, 39; in all, 115. None were under restraint. One, a female patient, was under seclusion.

3. The keeper being absent at the Resident Magistrate's Court, the Clerk accompanied me through the premises. I found everything about the building in its usual neat and satisfactory condition; the patients looking well cared-for, healthy, and very cleanly. The food being served up for the mid-day meal was abundant, wholesome, and well cooked.

4. The cook's room, and store adjoining, seem damp and unwholesome since the stove has been removed, the floor being close to the ground. This part of the building requires attention: it is old, and seems likely to rot away near the ground plate.

5. The poultry yard near the eastern and front part of the building ought to be removed, before the summer heat begins, to a position at the back, where, in the only three prevailing winds, N.E., N.W., and S.W., the smell will be blown clear of the asylum.

6. One room (in the cottage known as Mr. Stowe's) and occupied by the convalescents, was unlike every other part of the buildings, being in a slovenly and unpresentable condition, and not very cleanly. I would advise that these patients be warned that unless they undertake to keep their own room in a better state, they will be removed back to the wards they last occupied. This cottage is at a considerable distance from the main building, and requires the addition of a closet close by.

7. A ditch near the entrance gate, within two yards of one of the new attendant's cottages, ought to be at once filled up. It contains stagnant water, the drainage from the washing-house, and is immediately to windward of the cottage during the nine months of prevailing north-east winds. There is serious risk that the stench which the hot sun of spring and summer will draw up from this ditch, may breed disease in the attendant's family. There seems to be no outlet for the water to drain away, and it was only dug out originally for a fence to the kitchen garden. The drainage from the washing-house could easily be taken off in another direction, away from any of the dwelling-houses.

8. A fire-proof safe seems to me to be much needed for custody of the register and orders of admission and discharge. There are patients still alive who are among the very earliest entered on the register some twelve or fifteen years ago. The only legal evidence the keeper has of his right to detain these patients, and his only protection against any frivolous action for false imprisonment or for trespass, would be destroyed in the event of a fire occurring. I think the records of every Lunatic Asylum ought not to be without this protection. It seems to me as much required on account of the persons confined there as of the keeper and the attendants; and it might become a matter of great importance in the event of any serious abuse requiring to be inquired into.

9. I found one patient (No. 373, admitted about three weeks ago, and shortly after my last inspection,) of whom there seemed fair reason to doubt whether he ought to have been sent to the Asylum; or, at all events, whether he ought to be detained there at all instead of being left in care of his friends. This patient's mind seemed to me to be in a perfectly sound state, except on religious topics, on which he seemed to be exaggeratedly but harmlessly enthusiastic. I have instituted special inquiry respecting him.

10. I noted that patient No. 369, a female, admitted 5th July, by order of the Resident Magistrate, had been discharged 22nd July, in virtue only of an indorsement of consent on the order signed by the Deputy Superintendent. The discharge did not purport to be made by the committing Magistrate. Clause 71 of the Act (page 82) seems to leave no room for misapprehension as to the necessity for the discharge being given in writing by whoever signs the order under which the patient is received, the previous consent of the Colonial Secretary being given in writing. In the present instance, the Deputy Superintendent gave such consent under delegation. I have drawn attention to the omission, which happens not to be of much consequence on this occasion, as the patient had only three days ago been sent back to the asylum as again unfit to be at large.