

1874.

## NEW ZEALAND.

## GENERAL REPORT ON LUNATIC ASYLUMS IN NEW ZEALAND.

(BY DR. PALEY.)

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.*

Dr. PALEY to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

27, Bedford Place, Russell Square,  
London, 25th November, 1873.

SIR,—

Referring to your letter of the 31st of August, 1872, I have the honor to inform you that, in compliance with the request contained therein, I made inspection of the Lunatic Asylums at Auckland, Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch, and Dunedin, on the dates severally set forth in the reports hereto appended.

Following the guidance of your letter I made careful inquiry into the state of the buildings, their adaptability or otherwise to the purpose to which they are applied, and the condition in which they are kept; also into the mode of treatment adopted towards the patients, the discipline maintained, and the suitableness generally for the position they hold of the staff, medical and lay, employed at each Asylum inspected by me.

The results of my examination, together with consequent observations and suggestions, are embodied in papers marked Appendix 1, letters A to E, which I now beg to submit for your consideration. I regret that owing to the short time at my disposal in New Zealand I found it impossible to visit the Asylums at Hokitika, New Plymouth, and Napier. I learned, however, that a new Asylum was in course of construction at Hokitika, and that the number of insane at New Plymouth and Napier was so small that it did not seem necessary at that time to construct a separate building for their reception.

With reference to the supervision and management of the Asylums in your Colony, I was led to the conclusion, in the course of my investigations, that it was highly desirable to adopt a system of uniformity based on well-recognized principles. With this view I venture to offer in Appendix 2 certain recommendations, the adoption of which will, I believe, tend to ameliorate the condition of the patients, and render more effective the action of those who are intrusted with their care.

The question of providing for all the insane of your Colony by the construction of one or more Central Asylums, though not specially mentioned in your letter, seems to arise so naturally in revising the whole subject, that it would seem an omission if it were passed by in silence.

The chief advantages of a Central Asylum are—1. Facility of supervision; 2. Economy of management.

The objections to it (as affecting New Zealand at the present time) are,—1. Difficulty of conveying patients from distant places. 2. Removal of patients beyond reach of personal communication with their friends. Transit of insane persons of every class (whatever the kind of mental disorder under which they labour), is attended with more or less risk to themselves and those around them. In many cases their conveyance from place to place involves great danger, and when their disease is maniacal in character and there is concomitant physical prostration, it becomes a matter of difficulty to sustain life during a long journey. When it is necessary for patients to travel by sea, all danger to their health and all difficulties to their attendants are very much enhanced; they are often unavoidably subjected to such bodily inconvenience, if not suffering, as may even have the effect of rendering them permanently and incurably unsound in their minds.

The separation of patients from relations, friends, home, and local interest, deprives them of a very powerful and important means of restoration to sound reason. The first approach of many insane persons to convalescence is indicated by a re-awakened anxiety about their homes and their belongings; and nothing so much tends to help their progress towards recovery as the presence and personal sympathy of relations or friends in whom they can have confidence and trust.

On the whole, then, I am of opinion that it is advisable, in the interests of the insane, to retain the local Asylums in those districts which contain the greatest number of patients, re-