

The extent of land is inadequate for the employment and treatment of the number of patients now in the Asylum. At least 100 acres more should be got. If this were done, the accommodation could be greatly increased, either by additions to the main building, or by detached cottages for the use of private patients and for those capable of industrial occupation. The Medical Superintendent and other principal officers who are required by the circumstances of an Asylum for 100 patients could also conduct the management of a much larger establishment.

The Napier Asylum, though a separate building from the Gaol, is in some respects merely an extension of it. It is under the superintendence of the Gaoler, and is situated close below the Gaol, on the slope of the hill on which that building stands. It is a small wooden one-storied house, with accommodation for sixteen men and six women, and for the married couple, who are in immediate charge as attendants under the Keeper. It is very bare and comfortless. The patients are almost entirely restricted for exercise to exceedingly small airing yards, which are enclosed with high wooden fences, and are overlooked by the Gaol sentry, who is thus made to supplement the small staff of the Asylum.

A few of the less demented patients do a little work about the house, and find amusement in playing cards and draughts; but the extent to which occupation or recreation, or any system of treatment can be carried on, is hopelessly limited by the almost entire want of ground.

There are certain cases of insanity of frequent occurrence which yield very quickly to good feeding, rest, and medical treatment, and in which the many curative influences requisite in a good Asylum are not of much account; and for these cases this little building is not unsuitable, and may continue to be sufficient for some time. But, generally speaking, it is quite unsuited for the proper treatment of insanity, and none but the most transient cases should be placed or detained in it; all the more lasting ones should be removed without loss of time to some other Asylum.

The New Plymouth Asylum had only five patients in it during the course of the year, and these were removed to Wellington before I had seen the more important Asylums, so that it has not been inspected. It is part of the Hospital; and a reference to the plan will show that it is not a satisfactory place for the treatment of any class of the insane.

The Wellington Asylum stands upon a fine healthy site in the outskirts of the city, and has about seventy acres of land attached to it for the use of the patients. The main building, which is intended to accommodate fifty patients, consists of a central administration block of two stories, and a male and female wing one story high, each of which contains a wide corridor with single sleeping-rooms opening on to it, a day room, two dormitories, bath-rooms, store-room, lavatory, and closets, and a very uncomfortable room for an attendant, which is only lighted from the corridor. So far, this building is, in the circumstances of the colony, quite passable. It affords satisfactory accommodation for, at most, twenty patients of each sex, provided no classification is required, either on account of their social position or the nature of their malady. The remaining part of the Asylum, which is intended for violent and dirty patients, consists of outhouses, badly constructed single sleeping-rooms, and a range of building at the back which was originally intended, and is still urgently required, for washing-house, laundry, and workshops. All this portion of the Asylum is of a very inferior, and indeed in some respects quite disgusting, description. It is almost impossible to treat patients properly in this wretched "back ward."

Were it certain that the site occupied by this Asylum would long continue suitable, the best thing to do would be to pull down the whole of the back ward, and build on a proper principle such an addition as would render the Asylum capable of affording accommodation for 100 patients—that is to say, for thirty more than its present crowded population. But the city is so rapidly extending in the direction of the Asylum, it seems almost inevitable that the site will soon become unfitted for an institution of the kind; and as it will eventually have to be abandoned, it does not appear advisable to lay out much money in extending the present buildings. On the whole it is perhaps better reluctantly to put up with this back ward, and make the most of it in the meantime, and only to make such extensions and alterations as are urgently required.

The management of this Asylum during my acquaintance with it has been the reverse of satisfactory. On the death of the late Mr. Seager, in April, 1876, no new Keeper was appointed. His widow continued to hold the appointment of Matron at a salary of £225; and Mr. Ingwersen, who was head attendant, with a salary of £200 a year, was promoted to be Deputy Keeper, without any increase of his pay. The general management under Mr. Ingwersen was conducted with great extravagance. On application being made to him by the Inspector of Stores and myself for certain returns which were required in our respective departments, he applied for a week's leave of absence on urgent private affairs, and took his passage from Christchurch to London.*

It is absolutely essential that this Asylum should be placed under the charge of an able and responsible Superintendent. The duties of Matron are quite subordinate to those of the Superintendent, and in a small Asylum of this size do not require to be paid for at the rate of £100 a year, to which sum the salary was reduced in April. Nearly the same remuneration which it would be requisite to give to a man fit to be trusted with the duties of Superintendent would be sufficient to secure, in addition, the services of his wife as Matron. In order to clear the way for the appointment of a married Superintendent, whose wife can perform the duties of Matron, it has been necessary to dispense with the services of the present Matron, who occupies the quarters intended for the Superintendent, and which are certainly not too commodious for a married man. The Asylum has, in the meantime, been placed in the charge of Mr. James Whitelaw, who has been engaged on three months' trial. He is a married man without family, and should he prove, as I have the strongest reason to believe he will, a suitable officer, I purpose, with your consent, to make a permanent engagement with him. A married couple, who have had much experience in one of the best Asylums at Home, and have very high certificates of character, have been engaged as head attendants under Mr. Whitelaw. I have much confidence that these appointments will insure a marked improvement in the management of this Asylum. The pay of the male attendants, who were getting £146 a year in addition to their keep, has been reduced to £100.

* His cash-book has been removed by the Provincial Auditor for examination.