

WELLINGTON ASYLUM.

Inspected 18th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, and 28th November, 1876.

This Asylum is situated about a mile beyond the town, upon an elevated and very hilly piece of ground. The site commands a fine view, but in other respects is not very well suited for an Asylum. The land is sufficient in extent, but is so extremely hilly that it is for the most part not available for the purposes for which Asylum grounds are chiefly wanted—namely, to afford occupation and exercise for the patients. The soil consists of decomposed rock, and is poor and shallow. A vegetable garden of sufficient size to supply the Asylum with vegetables, with the exception of potatoes, is laid out in a comparatively sheltered piece of ground. In order to secure sufficient space for the buildings which have been erected, a great deal of rock has had to be cleared away. Apparently it is found impossible, owing to the cold winds that prevail, to get trees or flowers to grow, and the ground in the immediate neighbourhood of the Asylum, instead of being laid out in an ornamental manner, has an exceedingly bare and neglected appearance, which is aggravated by the high banks of rock which have been left by the excavations within a few feet of either side of the buildings. A considerable piece of ground in front of the Asylum has been levelled, and it is intended to fence it, and attempt to lay it out as a garden or exercise ground for the use of the patients. The grounds are enclosed with an ordinary paddock fence.

The Asylum, which is entirely built of wood, was in 1873 opened for the reception of patients. It consists of a central administration block, with a wing on each side of it for male and female patients, and a large dining hall, kitchen, and scullery behind it. The central block is in two stories, and there are four rooms in each story. The upper floor is intended for the accommodation of the Keeper and Matron, and the front rooms of the lower for an office and visiting-room, and the two back rooms behind these, and which are only lighted by windows looking into the adjoining corridors, are intended for the use of the attendants in charge.

The rest of the building is only one story. Each wing consists of a corridor 50 feet long by about 19 feet wide, which is well lighted on its north side by six windows, and on its south side has six single sleeping-rooms. At the extremity of the corridor is a good-sized day-room and two dormitories, and projecting back from it to the south side is a passage leading to lavatory, bath-room, &c. This completes what is called the first ward, which is occupied by about twenty patients and two attendants. The day accommodation, consisting of the corridor and day-room, is amply sufficient for this number; but the sleeping accommodation is very inadequate on the male side, each of the dormitories containing ten beds, and giving an allowance, the one of about 390 cubic feet, the other of 450 cubic feet, per bed. Only three of the single rooms are available for patients on the male side, the other three being occupied by attendants. The bath-rooms are far too small, and are very badly lighted—one of them, in fact, not being lighted at all except from the passage. The greater part of each room is occupied by its wooden bath, which is joined to the wall on three sides. The pails for the closets are removed daily from the outside, and by means of disinfectants the closets are generally kept fresh, but when the wind is blowing strong from the south the smell from them is occasionally perceptible in the corridor. The urinal has a very offensive smell.

The day-rooms serve as dining-rooms for the patients. The walls are papered and hung with a few pictures. They are plainly and not very comfortably furnished. The walls of the corridors and bedrooms are simply varnished wood. The corridors are furnished with small tables and benches fixed to the wall, a few chairs, and a piece of matting down the centre. There are some nice photographs and pictures on the walls, especially on the female side. For the male side there is a billiard table, which is much appreciated by the patients.

The refractory, or "back ward" as it is called, consists on the male side of a day-room, dormitory, and single sleeping-room, which have been formed by slight alterations out of a long row of apartments situated at the rear of the main building and running parallel with it, which were originally intended for workshops; a block of five cells and bath-room for dirty patients added on the south projection of the main building; a detached row of out-houses for violent patients, consisting of six cells running parallel with the block for dirty patients; an attendants' room at the southern extremity; and two more patients' rooms at right angles to the others. The day-room of this ward is only 22 feet by 16 feet, and is at present occupied by nineteen patients and three attendants, a number for which it is miserably insufficient. It gives an allowance of only 16 superficial feet to each person, instead of 40, which is considered requisite. It is lighted on the south side by two windows furnished with iron bars, which give it a very prison-like appearance, and one small window overlooking the airing yard. There is a fire-place, protected by an enormous padlocked fender, which projects into the room. The furniture consists of three tables, three benches without backs, and two chairs, and a piece of matting down the centre of the room. The walls and roof are painted white. There is a square hole in the roof and two in the walls to assist ventilation; but in wet or cold weather, when the doors and windows are shut, the atmosphere of this room must be very unhealthy. The dormitory adjoining this day-room is about 16 feet square and 9 feet high, and has seven beds in it, which gives an allowance of 329 cubic feet to each bed. The beds are of the same description as those of the front ward, but are made to appear uglier by the straw mattresses being several inches too short for them. The pillows are badly made and very uncomfortable looking. Several of the blankets are not quite clean; owing to the want of an upper sheet they cannot be kept so. Beyond the beds there is no furniture in the room. There are two windows furnished with iron bars like those of the day-room, and having no blinds nor shutters. There are two slits in the wall and a hole in the roof to assist ventilation. The single sleeping-room next the dormitory is occupied by a frail patient of dirty habits, and has a urinous smell. The window and auxiliary means of ventilation are the same as in the others.

The block of rooms for dirty patients is very badly constructed. The passage on to which they open is central, and is so narrow that the doors of the rooms, which are opposite each other, have not space to open in the usual manner, and therefore have been made to slide. They are 8 feet by 10, and 8 feet high. They are very badly lighted by small windows strongly barred near the roof. Originally these rooms were varnished, but were found to be so dark that they were white-washed, which