

1882.
NEW ZEALAND.

LUNATIC ASYLUMS OF THE COLONY

(REPORTS ON, FOR 1881).

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

Mr. L. W. LOVEDAY to the UNDER-SECRETARY.

SIR,—

I have the honor, in submitting the annual report for this department for the year 1881, for the information of the Colonial Secretary, to inform you that, in consequence of the death of the late Inspector-General, Dr. Skae, and in the absence of his successor, the Colonial Secretary directed that a report should be obtained from the Deputy-Inspectors and Superintendents of the lunatic asylums in the colony, for the purpose of laying the same before Parliament. Agreeably to that request the following reports have been furnished. Dr. King, having only been in charge for one month (December), does not make a report on the Wellington Asylum, but Dr. Neill (now Medical Superintendent of the Dunedin Lunatic Asylum), who was Medical Superintendent for five months of the year, gives a short report for the time he was in charge.

I consider it but right that attention should be drawn to certain matters which have been alluded to in some of the reports, and which, if allowed to pass without any comment from the department, would lead to the supposition that the Government had taken no action whatever regarding the subjects to which they allude.

Mr. J. Mackay, the Deputy-Inspector of the Wellington Asylum, in his report, says, "Such publications at the *Graphic*, the *Illustrated London News*, *Punch*, and Home and local newspapers would, I fancy, be more likely to attract attention. No doubt some philanthropic people would gladly supplement these, were it known they would be acceptable." I may state that ever since 1877 both the *Graphic* and *Illustrated London News* have been supplied to the institution, and, with regard to the local newspapers, I may state that the proprietors of the *New Zealand Times* and *Evening Post* have always kindly supplied copies of their respective newspapers gratuitously to the institution. The asylum has also a large library, and the patients can get books out of it if they ask for them. It would perhaps be as well to order an extra number of each of the illustrated papers named.

With regard to the absence of flax-mattresses in the female department, Dr. King purposes trying Rowell's patent spring-mattresses, a number of which have been ordered, and which are daily expected to arrive. Should the result be favourable, it is intended to ask the Colonial Secretary to allow these sort of mattresses to supersede both the flax ones in the male side and the straw ones in the female side.

With regard to Dr. Neill's remarks in reference to a difficulty existing "in preparing the average annual cost per head of the patients in this [Wellington] asylum, from the absence of information on the subject of payments made through the Public Trustee, as no payments pass through the books of the asylum," I may state that, with regard to the annual cost per patient, this has always been shown in the Appendix (Table 16); and, with regard to no payments passing through the asylum-books, I may state that provision is made in the Lunacy Bill now before Parliament, section 39, giving Superintendents power to collect maintenance-money in future, instead of the Public Trustee as at present.

With regard to the nuisance complained of by Mr. Gribben, the Superintendent of the Hokitika Asylum, being caused by the effluvia from the slaughter-yards, I have to inform you that directly the Colonial Secretary received Mr. Gribben's letter on the subject he wrote to his Worship the Mayor, and from the reply received it will be seen that it is doubtful whether the nuisance was really caused by the slaughter-yard. The following is a copy of the resolution passed by the Board, and sent to the Colonial Secretary: "That the Local Board of Health, having visited the slaughter-yards in company with their Health Officer, fail to discover any nuisance arising from the slaughter-yard, and have the belief that any effluvia arising in the vicinity is from the land at the rear of the yards, which is swampy, and has been used as a run for swine for many years." The Health Officer, Dr. Rossetti, in his report to the Board, says, "It must be remembered that all the effluvia complained of does not arise from the slaughter-yard alone, but from the swamp, the atmosphere prevailing round which is damp, thick, and laden with miasma, which would be greatly improved by cutting two parallel drains on each side of Lance Street to meet Boundary Street."

There is no doubt that Mr. Gribben had good grounds for making the complaint, and it is to be hoped that the Board of Health will see their way to carry out Dr. Rossetti's suggestion to abate the nuisance, if this has not already been done.