

It would not be advisable to make any additions to the building to provide for the necessary asylum accomodation, as the ground is so small, and is almost attached to the gaol, and will shortly be required for gaol purposes, as the gaol is much overcrowded now.

WELLINGTON.

Report by Mr. J. Mackay, Deputy-Inspector.

Wellington, 20th January, 1882.

SINCE my appointment as Deputy-Inspector I have made it my business to pay frequent visits to the Mount View Asylum. These visits have been paid at irregular intervals, at various hours of the day and evening, and sometimes on three days consecutively. I have invariably found the premises clean and in good order. I have frequently been present at meal-time, when the food seemed to me to be of good quality, well cooked, substantial, and abundant. In a previous report I recommended flax mattresses with straw palliasses for all clean patients, instead of the straw mattresses in general use. I did so because several of the female patients had complained to me that the straw mattresses were generally uncomfortable, and especially difficult to sleep upon when newly filled, because of their convexity. Since then a good many of the straw beds in the male ward have been replaced by flax mattresses; but a like measure of comfort has not yet been extended to the female ward, where it is quite as much if not more needed. I must say that some of the beds in the female ward look to me anything but comfortable; and, if they must be stuffed with straw, the straw ought to be renewed more frequently than is the case at present. Medical men, I believe, are of opinion that the accommodation provided for the insane should, as far as possible, be such as they have been accustomed to in their own homes. There are few people in the colony who cannot afford a flax bed, so that by adopting that material for general use there need be no fear of rendering the patients too luxurious. On the whole, I have no hesitation in saying, from what I have seen, that the physical wants of the inmates of Mount View receive careful attention.

For mental recreation indoors the patients in the male ward have two billiard-tables, draughts, and books. During my visits I have occasionally seen a game of billiards and of draughts going on, and a few of the patients reading or pretending to read. The books, some of them at least, while instructive, are not very entertaining, being chiefly school-readers. Such publications as 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 supply these, were it known they would be acceptable. There is also a good bowling-green for the male patients, where the game is played, I understand, twice a week. A good many of the male patients go out to work in the grounds, and seem all the healthier and happier for the exercise. Others do no work, and the only relief to the monotony of their existence seems to be an occasional walk. During the day I have generally found a number of them wandering disconsolately about the corridors or moping in the day-rooms. Many of these seem temporarily relieved by a little conversation or a hearty shake of the hand. In the female ward there are books similar to those in the male ward, but I do not remember seeing many of them in use. In fact the female patients do next to nothing, with the exception of helping occasionally at meal-times. The Matron informs me they will not work, and that really there is little for them to do. In the Nelson Asylum the same complaint used to be made; but long before I left Nelson the present Superintendent, Mr. Mills, had succeeded in inducing a great majority of both male and female patients to take an interest in some kind of rational employment. The females, for example, did a good deal of sewing, knitting, and crochet-work, in addition to most of the household-work in their own ward. His efforts seemed to me to be most beneficial in increasing the contentment and apparent happiness of the patients, and in directing their attention from the malady with which they were afflicted. I am glad to find that the present Superintendent of Mount View, Dr. King—whose appointment, by the way, seems to me in every respect a most happy one—pays special attention to the mental relaxation of his patients. On the occasion of my last visit the wards were nearly empty, most of the patients being outside enjoying themselves. In addition to the above means of recreation there is also a weekly entertainment for male and female patients. I was present at one kindly given by an amateur dramatic company, which seemed to afford intense amusement to all in the room. The Wellington Volunteer Artillery Band has also very generously devoted several Saturday afternoons to a musical entertainment for the benefit of the patients in the asylum grounds.

Though attention has been so repeatedly and so urgently drawn to the state of the back wards for dangerous male and female patients, I consider it my duty once more to impress upon the Government the necessity of immediate action in that part of the asylum. These wards have been so frequently condemned by experts and others as utterly unfit for the purpose for which they are intended, that I do hope no time will be lost in replacing them by buildings fit to be inhabited by human beings.*

In the male back ward two patients, subject to very violent fits of insanity, and, when the fit is on them, exceedingly dangerous, are under a mild form of restraint. Their outer clothing is a canvas combination garment, canvas being the only material they will not destroy. A canvas strap connects the trousers at the ankles, and two side straps limit the motions of the arms. The technical name for such a dress is I believe a camisole. These patients when excited are apt to use teeth, fists, and feet in assaulting other patients and the attendants. When out of their rooms they require to be carefully watched; in fact, a warder is constantly on guard over the more violent of the two, and two men are required to give him exercise in the yard and to move him from room to room. Under these circumstances the mild form of restraint adopted, is, I consider, highly necessary and perfectly justifiable.

The present site of the Mount View Asylum, I am aware, has been condemned by some because it is hilly and will be found more and more unsuitable as the asylum grows. Experts at Home, however, are unanimously opposed to large asylums, and in favour of a central asylum of moderate size for acute cases, with a number of small cottage-asylums in the same grounds. In each of these cottage-asylums an attendant lives in charge of several patients, who thus enjoy something like home life. Though the

* A sum has been placed on the Estimates for this service.