

site of Mount View is far from level, yet, by the expenditure of a little more prison labour, and a rearrangement of the level ground at the back now covered with lumber, ample space might be found for exercising-yards. Moreover, I fail to see why the insane should not enjoy a little variety in the shape of hill and dale, quite as much as the sane; indeed, I know of one asylum—the Mountrose Asylum—where there is an artificial mound specially constructed to enable the inmates to get a peep outside the four walls. Several gentlemen who have visited the asylum and inspected the grounds with me are of opinion that the site can be made suitable. It might, therefore, be expedient to obtain the opinion of a commission of experts before the site is finally condemned.

*Report by A. H. Neill, M.D., late Medical Superintendent.*

20th March, 1882.

OWING to certain disclosures made at a Commission of Inquiry into the management and working of this hospital for treatment and care of the insane, the Government considered it advisable to consolidate the offices previously held by a Superintendent and a Visiting Medical Officer, and appointed a Medical Superintendent to reside on the premises, and have full power and control over the entire establishment, and be held directly responsible to Government for the proper performance of his duties. Having been selected to fill this post, I assumed charge at the close of June, 1881; prior, however, to doing so, I had made a very close inspection of the asylum in company with the late Dr. Skae, Inspector of Asylums, during the month of May, and he pointed out to me the various improvements and alterations in the building which he had submitted to Government, and for which sanction had been obtained. These changes involved considerable expenditure, and were greatly needed; they consisted of a new building where what were termed the back wards stood, and were intended for the worst class of patients—those who were dangerous to themselves and others, and those who were of filthy habits and unfit to associate with other patients. In addition to this accommodation it was intended to erect a suitable set of offices, such as laundry and drying-room, cow-house, stabling, and other out-buildings, but during my term of residence nothing was ever done towards carrying out Dr. Skae's suggestions, which I was very anxious to see done prior to the beginning of the winter season.

The buildings generally are in good condition, and several important alterations were effected during the year in the direction of ventilation, drainage, and additions, but nothing was done in the back wards beyond relaying portions of the brickwork in airing-court, as it was not expedient to lay out any money on buildings which were supposed to be condemned for removal.

The water-supply has been ample and good, and the means available for extinguishing fires ample. The fire-hose was tested on several occasions, with a view to practising the attendants with its use.

Fires were kept up in all wards occupied by the patients during cold and wet weather, and both day-rooms and corridors are well lighted by gas.

The rations supplied have been good, and no complaints have been made regarding them; but it appeared to me that the supply of vegetables in the dietary allowance was not sufficient, owing, no doubt, to the small space of ground used as a garden not producing enough for every-day use. There are two items in a dietary scale for asylums which ought to be in an almost unlimited quantity, viz., milk and vegetables, and neither of these should require to be purchased.

During my tenure of office this garden was considerably enlarged, and an ample stock of vegetables for winter and spring use planted. A number of cows were also purchased, which gave an ample suppl. of good milk, and for the winter feeding of which several acres of land were laid down in crop oats and grass, and about an acre of mangold.

A piece of land about two acres in dimension was being broken up, cleared, and fenced, with a view to planting potatoes for next season, and thereby doing away with the necessity of buying any, thus saving a considerable sum yearly.

The condition of the clothing was not good, everything being pretty well worn, but this was at once rectified, and both clothing and bedding are ample in quantity and of good quality. The mattresses had formerly been of straw, but have been changed to flax, and thereby made more comfortable, and the appearance of the dormitories made more cheerful by the addition of white counterpanes, and in the female side the addition of small strips of carpet by each bedside.

There have been the usual fortnightly dances, varied occasionally by a concert or exhibition of dissolving views; a number of ladies and gentlemen in Wellington giving their services most cheerfully towards providing amusement for the patients, a large proportion of whom have always been present and conducted themselves with propriety. I observed at the dances that there was a tendency on the part of the attendants to consider them as being solely for their amusement, and not for the patients—a fact to be deplored, but also remediable.

By the exertions of a few gentlemen a sum of money was raised as a recreation-fund, by means of a concert given in Wellington, with a view to providing more varied amusement than was attainable by the patients, and during the summer it was intended that the money was to be used for giving a picnic party to the country for as many patients as could safely be taken, and this I believe was carried out.

Owing to the position of the asylum, and the natural difficulties to be contended with, it is impossible to employ the male patients at any outdoor work which would be permanently remunerative. It had been the custom to keep them working with pick, shovel, and barrow, levelling hill-tops and filling-in the gullies; but, of all work least suitable for lunatic patients, that is the least fitted for them. Variety in employment, work in which they may be induced or disposed to take an interest or to which they may have been used prior to admission, is what they need; and such employment at Mount View is not easily attainable, where farming is impracticable; but when more land has been cleared and fenced it will be possible to do something to vary the work. On most fine days all the patients, male and female, were sent out from the asylum-grounds for walking exercise into the country and to the beach, of course excepting the refractory and infirm cases, and these walks seem to be much appreciated, and were of decided benefit.