

DUNEDIN.

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

THE Dunedin Asylum consists of a number of low wooden buildings with iron roofs on the level of the soil, and are placed on an elevated site close to the Town Belt. The buildings were originally many years since used as soldiers' barracks, and were removed to their present site by Mr. Hume after much labour and trouble. They have been from time to time added to, as necessity for increased accommodation arose, and at present they are crowded into a limited space of ground. The condition of the buildings is bad, more especially the old portions, the wood and iron being worn out through age, and scarcely habitable were it not for paint and putty. The flooring has given way in many places, owing to decay of the timbers, and, except in newer portions of the building, the roofs and skylights leak like a sieve. This state of the buildings has been a source of much trouble, as it has not been considered desirable to expend much money on permanent repairs, seeing that before very long a large portion must be given over to the Governors of the new high school, and that removal to the new asylum at Seacliff must soon take place.

The drainage system is defective. The water-closets and baths, with pantry-sinks and sculleries, being all located in interior of the buildings. The drainage necessarily passes under the sleeping rooms to outside of the building, where they empty into cesspools, situated too closely to windows of dormitories and day-rooms, and with the overflow trickling into an open drain running parallel with the greatest length of the asylum at a distance of only 70 feet, and giving out a dreadful stench day and night. The closets are merely long troughs containing water, requiring to be filled by hand, and cleared out at intervals during the day, which means an insanitary condition of things, and a need for a liberal use of disinfectants and deodorizers.

The water in use has been supplied from the town pipes, but, owing to the supply being only on during the night, it has of course been limited in quantity. A large tank was built by Mr. Hume, which stored for daily use 2,800 gallons, but in case of fire during the day the whole mass of buildings was at the mercy of that element; however, owing to there being a great many doors opening from the wards on to the ground directly, I do not think that any risk to life could occur.

With the exception of a very few pieces, the whole of the fire-hose is old and worn out, and burst when tested; but, there being no water-pressure, fire-hose, even if new, would prove more ornamental than useful.

The wards and dormitories are scrupulously clean and sweet-smelling, while the windows are open in daytime, but having an evil odour at night, owing chiefly to being so close to the surface of the ground, which, after so many years of occupation, has become saturated with emanations from the inmates, and consequently gives out an unpleasant smell during the night.

The condition of the bedding and clothing is very good, and all are maintained in excellent order and cleanliness.

The rations are of the best quality and sufficient in quantity; they are well cooked and prepared and are served up to the patients with every regard to the decencies of life; the tables always have clean damask cloths on them at meals, and all utensils for table use are kept clean and bright, though of a homely character.

The patients are waited on during their meals by the attendants.

Owing to nearly all the better class of patients being removed to Seacliff temporary Asylum, there are very few among the males in this asylum who are either willing or able to work in any way. A few are occupied daily in the garden, perhaps not more than six, and about the same number are employed in cutting up firewood for daily use; the remainder here are cases that cannot be employed in any manner. During summer months there are no dances held, the season when they begin being the Queen's Birthday, and continuing till the 9th November. A supply of illustrated papers and periodicals as well as daily papers is obtained, but of the former there is not sufficient, owing to Seacliff taking a portion; an increased number will be obtained. A bagatelle-table is in front male ward here, and is constantly in use.

The bread made here is supplied to hospital, gaol, and Seacliff Asylum, at a cost of 4½d. for 4-lb. loaf. A baker is kept on staff, and has an assistant from among the patients; the bread is thus supplied at cost price, and is uniformly of good quality.

Firewood is chiefly used for heating wards, and is obtained from Seacliff at merely the cost of carriage, thereby saving a considerable sum.

All the potatoes used are grown on the farm at Seacliff, and are of best quality, and the ration in sufficient quantity; they are delivered here at merely cost of carriage. Vegetables are grown in the garden belonging to the institution, and have been issued in ample quantity.

All the soiled clothing of patients at Seacliff is sent in to town, and washed here, and clean articles sent out weekly. As yet there is no laundry at Seacliff, and if there was it would only necessitate a double set of servants and increased expense, which is avoided by having the washing done here. A considerable saving in expenditure is made by having nearly every article of raiment required by the female patients, as well as all bedding, &c., made and repaired by the females, a larger proportion of whom can thus be employed than among the males; and the greatest credit is due to the Matron for her unflagging energy and patience in trying to persuade the females to keep occupied, and to make their work remunerative.

A shoemakers' shop has been established, and all the boots and shoes are made and repaired on the premises; it is under the charge of an attendant and one patient.

I would recommend that this attendant be permanently employed in above capacity solely, and another man taken on the staff as an attendant.

The proportion of male and female attendants to the patients is too small for safety, as, for instance, in the refractory and dangerous patients' ward there are fifty-three patients, and though there are nominally four male attendants for this ward, yet, by having one occupied daily in shoemaking, and