

The work of conducting an asylum situated as the Dunedin one is at the present time must be harassing and most disheartening to the Superintendent. An increase of thirteen in the number of patients since the month of February has added much to his difficulties, and rendered the completion and occupation of the new Seacliff Asylum the more urgent. There is not a single bed at liberty; on the contrary, "shakedowns" are placed at night in already overcrowded dormitories. The attendants likewise suffer much inconvenience as regards their accommodation. The periodical visits paid to Seacliff at an early hour in the morning by the Superintendent are also a matter of much inconvenience to him, and a certain amount of risk attends the congregation of such a number of insane persons, at so great a distance, under no proper superintendent. The registers and other books are well and regularly kept. These were examined by me, as were also some patients' letters, properly detained from the post. The orders of admission and medical certificates I found to be in due form.

That I am able, in existing circumstances, to give so good an account of this asylum is the best evidence which could be adduced of the special fitness of Dr. Neill for his present office, and of the ability with which he is assisted by his staff.

4th October, 1883.—Visited the Seacliff Asylum new buildings and reservoir with the Colonial Secretary and the architect. Mr. O'Connor (of the Public Works Department), Dr. Neill, and Mr. Fulton, M.H.R., accompanied us.

6th October, 1883.—I have again this day again visited Seacliff with Dr. Neill, and have seen the whole of the patients, and completed my inspection of the whole of the buildings. One man was in bed on account of feeble health; another was looking ill and was ordered to be sent to Dunedin; the remainder appeared to me to be in robust health. I received no complaints but such as manifestly related to delusions, and there was neither noise nor excitement. The numbers at this temporary establishment remain as at my last visit. The whole of the rooms are scrupulously clean, as also is the bedding. The accommodation here is very superior to that which remains available for use at the old asylum in Dunedin.

I was glad to see that progress continues to be made in bringing the bush-land under cultivation. During the year ended the 30th September, 1883, the results of the patients' labour here were as follow: Potatoes, 60 tons; turnips, 20 tons; carrots, 7 tons; mangold-wurzel, 7 tons; oaten hay, 18 tons; rye-grass, 12 tons; firewood, 442 cords; bacon, 2,440 lb.; milk, 3,185 gallons; butter, 520 lb. There was also a large amount of other remunerative work performed at Seacliff.

With regard to the new buildings, progress has been slow indeed. It is to be hoped that the central portion will soon be ready for occupation; but much yet remains to be done before removal of the patients from Dunedin can take place. The internal arrangements are by no means in accordance with modern notions, the day-rooms being merely corridors in some parts of the buildings, and seldom admitting any sunshine, on account of the aspect of their windows. In the dormitories the windows are, for architectural reasons, placed too high to enable anything but the sky to be seen. The corridor or day-room windows are absolutely dangerous, and their large panes of glass must be guarded in some way for which no provision has been made. The diversity of the door-locks will cause endless trouble and some expense: the numerous keys thus rendered necessary are exceedingly cumbrous and quite out of date. No proper slopsinks are provided. There is no room set apart or fitted as a surgery or dispensary. The laundry is not commenced. Several alterations are required in the neighbourhood of the kitchen, bakehouse, and stores. No arrangements have been yet made for fire-guards in the wards. The two airing-courts constructed for temporary use at the back of the building will be dangerously overcrowded, as they do not even afford one-half of the space now available for the patients at Dunedin. They should be enlarged without delay. In a word, the unfinished state of the building and immediate surroundings is very disheartening; but worse than all is that of the new waterworks. With a reservoir which will not hold water, and a supply which is, to say the least, doubtful in dry seasons, I cannot think it safe to depend upon what can be stored in the rainwater tanks of the roof. If these be connected with the small creek above, there will still be no safety against a fire in the roof of the building. The ground in front of the asylum ought to be levelled and drained at once, and the permanent airing-court constructed. If a sufficient staff of workmen were employed the whole of the works might be very soon completed, and the patients transferred from Dunedin, provided that the repairs to the reservoir are in the meantime carried out successfully.

Dr. Neill deserves much credit for the way in which he has conducted the temporary asylum here, and I am sure that he will feel relieved of much anxiety, responsibility, and fatiguing work when the removal to Seacliff has been effected.

15th April, 1884.—I have, for several days past, been engaged in my periodical inspection of the two asylums at Dunedin and Seacliff respectively. Every portion of the two establishments has been visited by me. I find on the books the names of 349 patients under treatment, all of whom I have seen, with the exception of one male and four females, absent on trial. In addition to these numbers there are three patients admitted "on remand" and not certified as insane.

The distribution of the patients is as follows:—

				Males.		Females.		Total.
At Dunedin	...	...	...	33	...	74	...	107
At Seacliff	...	...	...	195	...	42	...	237
Absent on trial	...	...	...	1	...	4	...	5
Total	...	...	...	229	...	120	...	349