

*Wellington.*

On the 1st January, 1883, there were here 152 patients—91 males and 61 females. During the year 34 males and 21 females were admitted for the first time; 5 males and 7 females were readmitted. The total number under treatment was 219—130 males and 89 females. Sixteen males and 11 females were discharged as “recovered;” 1 male and 10 females as “relieved” or “not improved”: 10 males and 1 female died. The numbers remaining on the 31st December were 103 males and 67 females: total, 170. The proportion of recoveries to admissions was 40·29, and the death-rate, calculated upon the average number resident, 6·91.

The asylum was visited by me on the following dates: 4th and 5th July, 7th and 21st August, 17th September, 1883; and on 7th, 11th, and 15th January, 6th and 29th February, 6th March, 2nd, 8th, 9th, 21st, and 30th May, 6th June, 1884. The following reports were written by me.

5th July, 1883.—Yesterday, and again to-day, I have been engaged in my inspection of the Mount View Asylum. I have seen every patient, with the exception of a female, who is away on leave. The numbers to-day are—males, 93; females, 63. The general health of the establishment appears to be very good. One man was confined to bed on account of some form of paralysis, and an aged woman from general debility.

Three patients were secluded during my visit, on account of maniacal excitement; and two others are habitually placed in their rooms at meal-times, either because of dangerous or suicidal propensities. Recourse is still had to mechanical restraint in the case of one of the men; though I hope that the novelty of his surroundings, when removed to a new and more commodious building, may serve to divert his thoughts and actions into a more healthy and less dangerous channel. I shall expect, in the near future, to see a substantial diminution in the number of instances of seclusion. This mode of treatment is at present absolutely necessary, on account of the absence of any suitable airing-courts. Provision for these has been made, and they will, no doubt, be in use in a few months.

I found that 70 men and 47 women were usefully occupied. The former have been much employed of late in “pick-and-shovel work.” This is a monotonous and laborious occupation, more suitable for prisoners than for lunatics. Dinner was served during my visit in an orderly way, and no complaint whatever was made of the food. I took the opportunity of tasting the bread and butter, and had no fault to find with either. There is a great need of more roomy dining accommodation on the female side. The patients’ dress appeared to receive proper attention, everything being clean and suitable for its purpose.

The whole of the establishment is kept in excellent order, and all the bedding which I examined was scrupulously clean. The woven-wire mattresses continue to give satisfaction, and a further supply of them is very desirable.

Considerable progress is being made with the new buildings, which will add very greatly to the comfort of the present occupants of the back wards, and tend not a little to the recovery of some of them. In connection with the new female wards it is highly desirable that the mound which now obstructs a very good view should be levelled, and a good exercising-yard formed on its site. The work of doing this is beyond the capabilities of the patients. I have no reason to alter my opinion that the present site is not a suitable one for a large asylum, but I believe any labours expended in levelling the ground will add to its value for other purposes hereafter.

I was glad to find that seventy of the patients go for walks beyond the asylum precincts. Amusements continue to be supplied in great variety. A performance of the Wellington Gymnasium Club appears to have given unusual pleasure, and a conjuring exhibition by Mr. Keyworth on Tuesday next is looked forward to. Dances are frequent in the female division. One of the patients plays on a hired instrument, and there is a great want of two pianofortes, which should belong to the asylum. The (late Artillery) band continues its good services. The usual inquiries have been made by me, and the answers have been satisfactory.

All the books are well and very neatly kept, a great improvement in this respect having occurred since the present clerk and steward, Mr. Russell, took office. The orders of admission and medical certificates are in due and legal form. A considerable amount of trouble and correspondence has been involved in the collection of maintenance-moneys under the Act of 1882.

As regards the asylum buildings, I noticed that painting, colouring, and papering is much wanted in the front wards and corridors. The woodwork here was originally covered with a bad varnish, which is still very sticky and unsightly; another coat of good quality would remedy this matter. The patients all seemed fairly contented, and made no reasonable complaints. Dr. King discharges his duties in an able and thoroughly conscientious manner, and is assisted by good officers.

Some dissatisfaction as to wages prevails (not without reason) amongst the attendants.

8th and 9th May, 1884.—My periodical inspection of the Mount View Asylum has occupied a large portion of these two days. Every portion of the buildings has been seen and examined, and the grounds and outhouses visited. The following books have been found duly and regularly kept: Register of Admissions, Register of Discharges and Deaths, Register of Remand Cases, Medical Journal, Case-books, Contributing Patients’ Ledger. I have also signed the patients’ book, and examined all the orders of admission and medical certificates dated 1884.