

1886.
NEW ZEALAND.

REPORTS ON LUNATIC ASYLUMS,

BY DEPUTY-INSPECTORS.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to Section 144 of "The Lunatics Act, 1882."

NAPIER.

Mr. T. A. SMITH to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Napier, 9th June, 1886.

In accordance with clause 143 of "The Lunatics Act, 1882," I have the honour to report as follows for the twelve months ended the 31st December last:—

During the year I visited the asylum fifteen times. On the 27th April, 1885, in consequence of my representations as to overcrowding, 16 patients (13 males and 3 females) were removed per "Hinemoa" to Wellington. Since their departure I find the health of the remaining patients much improved. On the 31st December last there were 4 males and 3 females remaining. I always found the asylum clean and well kept, and the warders attentive to their duties.

I have, &c.,

T. A. SMITH,

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

Deputy Inspector, Lunatic Asylums.

WELLINGTON.

Mr. J. MACKAY to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SINCE my last report on the 10th February I have visited the Mount View Asylum as follows: 15th February, 24th February, 15th March, 13th April, 30th May, and the 5th June. From the 10th February to the 5th June, 10 patients, 9 males and 1 female, have been admitted; 6 patients, 5 males and 1 female, have been discharged, and 1 female patient has died. At present there are in the asylum 185 patients—105 males and 80 females.

I have seen and conversed from time to time with all the patients. I have heard complaints, none of which were rational; and inspected the dormitories, lavatories, &c., and found them invariably in excellent order. Of the management of the asylum I have the same old story to repeat: it continues to be characterized by the most careful attention to the minutest details, the same untiring zeal, and the same happy results. Those who knew the asylum before Dr. Levinge took charge and who know it now, cannot fail to be struck with the great improvements he has made. From what I have seen and read of other asylums in the colony, I am inclined to believe that the anticipations, to which I gave expression in a previous report, have been, if not altogether, at least almost, fulfilled—that the Mount View Asylum, as regards accommodation and supervision, is not far from being the model asylum of New Zealand.

The usual statutory statistics in connection with Mount View have been recently laid before the department in the late Inspector-General's last report. Instead of repeating these here, let me make one or two suggestions which I think might with advantage be acted upon.

1. *Convalescent Fund*.—My attention was called the other day by Dr. Levinge to the case of a female patient at present in the asylum. She has recovered and is discharged, but has no friends to whom she can go. It seems hard to turn her out into the world, and yet she ought not to be in the asylum. If there were a convalescent fund upon which Dr. Levinge could draw, he would be in a position to give this patient, and others similarly circumstanced, such judicious assistance as would put them in the way of making a fresh start in life. Now from the statistics furnished by Dr. Grabham in his last report, it will be seen that during the past year the patients at Mount View have earned a considerable sum of money, partly by agricultural labour and partly by washing for the hospital: might not a part of these earnings be set aside as the nucleus of a convalescent fund? If this were done, and the sum thus set apart supplemented by private charity, temporary provision could be made for discharged patients till they found suitable employment.

2. *Male Back Ward*.—Dr. Levinge is very anxious to make the back ward on the male side uniform with the corresponding ward on the female side of the building. The latter ward has now an airing-court beautifully laid out, ornamented with flower-beds and a fountain, and supplied with

a goodly number of comfortable seats. There is ample room for the same conveniences in connection with the corresponding male ward, the desolate appearance of which contrasts most unfavourably with the rest of the premises. All that is required is to remove certain old and useless buildings in the centre of the court, and to make some additions to those on the south side of it. The laying-out and ornamenting of the court could be done by asylum labour.

The asylum is at present being painted, and Dr. Levinge, with his usual eye to taste, is anxious that the necessary alterations should be made at once, so that the whole of the buildings, when the painting is finished, may present not a patchy but a symmetrical appearance. Details of these desirable alterations have, I understand, been submitted to the department, and as the expense will not be great, I hope the department will see its way to give effect to Dr. Levinge's wishes.

7th June, 1886.

J. MACKAY, Deputy Inspector.

CHRISTCHURCH.

Mr. A. LEAN to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 10th June, 1886.

I have the honour, as requested by you, to make the following report on the Sunnyside Asylum for the period from the 1st June, 1885, to the 1st June, 1886.

During that period I have made ten officially-recorded visits, exclusive of others not on record. On nine of these I have seen every patient, and all parts of the premises. I have found the patients on all these occasions well cared for, well nourished, and suitably, and the majority comfortably clothed.

With unimportant exceptions I have found the whole staff efficient, attentive to their duties, and humane and forbearing in the discharge of them. Since the date of my first report, 2nd August, 1879, observation has tended to strengthen my appreciation of the responsibilities, trials, and risks that await on those who have charge of the insane; and it is much to be wished that those of the outside public who feel interested should visit the institution, for which every facility is offered, and by continued visitations assure themselves of the benefits extended to all patients alike.

The official visitors—Messrs. Maude, Kimbell, and Acland, the last named newly appointed—show an active interest in the institution, and are a material assistance in the supervision.

On the 3rd July, 1885, I received notice of an outbreak of erysipelas, and my report of that date deals with the most unsatisfactory state of the water-closet arrangements, as also the surface drainage—matters which had been before reported.

On the 24th August, 1885, the old buildings were evacuated.

On the 15th October, 1885, the erysipelas had abated, not without deaths, and I was enabled to record a most beneficial alteration in the water-closet connections, connections which, as part of a new building, should never have been abominable nuisances as they were.

The provision of water-closets for the female side is an unspeakable benefit and relief to health and decency, and is everything that could be wished. A urinal in "A" male ward has been reported frequently as offensive, and remains so.

I regret that inebriate patients continue to be sent to this asylum. Without positive contact they are yet practically associated with lunatics, and, themselves depressed and sensitive, are subjected to disastrous influences. As long ago as the 22nd December, 1879, I represented this view of the matter, and quoted a case then before me. There is no isolated accommodation fit and available, so that male inebriate patients are received into the asylum, separated as well as circumstances permit, but indifferently so, while females have no alternative but to occupy the same rooms with lunatic patients; so that the weaker sex are the most exposed to harm.

I have a strong opinion that no sane mind should be constantly associated with the insane, and to that effect have represented the case of a patient detained "during pleasure" of the Colonial Secretary, being a committal for murder. It may be true this woman was mad at the time of her crime, and equally true that she is now in her right mind. If now in her right mind it may not be considered prudent to liberate her; but she, as a sane person, should certainly not be incarcerated among lunatic patients, to be as it were educated to lunacy.

I cannot but again record my protest against the fire-prevention appliances now provided. In my reports, 7th April, 1881, paragraphs 19 to 33, and 25th June, 1881, paragraphs 3 to 7, I dealt with this very important matter, and on the 7th January, 1882, I procured and forwarded a report from Mr. Harris, the Superintendent for many years of the Christchurch Fire Brigade, containing practical suggestions thereon. At present the appliances are most defective, more especially, as I have from the beginning of the occupation of the new buildings pointed out, in the provision of inch pipes to feed a 3in. hose. Moreover in the roof used as a dormitory the absence of pressure renders the hose useless.

The Overcrowded state of the Female Wards.—The necessity for alteration in the day-room of "B" ward, represented by me on the 7th February, 1880, with sketch, paragraphs 13 and 14, the surface drainage (2nd August, 1879) upon which I represented the matter to the Road Board are, I see, duly noted by Dr. Macgregor at his first official inspection. Dr. Macgregor's forcible remarks on the cruel inconveniences attached to the existing deficiencies consequent on the omission of the central block fully endorse all that I have so frequently represented in connection with the subject. Without the central block the present buildings are, while providing comfortable lodging, a source of inconvenience and hardship amounting to cruelty, in that the patients at every meal have to be supplied from a kitchen four hundred yards away, and for want of a dining-hall have to poison the day-rooms with the fumes of victuals.

I much regret that it has not been found possible to induce the Spreydon Road Board to acquiesce in the deviation of the road now bisecting the estate, as through the late purchase it now does; the more so as the Board by no means represent the landowners in this matter, but rather the vested interest of a smithy at the junction of the road. The road as it now is leads to public inconveniences, and exposes to public gaze the female airing-court, besides of necessity leading to contact of the walking parties with the public. I also regret the withdrawal of railway excursions to patients.

The present approach to the asylum was made to the front of the old buildings, and now leads to the rear of the new buildings, and leads directly to the airing railed-in court intended for the worst cases. I should be glad to see the approach taken along the eastern boundary of the property, and so to the northern face of the new building. An additional plea for this will be found when the old buildings are converted into workshops, as I hope—consequent on the erection of the new central block—they will be.

The outer fence throughout is inadequate. The short distance along the high road should certainly be fenced with a wall. A concrete wall could very well and economically be built by labour of the patients. I understand Mr. Seager, the Steward, is in future to have the superintendence of out-door employment; in that case this is one which he could very well take in hand.

It is extremely satisfactory to those connected with the Sunnyside Asylum to find each Inspector-General, in succession, advocating the claims for accommodation so well known to those on the spot. I trust that Mr. Macgregor may be more fortunate than his predecessors in seeing money not merely voted for the institution but expended in the direction required.

I have, &c.,

ALEX. LEAN, Local Inspector.

SEACLIFF AND ASHBURN HALL.

Mr. W. P. STREET to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Dunedin, 14th May, 1886.

I have the honour to state that, since my last official report to you, I have made five inspections of Seacliff Asylum and four of Ashburn Hall, licensed house. The number of patients confined on my last visit to Seacliff was 296 males and 160 females, including two males and one female out on trial. The number at Ashburn Hall was 16 males and 9 females.

Both institutions are in excellent order, and all matters are working satisfactorily.

With regard to Ashburn Hall, in my report of the 10th February I suggested for your consideration whether you should not order that dipsomania cases in future be committed to this asylum, which appears to me to be specially adapted for cases of this description.

In the various reports furnished to you I have gone pretty fully into the several matters requiring attention, and I have nothing to add thereto.

I have, &c.,

W. PARKER STREET, Deputy-Inspector.

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