

I was greatly pleased to find a large party of female patients were allowed to be present at the football match on Saturday, and I am informed that no opportunity of such an outing is neglected. There is a weekly dance, and parties are always sent to the theatre and circus when the opportunity offers. It is gratifying to find that so large a proportion of the inmates are paying patients. Since the 1st January Mr. White has collected from this source £566.

I hope the Government may be induced to purchase the thirty acres of hill land just behind the asylum, so that an independent water-supply can be obtained, besides securing grazing ground. Another immense advantage could thus be gained, inasmuch as the road which passes right through the ground close to the buildings could then be closed, thus securing the privacy which is so essential to the proper working of the institution. The old barracks, known as Taranaki Buildings, should be pulled down at once, and such of the materials as are still serviceable used for workshops and other outhouses.

I examined all the books and medical certificates, and found them all in proper order except the case-book, which I hope will be written up before my next visit.

The beautiful site of this asylum, the condition of the grounds, and the excellence of the management are gratifying in the highest degree, and the pride and interest that are taken in the asylum by so many of the people of Nelson cannot be too thankfully acknowledged. Indeed, I have no doubt that it is just this local interest in all its concerns which has stimulated its officers to make the asylum a credit to Nelson.

Hokitika.

28th October, 1886.—I inspected this asylum to-day, and made a careful examination of each patient. I had often heard of the admirable way in which it was conducted, but the half had not been told me. I find that Mr. Gribben's wonderful faculty for rule and organization, combined with Dr. King's conscientious devotion to his duty, manifestly result in a most satisfactory way. As regards the condition of the patients, their treatment, and their surroundings generally, I found nothing to blame, and a great deal to commend in the very highest terms. With the one fundamental and inevitable drawback—the loss of liberty—I find it very difficult to indicate any important respect in which their state could be improved. They are suitably lodged, in the best-kept grounds and in the finest situation in the district; they are fed and clothed abundantly, and carefully and skilfully treated. In other asylums the natural thing to do is, in stating the proportion who work in the open air, to say how many do so; here, it is easier to give an account of the few who do not. Out of 70 male patients all but eleven are regularly engaged in some sort of employment, and the consequence is apparent that they look well, eat well, and sleep well. Of the 29 female patients, eleven do nothing at all. Of these, two are physically unable to work in any way, and the rest are unwilling. The universal difficulty in asylums is felt here, as elsewhere, namely, the relatively large proportion of women for whom no suitable work can be found.

There is some overcrowding on the male side, but Mr. Gribben says he can get over this year without any further building.

I should be glad to find, by the time of my next visit, that the townspeople have made an effort to increase the supply of books and papers to the patients. It would be a great boon, that might be conferred at little cost, on an institution of which the district has reason to be proud.

Ashburn Hall.

19th January, 1887.—I have this day carefully examined every patient in Ashburn Hall Asylum. I found that all except one female patient (Mrs. A.) were able to be outside. This patient was in a state of acute mania, violent and restless, refusing all food, and requiring to be restrained and fed. Her case seems to be a very unpromising one. All the other patients were well clad and well cared for in every way. Their rooms were clean and comfortable, and evidently every attention was given to make the asylum as much like a home as possible. This homelike life is the great characteristic of this institution, and nothing like it is possible in the large public asylums of the colony. The ability and kindness both of Mr. Hume and Miss Fergusson, together with their long experience, have enabled them to bring the place into such a condition that little or nothing is left to be desired.

Dr. Alexander is regular in his attendance and most attentive to the proper treatment of the patients. In short, the friends of the inmates may rest assured that nothing that care, kindness, and skill can do is omitted.

There is no patient here detained whose condition does not make it necessary. Mrs. A., whose case I remarked on in my previous report, is still undoubtedly insane, and at intervals is very violent and unmanageable. There are at present in the asylum 14 males and 9 females, total 23; dipsomaniacs, 3 males and 1 female, total 4. There are none "out on trial."

The situation of the asylum and the beauty of the grounds and fields are such that it would be hard to find any site so suitable, and the management is admirable.

I found all the statutory books and documents in legal form. Mr. Hume has explained to me his plans for enlarging the asylum to accommodate the increasing numbers, and he proposes to use the water-power of the stream behind to light the house with electricity. Regular work in the open air, and sleep thus healthfully earned, are here systematically employed, and with the very best results.

In closing this report I desire to acknowledge the zeal and alacrity with which Mr. L. W. Loveday, the Clerk and Accountant, helped me on taking charge of the department.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

D. MACGREGOR,
Inspector of Asylums.