

the skin. In most cases we have to keep the unfortunates in the cold, and my predecessor's anxiety upon the subject was so great that no fires were allowed even in the day-rooms. As a direct pecuniary argument in favour of heating the rooms by hot-pipes, I may point out that for several months never less than two attendants and sometimes three have been employed solely in fire-watching—i.e., we have had to keep them in the rooms of sick patients, not because the cases urgently needed such special attention, but because a fire was indispensable, and we dare not leave them alone with it. The cost of materials for what I have indicated would be, roughly speaking, about £100—viz., say, boiler, £20; iron piping, £75; junction-valves, &c., £5 to £10. (b.) Similar works should be carried out upon the male side, but could be considered after the completion of the above.

I trust that you will enable me to proceed with the work as soon as the drainage alterations are completed, as we have good workmen here, and I should be sorry to dismiss them until everything was carried out.

I have, &c.,

F. TRUBY KING,

Medical Superintendent.

The Inspector-General of Asylums, Wellington.

The SUPERINTENDENT, Lunatic Asylum, Seacliff, to the INSPECTOR-GENERAL of Asylums, Wellington.

SIR,—

Seacliff, 13th July, 1890.

Referring to my letter of 7th instant, I have the honour to request that immediate attention be given to the subject of "heating" therein dealt with. You will recall that I stated: "If it were merely as a precaution against fire I consider we should be justified in expending a considerable sum in warming these rooms. At present bedrooms can only be warmed by having fires in rooms provided with fire-guards. The guards are unfortunately insecure."

How many times Seacliff Asylum has narrowly escaped being burned down it would be rash to conjecture; but, judging from my own experience during the past fifteen months, I am led to suppose that serious accidents in connection with fire have occurred with appalling frequency. The risks which have been run in the past are not to be estimated by the recorded fires, as will be borne out by the following fact related to me to-day by the head-attendant: About three years ago a fire took place through burning wood falling out of a fireplace, and a hole 3ft. or 4ft. in diameter was burned in the bedroom floor before it was discovered. After the fire was put out an attendant stayed up all night reflooring the room, and until the present time the fact of an accident having occurred at all remained unrevealed. Mr. Stewart pointed out to me the square patch put in the floor, which was until recently covered with linoleum.

Cases such as this in bygone times may not appear much to the point, but I instance this case specially because a parallel accident happened early this morning. A patient named Roots, suffering from pyæmia, has been sleeping for some weeks in a single room off the main corridor in Ward II. The man has been in a somewhat critical condition, and it was absolutely necessary that he should have a fire in his room. There was no risk of his leaving his bed, and therefore we thought he might be left with reasonable safety with a fire burning in the guarded fireplace. The night-attendant had instructions to visit the room at frequent intervals every hour or so. Acting Night-attendant Fred Buckley reported this morning: "I put wood on Roots's fire a little after 1 a.m.; at twenty minutes to 2 when going my rounds everything was right, an ordinary fire burning in Roots's room. Had supper, and after going to the upper building went to Roots' room at 3 a.m. with milk, and found flames about 6in. high issuing from a hole in the floor in front of the fireplace. I threw the two pannikins of milk on the fire, closed the door, and then ran for water, then put out the fire with the assistance of Duncan. The door of the boot-cellar, which is immediately below Roots's room, was shut." The last-mentioned point that the door of the room below was closed is of importance, because had it been open, which is frequently the case, the access of air to the fire would have been much freer, and possibly it would have got beyond control before it was discovered. (Until quite recently there was no door to the boot-cellar.) The inclosed photographs will convey to you better than a description the appearance the room presented after the fire and also the relation of the room to the main corridor. The greatest measurements of the hole in the floor are 2ft. 9in. by 19in.

That the whole Asylum was not burned down can only be regarded as a matter of chance, and I think I may safely say that the law of probabilities would not usually permit a building to remain undemolished after more than ten such accidents. If this be the case, and the Asylum be worth £100,000, then the value of this morning's accident was £10,000. It is unnecessary to dwell upon the more serious considerations connected with the special horrors liable to attend upon a fire at a lunatic asylum, as these have been sufficiently emphasised by the recent disaster at Tongue Point. In regard to the rough estimate supplied to you last week, I have to inform you that probably £125 would be needed to carry out what I proposed upon the female side, as we shall have to pay a higher price for the iron-piping than was calculated upon. I trust that the extreme urgency of the matter will be deemed a sufficient excuse for my again insisting upon the necessity for prompt action before receiving a reply to my former letter.

I have, &c.,

The Inspector-General of Asylums, Wellington.

F. TRUBY KING.

APPENDIX N.

The SUPERINTENDENT, Lunatic Asylum, Seacliff, to the INSPECTOR-GENERAL of ASYLUMS, Wellington.

SIR,—

Seacliff, 10th September, 1889.

The existing arrangements for bathing patients are so very inadequate and unsatisfactory that I have to request your sanction to a scheme for coping more comprehensively with this import-