

The duties of the assistant clerk and storekeeper are almost exclusively confined to the store, and the time has arrived when a cadet should be appointed to assist Mr. Russell in the office. The general health of the inmates is good. I received no rational complaint, and, indeed, save for the inevitable loss of liberty, patients capable of appreciation apparently consider themselves well provided for. The wards were clean, and the corridors and sitting-rooms were brightened by pictures, flowers, and hanging brackets of greenery, making an effect which was decidedly pleasant. The ventilation is not yet quite satisfactory, though very considerably improved, and the works in progress are calculated to materially assist towards the desired end. The administration of the Hospital in all its parts is most methodical. I am glad to find Dr. Gow much improved in health, and attending to his duties with unabated vigour. We discussed various cases, and again went into the question of the vastly disproportionate number of patients in this Hospital with goiterous enlargements. Dr. Gow is going to carefully investigate the matter with Dr. Gribben. Dr. Gribben was absent on holiday. The letters detained as inexpedient in terms of the Act were examined and disposed of, and the statutory books were found to be neatly and correctly kept.

SEACLIFF MENTAL HOSPITAL.

24th October, 1906.—I visited this Mental Hospital on the 22nd and 23rd, and inspected the statutory books this morning. There are to-day on the register 744 patients (471 men and 273 women), of whom 6 (3 men and 3 women) are absent on probation. Neither the auxiliary hospital at Waitati, where there are 33 patients, nor the fishing-station at Karitane, where there is 1, were visited upon this occasion. The general health of the patients is good, and only 2 were confined to bed. There are no bed-sores. The number of patients reported to be wet or dirty is 26, or 3·5 per cent. of the number resident—males, 3·6 per cent.; females, 3·3 per cent. Since the 27th July, the date of the last visit, and practically a period of three months, 8 male patients have been mechanically restrained. The register shows that the restraint was applied for adequate reasons by the least irksome means to meet the necessity of each case. The changes in the population during this period include the admission of 48 patients (33 men and 15 women), the discharge of 15 (12 men and 3 women), and the death of 15 (11 men and 4 women), which gives an excess of 18 patients admitted over the number who have died or been discharged, but does not include 7 patients who have been allowed out on trial during the same period. Of the deaths 7 were due to cerebral disease, either as a sole cause or important contributory factor; 1 of these was complicated by pneumonia. Another case of pneumonia and 2 of broncho-pneumonia terminated fatally, and there were 3 deaths from heart-failure, due to organic disease of that organ. One death was due to phthisis pulmonalis, and 1 to suicide by precipitation. This last very painful case has already been thoroughly investigated, and Nurse F., who had disobeyed the rule in taking a walking party in the vicinity of the cliffs, was dismissed. Such events, for a period at least, have a tendency to restrict the standard of liberty; but I trust that it will not—in fact, I do not think it will—interfere with Dr. King's wise policy of according to patients as much liberty as possible compatible with their own and the public safety. During the same period of three months 7 patients (all men) escaped, and 6 were absent for at least one night before being returned to the hospital. All the patients who are fit to appreciate entertainments attend and take part in the usual dances, sports, cricket, &c., and the same remark applies to those attending Divine service. Somewhat under a third of the patients are either mentally or physically unfit for employment (men, 28 per cent.; women, 40 per cent.); the remainder are, according to their capacity, usefully employed in diverse occupations suitable to their condition, and are mainly in the open air. Needless to add that such occupation conduces to contentment and to the mental and physical betterment of the patients. Four nurses and 2 attendants have left the service, and 5 nurses and 4 attendants have been engaged. The comfortable club-rooms for the staff are well patronised, and the reading-room therein has a good supply of excellent periodicals. The movement is highly commendable, and is worthy of imitation, especially in mental hospitals situate in the country. The Government supplied the accommodation and furnishing, including a billiard-table, and gave a subsidy towards the library; for the rest the club members subscribe, and the management is placed in a committee elected by them. Herein one is pleased to see something of the same independence and desire for betterment, of the same individualism and enterprise that was remarked upon regarding the married attendants' cottages. These last, though not coming within the scope of inspection, were visited, and I am glad to note that the picturesque little settlement fully justifies anticipations. I discussed with Dr. King the question of the training of the staff. It is necessary to lay down a standard, and one that is recognised, hence the introduction of the "red book," which is the accepted one in the United Kingdom. It must at once be conceded that a person merely memorising the "red book" would not be one whit the better thereafter or thereby; on the other hand, it is not anticipated that such a person would satisfy the examiners, because it is not intended to adapt the examinations to suit such, but (beyond the memorising of some elementary rudiments) to make them a test of the practical application of knowledge to be mainly gained by an intelligent and intellectual interest in the daily round of work. The object of the lectures is to stimulate this, and of the "red book" to prescribe limits and not to dictate a uniformity of teaching (which would obviously be an absence of true teaching) within those limits. The learning of some technical terms as a matter of convenience is helpful and necessary, but this is attained without conscious effort once a familiarity with their meaning and application is established. Dr. King and I went over the various necessary works to arrive at the most urgent to be provided for during the current year out of the public-works vote. We decided upon the extension of the main building on the male side towards the park, and the alterations connected therewith for completing that scheme. At Waitati the laboratory and brick and tile plant should be supplied. Here, also, the reclamation, which is really a simple matter, should be authorised in order that what is a waste may become revenue producing. At Seacliff the laundry building will very soon be fit to accommodate