

Sanatoria for the more Sensitive and Curable Patients.

The special neuropathic hospitals for care and treatment of incipient recent and recoverable cases, as projected, have been completed and occupied at Porirua and Hornby, and similar institutions at Auckland and Seacliff are ready for occupation.

Four of these homelike Sanatoria have been built and equipped. These are either situated in a separate district, some miles away from the main institution, and have no suggestion of association with it, either in name or locality, as is the case at Hornby (Canterbury) and Puketeraki (Otago); or, where this did not happen to be feasible, a similar sanatorium has been erected on the main Mental Hospital estate, but located as far as circumstances would permit from the parent institution. This is the case at Porirua, where an absolutely ideal site has been availed of, commanding the bay and the whole surrounding country, yet remote from the Mental Hospital and not within even a distant view of it. At Auckland it was impossible to locate the sanatorium far from the main buildings, but it is placed on the opposite side of the road. A quickly growing effective shelter-belt (purposely planted the previous year, and already about 6 ft. high) will entirely screen off the new buildings in the course of the next six months; and the undulating, well-laid-out and well-planted garden-grounds will soon be very attractive. As this sanatorium stands on relatively high ground, commanding an extensive view across five or six miles of picturesque, open country, backed by Mount Eden and the heights of the city, it supplies all that can be desired in the way of a temporary residence for the more sensitive and curable women patients.

Systematic adjustment and improvement of Diet to meet varying requirements in the different Mental Hospitals.

Under the above heading, in my first Annual Report (made nearly two years ago) occurs the following passage:—

“As great advances have been made of late in the science, practice, and economics of dietetics (especially as applied to feeding during infancy and early childhood, and the catering for armies and persons boarded in schools, sanatoria, hospitals, &c.), it is gradually coming to be recognized that trained experts will have to be appointed in order to supervise and direct the feeding of all hospital patients, whether the evidences of ill health manifest themselves mainly on the bodily or on the mental side. In either case—digestion and nutrition being always more or less impaired—suitable adjustment of food and feeding-habits must be provided for. With this in view a professional dietitian (Miss d’Auvergne) has been appointed by the Mental Hospitals Department to organize, supervise, and direct the feeding arrangements in all our mental hospitals, in conjunction with the Inspector-General and the local Medical Superintendents. This lady, after going through the three-years course in domestic science at Otago University, further qualified herself by taking a special practical course of training as a Hospital Dietitian at one of the most advanced centres in the world for practical and progressive dietetics—viz., Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore.

“It is recognized that, while the scale of food and feeding in the general and mental hospitals of the Dominion, and throughout the British Empire, is liberal—indeed, generally somewhat beyond what is desirable, especially in regard to meat—systematic scientific adjustments to meet the needs and tastes of individuals ought to be provided, as one of the most essential features of all curative treatment of those sick in body (“medical” or “surgical” cases) or sick in body and mind (so-called “mental” cases).”

Miss d’Auvergne took up her duties in September, 1925, and worked unremittingly for more than a year at the various Mental Hospitals in the Dominion. She lived with and among the staffs and patients, taking an intimate interest and part in the whole life of the institutions, and conducting her inquiries and investigations in a spirit which won for her everywhere the help and co-operation of all concerned. Miss d’Auvergne’s mission was a singularly delicate and difficult one; and had she not shown great broad-mindedness, tact, and consideration in dealing with the authorities and members of the staffs responsible for the catering, feeding, and allied domestic arrangements she would inevitably have evoked hostility and obstruction, instead of winning every one, as she did, to assist her in getting a thorough grasp of the local facts, figures, and practical results.

In her carefully-drawn-up report of some 500 pages foolscap, consisting largely of typed dietetic statistics, scientific calculations, comparative tabulations, &c., which form the basis of her deductions, suggestions, and practical recommendations, Miss d’Auvergne has left behind her a sound, permanent, exhaustive record which will enable her successors (if they will work harmoniously and progressively with the central and local authorities) to carry out in practice the improvements and advances which we know to be necessary, but which need more time, patience, money, and practical working-knowledge of the whole subject than any country can fairly be expected to command for this particular purpose as a moment’s notice.

This is neither the time nor the place to give more than a few condensed extracts from Miss d’Auvergne’s report. Her main task has been to gather and analyse facts and figures, and to submit her deductions and conclusions for others to carry into practical effect, as time and opportunity may make possible. Miss d’Auvergne left the Department to be married shortly after completing her report.

EXTRACTS FROM MISS D’AUVERGNE’S FINDINGS AS TO DIET IN THE VARIOUS MENTAL HOSPITALS OF THE DOMINION.

“*Calculations.*—The actual calculations show that in all our Mental Hospitals the dietary is slightly above the average requirement for life and health. . . .