

persons and by the Artisans' Society; but there is no system of amusement, or indeed much in any way likely to withdraw the lunatics from the monotony of their sad condition.

The new Asylum, as at present constructed, has room for sixty patients, with suitable arrangements for their comfort and convenience.

The Provincial Engineer has prepared a plan, and been instructed by the Provincial Government to call for tenders to erect considerable additions to the original plan, which will enlarge the space intended for quiet lunatics, and afford suitable means of separating and properly treating the worst cases.

I hope the day-rooms and corridors will be painted in lively colours, the walls hung with interesting though inexpensive pictures, and the workshops provided with tools and suitable appliances for indoor employments.

The dining hall is spacious, and might be provided with moveable fittings for scenic and other entertainments.

The information I have obtained by visiting asylums in Great Britain and America leads me to believe that the best means of alleviating the mental distress of the insane and restoring them to health is to provide them with scope for outdoor exercise and field labour. A skittle-ground under cover, for rainy days, might be prepared, and regular gardening and farming operations carried on in the fine weather for the benefit of the lunatics and the profit of the institution. But the ground on which the new Asylum is built is not more than eight acres in extent, including the yards and site of the buildings, which is not, in my opinion, at all sufficient space for outdoor work; and therefore I would beg leave most earnestly to recommend that at least twice as much land should be procured for this establishment in the rear of the new buildings, or at some other spot within a reasonable and convenient distance of the Asylum.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

I have, &c.,
D. ROUGH.

No. 4.

MR. MACGREGOR TO HIS HONOR THE SUPERINTENDENT OF OTAGO.

SIR,—

7th July, 1875.

In reporting on the general management and present condition of the Dunedin Lunatic Asylum for the year ending on the 31st March, 1875, I have very little to add to the Surgeon's report. I have visited the Asylum at many different hours, and always unexpectedly, without ever seeing anything that could be made the subject of reasonable complaint. Last year I pointed out the inadequacy of the dining accommodation, and drew special attention to the evils resulting from the bad bread supplied by the contractors. Both these evils have been thoroughly remedied, as has been fully explained in the Surgeon's report.

I regret to say that, in spite of repeated warnings, the Town Council have made no provision whatever for carrying off the Asylum sewage. The whole place is thoroughly saturated with odour, and waits but the spark of contagion to become a hotbed of typhoid disease.

Another matter which demands instant attention, is the fact that if a fire were to originate in any part of the buildings, which are wooden, there is no adequate water supply. For about ten days last autumn there was no water to be had at all, except what was carefully saved and carried from a small spring. Is it possible that the Councillors are speculating on the chances of getting rid of all our lunatics at a blow by means of one vast holocaust?

Some time ago a man named Alison died during the night in an epileptic fit without any one of the officials being present—the only case of this kind which has ever happened here. I was present at the inquest, and was perfectly satisfied that the occurrence was unavoidable, and cast no blame on anybody. I mention the matter here simply because the jury recommended that an additional warder be appointed for night duty; to this reasonable recommendation I would add a suggestion to the effect that all the epileptic and suicidal patients be lodged in one part of the building, and put under the special care of this officer.

Bearing in mind that the Asylum has grown with the growth of the province, it is not surprising that its present state is a reflex of the varying fortunes of the Provincial Treasury. Considered absolutely, as the asylum of a wealthy and enlightened province, it is labyrinthine in plan, and generally unsuitable. In fact, it is essentially temporary in character and intention—at least I hope so. Nothing will, perhaps, convey so good an idea of it as comparing it to a two-roomed cottage to which a vigorous young couple came home after getting married, the rapidly arriving babies being accommodated in additional rooms hurriedly improvised for their reception. Considering all that this implies, it is quite astonishing what a degree of comfort the patients enjoy, and how satisfactory the results are found to be, when compared with those of similar institutions elsewhere.

Taking the returns of Her Majesty's Commissioners in Lunacy for the years 1859–1872, I find that the average of recoveries per 100 admissions is 33·95. Since the opening of our Asylum in 1863, to the present time, the average has been much higher, being 61·9 per 100 admissions. This is a very singular fact, and one which demands some explanation, though as yet I am not able to furnish it adequately. Many things have to be considered in dealing with a result so complex and apparently anomalous as this, even if it do not require careful sifting in various respects. One thing, at any rate, is clear: our Asylum is successful, however much allowance is made for altered circumstances and a selected population. I am glad to be able to say that at length, in consequence of the urgency of the annual reports on this subject, the Provincial Government have determined to attach to the Asylum a large farm in the Blueskin district. The effects of this cannot fail to be beneficial in many ways: chiefly, however, in two main respects. The Asylum will be rendered nearly self-supporting, and its curative efficiency will be greatly increased. Nothing strikes the student of mental science more than this—namely, that science and experience declare, with annually increasing emphasis, that the cure of