

The inmates of this little asylum, such as it is, appear to be very kindly treated.

*Nelson Asylum.*—On the 1st of January there were 50 patients. During the year 23 were admitted, 9 were discharged recovered, and 5 died; and on the 31st December there remained 38 men and 21 women. The following is the report made on the condition of this asylum when inspected on the 8th November:—

“The house was found very clean and in excellent order.

Since last inspection the recreation hall and main corridors have been tastefully painted, and the windows have been furnished with blinds. It is very desirable that these improvements should be speedily effected in the remaining portion of the building. The iron bars have been removed from the bedroom windows, which are being altered so as to open freely and admit abundance of fresh air, and suitable wooden shutters are being substituted for the odious and dangerous iron bars. The wards are still almost destitute of furniture. What they will principally require after the painting has been completed, in order to bring them up to a proper standard of comfort, is a plentiful supply of tables and chairs, a few stuffed benches, a strip of linoleum down the centre, coloured pictures, flower-stands, window-curtains, &c., and a few singing birds or other pets in which the patients could take an interest. It is absurd to expect that the inmates can feel at ease in these empty echoing corridors, which do not contain a single one of the simple articles of furniture to be found in every working-man's cottage. The bedding and clothing are being gradually increased in quantity and improved in quality, and sheets are being supplied to the male patients.

The general health of the patients appears to be good. They were seen partaking of an abundant, well-cooked, and neatly-served dinner. Both men and women have ordinary knives and forks and earthenware dishes. All, with one exception, were very quiet and well behaved. Rather more than half of them engage in industrial occupation; the men principally in the garden, which is in a forward state of cultivation. Only one man is at present restricted for exercise to the small yard at the back of the house; he is very destructive to clothing, &c., and on this account is wearing canvas clothing and fingerless gloves. No other patient is wearing a special kind of dress, or is subjected to any kind of mechanical restraint. No patient was found in seclusion, a resource in treatment which appears from the medical journal to be not unduly resorted to. It was very gratifying to observe that three male patients who, on former visits, were found confined to the backyard above mentioned, on account of their seemingly incorrigible dirtiness and untidiness, were much improved in their manners and appearance, and associating with the other inmates. Improvements effected in the condition of patients of this kind, long sunk into filthy and destructive habits, are a certain indication of conscientious and painstaking management.

According to the recommendations formerly made a piece of ground has been fenced off for the use of the women, and is going to be laid out as a garden.

Divine service is now performed every Sunday by a clergyman of the Church of England, or by a lay reader in his absence. About fifteen of the men and ten of the women attend. These numbers should be considerably increased. There is a regular weekly dance for the amusement of the patients, to which some twenty men and seventeen women go; visitors are admitted who join in the dance and help to make it a success. There can be no doubt that their assistance is necessary for this, and that their presence is a source of pleasure to the patients; but they appear to be sometimes admitted in too great numbers, and this should be carefully guarded against.

Parties of fifteen to twenty men and eight to ten women go out for a walk beyond the Asylum grounds once a week.

The registers are carefully and neatly kept; but no case-book was produced.

The water supply is still very inconveniently and dangerously deficient, as formerly pointed out.”

*Wellington Asylum.*—On the 1st of January the number of patients was 99. During the year 51 were admitted, 29 were discharged as recovered and 1 as relieved; and 3 died, leaving 117 at the 31st December. The following is the report made on this Asylum after inspection on 25th and 29th November and 6th December:—

“The numbers now in the Asylum are—males, 66; females, 46: total, 112; being 40 more than when I first drew attention to its overcrowded condition. This has now reached a pitch which is quite unendurable, and baffles all attempts at good management. Almost all the bedrooms, intended for the use of one patient only, are occupied by two or three. There is consequently no possibility of safely disposing of excited and violent patients, and the risk of serious accidents, even murders, is very great indeed, not to speak of the abominable vices which are liable to be encouraged by such distribution of persons of disordered passions and bereft of self-control. The passages and lavatories are used as sleeping places. Most of the associated dormitories are crowded with beds, to which less than half the minimum cubic space thought consistent with good health is allotted. The solitary day-room of the male “back ward” is even more crowded than the dormitories. This room is 20 feet by 15 feet, and, when visited on the 29th inst., a rainy day, on which the patients could not get out to the grounds, it contained thirty patients, packed so closely together on benches that they had not room to move their elbows. Although three windows and the door were open, the atmosphere was close and offensive; but the Superintendent explained it was nothing to what it usually was in wet weather, when it is occupied by thirty-five patients and two attendants, and the windows have to be kept shut on account of the strong cold winds. It is absurd to pretend that this place, in its present condition, has any claim to be considered “an asylum”; it would be an undeserved compliment to call it “a prison.” It is not morally justifiable to continue week after week adding to the numbers of its inmates. Whatever difficulty there may be in otherwise disposing of the insane, it appears to me necessary that a circular should be sent to all Resident Magistrates and acting Justices in the provincial district informing them that no more patients can be received into the Asylum until the building has been enlarged or a reduction has by some means been effected in the number now resident. Unless some such step as this be taken, it seems certain that some dreadful catastrophe will happen. It cannot be too distinctly stated that this Asylum is already in a dangerous and unmanageable condition.