

The patients are unusually well dressed, and their personal appearance is clean and tidy. A good deal of variety is to be seen in dress material, which I notice with much approval.

I had the opportunity of seeing dinner cooked and served in a satisfactory manner, the scale of diet being liberal and the quality of the provisions good.

Being at the asylum on Sunday I was able to attend Divine service in the afternoon. This is regularly held in the lower hall by the Dunedin City Missionary, Mr. Torrance, and is of a character suited to the intellects of those who attend. The behaviour of the patients was quite as good as that of any ordinary church congregation.

The employment of the patients receives a large amount of attention, as has always been the case at this asylum. 115 men are engaged in outdoor labour and 91 in domestic work within the building; 18 females are needle-workers, 34 are employed in laundry and kitchen, while 37 perform other domestic duties. Thus a very satisfactory total of 295 persons is shown to be usefully employed. On the first occupation of the asylum it was necessary to devote all available labour to providing means of subsistence, by felling bush, forming gardens for vegetables, and clearings for the cultivation of produce and pasture for live stock. A vast amount of fencing and formation of roads and paths also require to be done, as well as the erection by home labour of numerous wooden buildings for necessary uses. These works having been in great measure overtaken, it has been found practicable to devote labour of late to levelling portions of the estate immediately fronting the asylum. In this way an extensive plateau is being formed, which will be both ornamental in appearance and very valuable for purposes of recreation, for, singular to state, there is no level patch of ground on the whole reserve available for this use. The tramway from the railway-station is also in course of thorough renovation. Its course, which was objectionably close to the female wing, has been diverted; and, with improved gradients, it will shortly be completed as a work which will serve for many years with very slight repairs.

A site has been cleared for a cemetery. Some opposition by owners of land on the other side of the railway-line has no substantial basis. The alleged water supply which would be in danger of pollution is non-existent, while the natural drainage of the proposed cemetery site is not in the direction of the property in question. The site is, in my opinion, unobjectionable, and the best which the reserve offers.

Passing to work of a more skilled character, I notice good and roomy cottages erected for attendants, and composed almost wholly of old material brought from the Dunedin Asylum. A new range of ten single-rooms, with a corridor built in wood, since my last visit, are fully occupied by male patients of the violent class. Neat picket fences have also been placed round the mortuary, the larder, and in front of the reserve, where it borders on the public road and railway. These works have been completed by home labour alone; all the chimneys and a massive retaining wall having been built by a patient. Surely such undertakings as these, successfully carried out, should be the best answer to those officials who would criticize the mode in which the lunatics have been employed at this asylum since its opening. As an indication of the economy resulting from such a utilization of labour I would point out that the new single-rooms have cost, with all the fittings, less than £14 each.

It now becomes my duty to notice the structural and other defects of the asylum, its site and its water supply.

An exceptionally dry season has caused a drought here as elsewhere in the colony. The level of the water in the reservoir, which created some alarm upon the visit of the Colonial Secretary some fourteen days ago, has since fallen about 2ft.; and steps are in progress by the Public Works Department to intercept a very slender stream elsewhere for use in the laundry. The water remaining in the reservoir must be largely contaminated with organic matter, to which its excessive hardness probably acts in some sort as a remedy by precipitating it, otherwise serious illness might have been expected from its use; nor is the asylum population free from such danger after the occurrence of the next heavy rainfall, which will cause much pollution of the reservoir. Plasterers are now engaged in replacing fallen ceilings within the new asylum, and in stopping all cracks which have opened. I notice several fresh ones since my last visit; some of which, but not all, are due to shrinkage or warping of ill-seasoned timber. Lead safes have been fixed to take away the leakage of bath-taps, and thus save the ceilings below. One of the hot-water cisterns in the roof has been replaced at considerable cost by a copper vessel, which will remain serviceable. The other lead-lined boxes will continue from time to time a source of trouble and expense until similarly replaced. One of them at present needs a large washhand-basin to catch its leakage. The leakage through the roof of the large hall has been effectually stopped. Small drains have been made to take away the water which partially covered the joists of certain rooms on the lower floor, as mentioned in former reports. There is no water there now; but notwithstanding the protracted drought, there is soft and wet mud. To compel persons to occupy such rooms as exist on the first projecting bay from the centre block on the female side would be little short of the crime of manslaughter in view of their present condition of dampness in an unprecedentedly dry season. The defective apparatus at the laundry remains unaltered. My previous complaints about the "toy" steam boiler elicited a reply that a similarly sized boiler satisfactorily performed the work at the North-East Valley Public Laundry, Dunedin. On inquiry, I find that the Dunedin boiler has an outside measurement, an area of fire-grate, and a heating-surface, each of them three times as great as the Seacliff boiler, while the drying-closet at Dunedin is supplemented by a hot-air furnace in addition to the steam tubes. It will be sufficient to give this one example of the way in which my complaints have been met, and to say that other similar statements of a contradictory character could be quite as easily rebutted. Meanwhile another and larger boiler is badly needed, as well as a good ironing-stove.

In the matter of a gas supply nothing has yet been done. All that is wanted could be provided at a cost of from £1,200 to £1,500; the latter sum sufficing for a plant large enough to supply any future extension of the asylum. The necessary vote has received parliamentary sanction, but there the matter remains, and the increased risk of fire, with many other drawbacks, continues,