

increase of females at the most trifling cost—by the completion of a dormitory left unfinished at the time of the restoration of the female division, which would afford sleeping-room for at least forty patients, thus providing for the present overflow, and probably also for the ordinary increase of the next five years. I have also suggested an extension of some of the present male dormitories to accommodate from eighty to a hundred additional males; this also can be accomplished at an exceptionally low rate, so that there would seem to be no further reason for the overcrowding which necessitates so many patients sleeping in out-of-the-way corners all over the building on the floors, where they cannot be kept under proper care and supervision, and I strongly recommend the advisability of it to your favourable consideration.

The permanent removal of patients to other asylums from the districts to which they belong, and in which their relatives reside, has obvious objections, and, unless for some such reasons as those referred to above, has nothing but expediency to commend it.

The farm, despite unfavourable seasons, continues a source of profit as well as healthy occupation for the male inmates; the most recent addition, a block of 50 acres leased from the Church Property Trustees, and taken over in a very dirty, neglected condition, is gradually improving under cropping which permits of its cleaning.

Fire practices to test the appliances and familiarise the staff with their working, and the patients with the rescue shoots, are regularly held under the direction of the captain of the brigade.

It is a subject for regret that financial considerations still prevent the supply of uniforms to those of the staff in direct attendance on the patients, but with very commendable spirit the female attendants provide it for themselves.

I drew attention last year to the great prevalence of goitre amongst the patients, one in every five of whom suffered from it in more or less degree, but acknowledged my inability to trace its cause. I have since had the water in use tested by Professor Bickerton, who has reported as follows: "In all respects, save the proportion of chlorine, this water is very pure; there is nothing whatever from a chemical point of view to account for the prevalence of goitre." I am myself rather disposed to assign the cause to telluric influence; at any rate, the fact is so remarkable, the disease so disfiguring, and the scientific importance attached to the conditions so great that it affords an interesting field for investigation, and demands close consideration and inquiry. As regards its treatment, when the swelling becomes large and interferes with respiration, or is otherwise inconvenient, I find that it generally yields, though only temporarily, to inunction with iodine ointment.

Religious services have been held regularly on Sunday mornings by the clergymen of the Church of England and Roman Catholic religions, whose ministrations are much appreciated by a large number of the inmates; and in the afternoons large bodies of patients go for walks beyond the ground, which are very popular with them.

In referring last year to the increased salaries and leave of absence granted to the attendants I expressed a hope that it would have a good effect on them generally. I am pleased to be able to say that, with the exception of a few cases of misconduct amongst the men, notably two of theft, necessitating prompt dismissal, the staff generally has shown very commendable zeal, trustworthiness, and interest in their work.

I may perhaps, with pardonable pride, be allowed to refer to our continued low rate of maintenance, as shown in Tables XX. and XXI. of your last annual report, this Asylum having been for some years conspicuous in this respect. I cannot and do not wish to take to myself all the credit of this, and my chief object in referring to it is to express my acknowledgments and obligations to my fellow-officers for their ready and consistent support of my efforts in the direction of economy, to which must be credited to a large extent the success of my endeavours.

To Mr. Russell, the clerk and steward, in particular is due the credit of the very large sum collected for the maintenance of patients, which for several years has exceeded that collected at any other asylum, and which I have reason to believe will also be the highest for the year under review—1896—notwithstanding the larger numbers elsewhere. I can only add that I trust his services, and those of others which I have recommended to your favourable consideration, will be rewarded in some more substantial way than words.

In the early part of the year Dr. Gane, the then Assistant Medical Officer, sustained a severe injury to his foot in alighting from a tramcar at the Asylum entrance, necessitating his absence from duty for several months, without any definite prospect of his ability to resume work, which reluctantly compelled the department to terminate his engagement. Dr. Arthur Crosby, at the time Junior House Surgeon at the Hospital, was selected out of several applicants to fill the vacancy, and by his assiduity, energy, and devotion to his work has proved himself well deserving of choice.

I have, &c.,

The Inspector-General of Asylums.

EDWD. G. LEVINGE, M.B.,  
Medical Superintendent.

#### SEACLIFF ASYLUM.

SIR,—

In presenting my annual report I have the honour to acknowledge the generous treatment of the Government in granting me leave of absence during winter to recuperate my health. Dr. R. M. Beattie, who, as the senior Assistant Medical Officer in the service, acted as interim Medical Superintendent, conducted the affairs of the institution with great energy and devotion, Dr. R. A. Fox acting as assistant.