

1904.
NEW ZEALAND.

SUNNYSIDE ASYLUM

(DEPARTMENTAL INQUIRY INTO ALLEGED GRIEVANCES OF ATTENDANTS AT THE).

Laid upon the Table by the Hon. Mr. Hall-Jones, with the Leave of the House.

REPORT ON THE CASES OF THORNTON, KENNEDY, AND DAVIS.

SIR,—

Christchurch, N.Z., 12th September, 1904.

I have the honour to report that, acting on the authority of your letter of the 2nd September instant, authorising me to obtain all the information I legally could regarding the cases under mentioned, and to report the same to you with my conclusions and recommendations, I have obtained all the information it was possible to procure in the cases referred to, having examined all persons whose statements were tendered by the Medical Superintendent and those otherwise concerned in the inquiry.

The case of the baker, Davis, is to some extent mixed up with that of Kennedy—both men are charged with being “untruthful and untrustworthy”—while the case of Thornton stands apart, being a charge of “improper treatment of a patient.” The inquiry being a departmental one, the evidence could not be taken on oath.

IN THE MATTER OF THE DISMISSAL OF ATTENDANT THORNTON.

Thornton was dismissed by the Superintendent on the grounds that he had ill-treated a patient—viz., ———. The evidence in this case is purely circumstantial, but is of the strongest possible character. Thornton slept in a room exactly over that of the patient ———, and was disturbed during the night by ———’s restlessness. Early on the following morning he was seen by the Head Attendant Newport to leave ———’s room, and in passing the night attendant at that moment he (Thornton) said that he had “had no sleep through that noisy bugger ———.” He had no business to be in ———’s room; his duty was (if he desired to enter it) to call the night attendant in whose charge ——— was. Thornton, in his statement, says that ——— was knocking at his room-door, asking to be let out. Thornton did not make that statement to the Superintendent when questioned by him on the subject, but said he “went there out of curiosity,” nor did he make any such statement when he passed the night attendant in the corridor immediately after leaving ———’s room. It is proper to say that Thornton denies having used the expression “bugger.” About a minute after Thornton had left ———’s room the Head Attendant and Attendant Stevens went in and found ——— in a state of collapse, lying across the bed on the floor, and the room in disorder. Five minutes before that the Head Attendant had visited ———’s room, and had seen him lying quietly in his bed and the room not disordered.

In concluding that the case against Thornton is fully proved, and that therefore he was properly dismissed, I do not attach the slightest weight or importance to the statement of ——— that Thornton had ill-used him.

IN THE MATTER OF THE SUSPENSION OF ATTENDANT JOHN KENNEDY.

During the investigation of this case it became apparent that a much larger issue than his suspension was to some extent involved—viz., the alleged grievances of a large majority of the male attendants of the Asylum. The scope of the inquiry which I was authorised to make did not include the investigation of those grievances. I have, therefore, not touched upon them, except in so far as they are, so to speak, interwoven with the particular case under consideration.

It appears from the statements made by nearly all the witnesses called—as well by the Medical Superintendent as by Kennedy—that a very large majority of the attendants at the Asylum are, and have been for a long time, dissatisfied with their position as regards their pay and hours of