

HOKITIKA MENTAL HOSPITAL.

13th May, 1909.

I visited this Mental Hospital on the 10th, 11th, 12th, and to-day.

The 195 patients resident (males, 144 ; females, 51) were seen, and I conversed with nearly all. Some were solicitous for discharge (though not fit for liberty) ; but there was, generally speaking, a spirit of contentment manifest, and the patients looked well cared for. Since the beginning of the year the Official Visitors and Deputy Inspector have paid eight visits, and continue, as heretofore, to take an interest in the welfare of the patients. During the above period 4 patients (males, 1 ; females, 3) have been discharged as recovered, and 10 (males, 4 ; females, 6) are at present out on trial. There have been no serious accidents or casualties, and the 5 deaths (males, 3 ; females, 2) recorded were due to causes which call for no comment. The number of admissions, 9 (males, 6 ; females, 3), exactly balances the number of discharges and deaths, leaving the total population on the register unaltered.

The Register of Restraint has entries referring to the use of gloves in the case of one man and one woman, in both cases for divesting themselves of clothing, violence, and destructiveness.

I found the wards clean, in good order, and airy, and the whole establishment bore testimony of faithful work and careful supervision. The garden plots and paths in the exercise enclosures are neatly kept, and the extensive view therefrom, which is particularly beautiful, was commented on by some to whom I spoke.

There is at present vacant accommodation for 23 (males, 12 ; females, 11). The separate buildings afford facilities for classification, but Dr. Macandrew has felt the necessity for an infirmary ward. For this purpose I selected a site for a cottage on the sun-absorbing bungalow principle, giving accommodation for a four-bed dormitory for each sex, with two single rooms between, available according to circumstances for either sex, and a nurse's room at the back. Mr. Downey undertakes to build this economically, without calling in outside labour.

The closing of the Hokitika Prison makes it possible that the accommodation therein may be utilised in connection with the Mental Hospital, the estates being contiguous. With the above possibility in view, I inspected the building, which, I believe, at a cost of some £150 to £200, could be made a comfortable residence for about 27 patients of a class whose presence in ordinary mental hospitals is undesirable. Such an arrangement would be a great addition to our resources.

The farm land is very poor, but is being worked to the best advantage. Some experiments with manures are being carried out.

The statutory books and registers were up to date, and are neatly and correctly kept.

NELSON MENTAL HOSPITAL.

8th May, 1909.

I inspected this Mental Hospital on the 6th, 7th, and to-day, and spoke to each of the 149 patients (males, 90 ; females, 59) resident. I was pleased with their general appearance, and with the almost complete absence of excitement, only one woman being turbulent.

The general health of the patients is good, a newly admitted male being the only patient in bed. The number reported to be wet and dirty is 10 (m., 8 ; f., 2), which, considering the number of senile cases, is satisfactory.

As many as 114 (m., 70 ; f., 44) are usefully employed, according to their capacity.

I note that only 48 patients (m., 32 ; f., 16) on an average attend divine service. Apart from the break in institutional life which such occasions afford, they are a useful discipline to the restless, and a larger number with advantage could attend such services.

The average number entering into the amusements is 69 (m., 54 ; f., 15). A party of 20 go this evening to an entertainment in the city.

For many years it has been the custom for neighbours to pay something towards the recreation fund, and join in the weekly dances. The institution has grown, and so has the district. It is difficult to pick and choose among the newer residents in the district, and, owing to the increasing resources from within, the time has come to discontinue a practice which has in the past had a wholesome influence.

Since the 26th September last entries have been made in the Register of Restraint relating to one man and two women ; the first was a temporary measure to combat an outburst of destructiveness ; in the other two cases restraint was resorted to to prevent interference with surgical treatment. The form of restraint was carefully adjusted to the conditions.

During the same period there has not been any accident or casualty, and the 5 deaths recorded were due to natural and unpreventable causes.

Four men are presently out on trial, and during the above period 4 patients (m., 1 ; f., 3) have been discharged.

During the visit I found the wards clean and in good order. In two rooms on the women's side the flooring-boards were decaying owing to attacks of the borer, and, as the space below was not ventilated, the joists will also probably be defective. In these rooms there was an unpleasant odour, and the floors should be relaid as soon as possible. The sewerage drains were working well, but one of the storm-water drains in the court on the women's side does not act efficiently after heavy rain.

The staff mess-rooms are not sufficiently large for the increasing number, nor is their aspect desirable. I went over all the possibilities for remedying this, and think that a start should be made with the nurses' mess-room by abandoning the present one, throwing it into the kitchen, and appropriating for the purpose the patients' bath-room, which has become too small for requirements. With