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ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
Christchurch Lunatic Asylum.

TO THE PROVINCIAL SECRETARY.

Sunnyside Lunatic Asylum,

November 30, 1868.

Sir,—I have the honor to lay before you for the information of the Provincial Government, the second annual report of this Asylum for the ten months, viz., from February 1 to November 30, 1868.

Since the last report a reference to the tables annexed will show that thirty-four patients have been admitted, eighteen discharged, and two have died; making the total average number of patients in the Asylum to have been eighty-four; and at the date of this report there are ninety patients in the institution.

REGISTRATION.

An omission occurred in my last report relative to the system of registration. It may not be out of place therefore to state here that on the admission of a patient the name is entered in the register with all particulars as to country, age, &c., but more especially as far as can be ascertained the cause of his affliction. In addition to this a photograph is taken, a copy of which is placed in the first column opposite to the name. This plan, which I conceive to be a novel one, is attended with many advantages, not the least of which is, that should a patient escape, great facility is afforded for tracing him. Moreover, as many of them are strangers with no known connections in this colony, friends who may hereafter make enquiry may at least have the satisfaction of learning their fate.

MANAGEMENT.

I have seen no reason since my last report to make any alteration in the method of management. Many satisfactory cases have been discharged; amongst the most interesting is that of M. McC., from Westland. When admitted, she was prostrated both mentally and bodily. At this time her death was daily anticipated, but by adopting the usual system of treatment, the following satisfactory results were attained. During her illness she was extremely violent, frequently tearing her clothes into shreds, and more frequently her bedding; she required the constant care and watchfulness of an attendant. During the first lucid interval an experiment was made by admitting her to an entertainment given by the Christy Minstrels. The following day a favorable change was observed from the fact of her crying a great deal, but very quietly. Although relapses occurred, her recovery gradually progressed until she attained perfect health and strength, and was ultimately discharged, and is now residing in Westland with her relations. Having corresponded with her since her arrival there, I am happy to state that she is still doing well. Experience has proved the fallacy of coercion as a remedial means, and it has further proved that contradiction, argument, or ridicule, will only irritate the insane, and confirm them in their delusive opinions, however absurd such opinions may be. Above all, great care is needed that all cases of incipient insanity should be separately treated: If allowed to mingle with others whose disorders are of a

more confirmed or chronic order, their infirmities will aggravate the symptoms, and in time so impress them upon the patients that the impression becomes perpetual. It is a matter of fact that restraint increases the frenzy of lunatics, and induces them to commit suicide, while the system of non-restraint has diminished the number of dangerous patients. The facility with which drunken prostitutes find admission and readmission into the Asylum is remarkable. Their malady is delirium, rather than insanity proper, produced by excessive drinking.

I confess to a feeling which grudges to such persons the benefit of an asylum, and association with the lunatics who are truly unfortunate. Their detention is wholly unsatisfactory, it leads to nothing, it proves no warning against former bad courses, while the presence of people of this class is hurtful to the more sensitive of the inmates, and very seriously injures the morality and interior comforts of the wards.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES.

The Sunday services have been continued by the Rev. J. Wilson; there has been a considerable increase in the attendance. The harmonium is played by Mr G. Inwood, and the singing is materially improved; this portion of the service would bear comparison with that in many public places of worship. Having gone at some length into this subject in my previous report any further remarks are not necessary. But in allusion to this cheering aspect of the subject, the following remarks by the Chaplain of the Hanwell Lunatic Asylum may not be out of place:—"Whatever may be the difficulties presented by insanity there is no obstacle on the part of the treatment pursued which is likely to cause the patients to doubt the kind intentions of those who speak to them of the obligations and consolations of religion; and even where a melancholy patient has, in connection with his

delusion, entertained doubts and fears that evil was in store for him, an appeal to the uniform kindness with which he has been treated has seldom failed for a time at least to silence the suspicions and allay his fears."

EMPLOYMENTS.

The large extent of grounds belonging to the institution affords many useful modes of profitable employment to the patients, especially in gardening and horticulture; several specimens, the result of the labour of the inmates, have been sent to the horticultural societies for exhibition, and highly commended. The inmates are also employed in laying out the ornamental grounds and flower garden. In addition to this, the hay taken off the paddocks has produced sufficient funds to purchase one of Alcock's billiard tables and a demy Columbian printing press; the latter has furnished the means of employing some of the male patients who are approaching convalescence, and others who, under supervision, can be induced to assist in carrying out the arrangements in connection with the "Sunnyside Press." Not the least important employment, however, is that of erecting a new building for a recreation hall. I had the honor of suggesting in my previous report a plan by which this building could be erected at a comparatively small outlay, viz., by the employment of a mason (an attendant) to superintend and take charge of the inmates engaged in the work. The Government having been pleased to accede to this plan, the building is now rapidly approaching completion, and when finished the size of the hall will be sixty-three feet by thirty-three feet, and thirty-two feet in height, having stage and proscenium and all the details and accessories of an elegant hall. One pleasing fact is that the whole of the masons', carpenters', and painters' work has been performed by the patients. A table (No. 3) is appended showing the nature and quantity of the work performed and its estimated value

which is based, not on the time occupied, but what is considered the cost would be if undertaken in the ordinary mode—by contracts.

AMUSEMENTS.

The means of affording amusement to the patients has largely increased since my last report. The library includes many works of interest, both truth and fiction. The party of gentlemen who give their performances at the Asylum, under the name of Christy's Minstrels, still continue their kindly offices, and afford a cheering and pleasant variety to the other amusements. In addition to the billiard table already mentioned, there is now a bagatelle table in each of the male wards; and for the recreation of those who cannot be permitted to attend the periodical gatherings a portable piano is carried round the wards, the playing upon which seems to be greatly enjoyed by the patients. In fine weather, a drum and fife band plays in the grounds, the performers in which are patients, assisted by attendants. The good effects produced by the spirited melodies of this band cannot be too highly estimated, as frequently the most melancholy patients are induced to promenade the yards and grounds to a lively quickstep at times, which would otherwise be spent in dreamy inactivity or gloomy forebodings. In fact, one patient, now discharged, and residing in Wellington (B.B.) laboured under what at first appeared to be confirmed melancholia, mainly attributes her recovery to the lively strains of the music played by the band.

The dissolving view apparatus still continues to afford one of the principal means of amusement; the mirth and surprise occasioned by the transition from one view to another, has a most wonderful effect upon the mind, in proof of which the patients converse among themselves as to certain pictures exhibited. The printing press has added a very attractive feature to the musical and other entertain-

ments, inasmuch as the addition to the printing materials has furnished the means of printing announcements of entertainments about to take place, which are posted up in the wards, and create an interest and expectation in the minds of the patients, to whom also programmes are issued during the evening on which the performance takes place. The liberality of the Provincial Government in supplying an American wagon and double set of harness, enables me to give some of the patients excursions to the suburbs, and in other respects has proved a most useful addition to the property of the Asylum. During last and the present summer picnic parties of about forty are taken to the Selwyn and to Lyttelton, all of which have been enjoyed as heartily as if those taking part in them had been in a state of mental health, and frequent wishes are expressed which indicate a lively recollection of these events and an anxious desire for repetition. An enumeration of those ladies and gentlemen, who by their assistance and support in various ways have assisted in carrying out the many means of ameliorating the condition of the inmates, would occupy too much space, and indeed I am certain, is not desired by them. But I cannot permit this opportunity to pass without recording my acknowledgements for many acts of personal courtesy to myself; and material proof of their kind sympathy and co-operation, on behalf of the unfortunate beings placed under my charge. Every amusement that the patient can be indulged in with security should be allowed; and in this powerful means of drawing the lunatic from his disordered train of thought the affluent possess much greater advantages than the needy.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, I would venture to take upon myself to say that were it possible for the public to become more intimately acquainted with the working details of the asylums for

the insane, and of the various and wonderful phases of mental derangement, no amount of reasonable expense would be grudged. All would be ready to admit that any outlay, having for its object the comfort and relief of those labouring under this direful visitation was money well spent. Though for obvious reasons it is not desirable to give too great facility of access to these institutions to visitors whose motive may be one of morbid or idle curiosity, yet under proper restrictions, and when visitors are actuated by feelings of less objectionable character, doubtless some good may result to both visitors and patients—to the visitor in exacting a feeling of pity which may result in some display of good feeling or active benevolence, and to the patient in affording a change in the stagnant current of a lunatic's life. In any event, those who may only read of, or those who may be brought into contact with the insane, will assuredly be brought heartily to reiterate the prayer of Dr Johnson, "That in whatever shape affliction might pursue him, the Almighty might not visit upon him the most terrible evil to which human nature could be subjected—the loss of reason."

Return of inmates, showing their nationality, from February 1 to October 31, 1868:—England, 38; Ireland, 36; Scotland, 8; France, 2; Germany, 1; Holland, 1; America, 2; Sweden, 1; Hebrew, 1; total, 90.

Return of patients admitted, discharged, and died from February 1st to October 31st, 1868:—January, 79 remaining; February, 5 admitted, 2 discharged, 79 remaining; March, 6 admitted, 2 discharged, 83 remaining; April, 3 admitted, 2 discharged, 84 remaining; May, 2 discharged, 82 remaining; June, 2 admitted, 2 discharged, 2 died; 80 remaining; July, 7 admitted, 3 discharged, 84 remaining; August, 4 admitted, 1 discharged, 87 remaining; September, 2 admitted, 2 discharged, 87 remaining; October, 3 admitted, 90 remaining. Total—Admitted, 32; discharged, 16; died, 2; increase, 14.

Return showing the amount of wages earned by the patients from February 1 to October 31, 1868:—4 gardeners, 39 weeks at 4s per day, £187 4s; 4 masons, 39 weeks at 4s per day, £187 4s; 4 brickmakers, 39 weeks at 4s per day, £187 4s; 1 painter, 39 weeks at 4s per day, £46 16s; 2 carpenters, 39 weeks at 4s per day, £98 12s; 2 tailors, 39 weeks at 4s per day, £98 12s; 4 laborers, 39 weeks at 2s per day, £93 12s; 8 women washing at per week, 39 weeks at 16s per week, £31 4s; women, needlework, including repairs of clothes, mattress making, &c., £20; total, £940 8s.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
(Signed) E. W. SEAGER,
Steward.

