

Lord Shaftesbury, in his evidence before the Select Committee on Lunacy, 1859, dwells on the advantages derived by lunatics who are confined in asylums, from the visits of their friends, and he even goes so far as to suggest that visits should be made compulsory by Act of Parliament.

The Royal Commissioners in Lunacy, in their 12th Report, give examples of the distress not unfrequently attending the removal of lunatics to a long distance from their friends. Such distress often operates to the disadvantage of patients, particularly females. It also increases the sorrow of their friends.

3. In a Central Asylum it would be impossible to pay the same individual attention to patients as is done in asylums on a smaller scale. In England and Scotland it has been found a great mistake to have large asylums. It is thought that no asylum should contain more than 500 inmates.

Having just returned from a tour of inspection of all the lunatic asylums in Victoria, and those of New Zealand, excepting Wellington and Auckland, and there seen my opinion confirmed, I am the more strengthened in it. In Victoria, asylums are built in various part of the Colony, namely, at Yarra Bend, Kew, Collingwood (all within a radius of four miles), Beechworth, and Ararat, also a small asylum at Bendigo, thus ignoring a Central Asylum.

Dr. Paley, Inspector-General of Lunatic Asylums in Victoria, whom I had the opportunity of consulting on the general treatment of the insane, gave me as his opinion, derived from many years' practical experience, that no asylum should contain more than 500 patients. This opinion is also entertained by all medical and other gentlemen of practical experience I have had the honor to converse with upon the subject, both in Australia and New Zealand.

There is something to be said in favour of a Central Asylum for chronic cases. But a strict classification of lunatics is not desirable, further than dividing the epileptic and idiotic. When in Victoria, I visited an asylum set apart for the reception of such cases, and witnessed, with great interest and pleasure, the practical good resulting from such a system. But it must be remarked that all the transit is there by land. If a Central Asylum is established, I would recommend that the local asylums, as far as possible, be retained. Then, after a patient has been confined for six months, and no improvement in the case is discernible, for him to be removed to the Central Asylum. The change of scene and surrounding circumstances might possibly act beneficially. I venture to submit this is the only argument bearing on the central system, other than economy in the cost of supervision and uniform mode of treatment, which, however, is not always possible. I think one asylum for the North, and another for the South, would be better than one Central Asylum.

I have, &c.,

E. W. SEAGER,

Steward and Keeper.

REPORT of INSPECTOR upon the Sunnyside Lunatic Asylum, near Christchurch, Canterbury.

30th May, 1871.

I HAVE much gratification in being able to report that, on visiting the above-named asylum for an inspection, I found that preparations were begun by the Provincial Government for the erection of a new and substantial building in stone, in lieu of the present wooden one. Ample accommodation will at once be provided, on a plan carefully devised beforehand, and suited to the requirements of an establishment of this kind, and to the mode of treatment by which it is hoped to effect the cure of the persons admitted into it. The present building, began at a time when the public funds could be spared for it in only small and inadequate amounts, and added to from time to time, as emergencies arose, but not on any general systematic plan, is necessarily defective in many respects, wanting in both room and conveniences.

The good management and talent for contriving of the present keeper, Mr. E. W. Seager, has, however, gone far towards supplying a partial remedy for what is wanting in regard to a sound plan of building worked out from the very first. What is now so much needed, as the number of patients will continue to increase with the growth of population, is abundant room for the more minute classification of patients, according to their different conditions of mental aberration, and their progress towards full recovery. It is satisfactory to note that a large quantity of stone for the new building is already stacked on the ground.

Since my previous inspection, the dwelling accommodation for the keeper and his family has been increased, and a visitors' room provided, as recommended by me.

In addition to the amusements already provided for the patients, and which serve to contribute in so important a degree to their recovery, an organ has been just erected in the large recreation hall. The acquisition of this instrument at a moderate cost, and within the resources of the asylum, is owing to the exertions of the keeper, and to the kindly interest taken in his work by his brother, Mr. Seager. This gentleman procured the organ at home, took charge of it thence out to the Colony, and himself undertook the labour of setting it up in the hall and getting it into order.

The keeper reports to me that one result of the performance of the organ at Divine Service on Sundays, there has been more attendance on the part of the patients, as well as an increase to the number of the choir. Great assistance is also afforded at the evening musical recreation of the convalescent patients during the week days. Mr. G. Inwood continues to play for the patients at every Sunday Service, and at the weekly choir practices of the patients. This gentleman, who is closely engaged in his business all the week, has for many years past, in the most generous spirit, volunteered to give up his Sundays, and also one evening in the week days, to the performance of the duties of organist and leader of the asylum choir. I am impelled to suggest that some notice should be taken, either by the General or Provincial Government, of the very valuable service he has thus rendered to the patients for so great a length of time, and with so much self-denial. There seems to be no room for doubting that these Sunday Services, conducted with the usual choir singing of other well-appointed places of worship, have a marked beneficial effect on a considerable number of the patients. I found, on inspecting the several rooms and court-yards, and other parts of the building, that the matters I had previously had occasion to remark on had been duly attended to. The offensive smell in the