

1873.

NEW ZEALAND.

## LUNATIC ASYLUMS IN NEW ZEALAND,

(REPORTS ON THE).

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by command of His Excellency.*

AUCKLAND.

No. 1.

## REPORT ON THE PROVINCIAL LUNATIC ASYLUM.

1. *The Lands of the Asylum.*—The present extent of these is quite sufficient for airing, exercise, and for garden purposes, but to make them thoroughly available they should be enclosed by a wall, in order to add to the security of the patients, and prevent too curious passengers from overlooking their actions. A large number of the inmates cannot be trusted out of the small airing-yards, in consequence of the want of enclosing walls around the grounds; and the effect of this unnecessary and improper close confinement on these patients is to add greatly to their discontent, and render their management more difficult.

A building material in the shape of scoria stones may be obtained in the neighbourhood of the Asylum, and a rubble wall could be commenced and carried on by degrees by a few of the patients, if a bricklayer or mason attendant were employed to look after the work and manage the patients.

The quality of the soil is very poor, and far from fertile, and the clayey and retentive material of which it is composed renders it, as is well known, far less desirable for residence than the porous scoria lands adjacent. These disadvantages can be greatly lessened by draining, and the grounds would be rendered more fertile and the site more healthy by this measure; while, with such an amount of labour at the disposal of the management as is afforded by the numerous male inmates, this could be done at very trifling cost, tools and materials being all that is necessary.

The cultivation of the whole of the grounds now belonging to the establishment should be systematically attended to. As noticed above, the male inmates supply a valuable amount of labour; a large amount of manure is produced on the Asylum; and if horses, a plough, and harrows were obtained, by a little energy a large return would be obtained from lands at present quite unproductive.

The economical management of such an institution is however most successful when the labour of the inmates is turned towards producing supplies for their own use. This aspect of the question quite neglects the much higher one of the benefiting the health of the patients and promoting their recovery, which is at the same time and by the same means effectively carried out. To apply the labour of the Asylum to such a purpose, would however require a much greater extent of land than is now attached to it, and involves the securing from 80 to 100 acres, with properly arranged farm buildings. On such a farm, the whole of the meat, potatoes, vegetables, milk, butter, and cheese, consumed in the Asylum could be produced; a large reduction in the annual cost would follow; a much better supply of the articles would be obtained, and the health, comfort, and recovery of the inmates be greatly promoted.

2. *The Buildings.*—These are well constructed and well-arranged and quite suitable for a small number, but are not nearly sufficient in accommodation for their present population. A central block and right wing have been erected, and the left wing is most urgently needed. The male patients are accommodated on the ground floor, and the females on the upper floor of the wing. The construction of the central block prevents its being made use of, the hanging staircase and the large-paned windows being utterly unsuited for any portion of an asylum occupied by patients. No doubt the staircase might be walled up and the window frames altered; but the increase to the accommodation which would result would be very small, and would not afford sufficient relief to the present crowded state to be of service commensurate with its cost. The steady increase in the population of the Province, and the corresponding increase in lunatics, render it necessary that additional accommodation be provided; and the feeling of the Commission is unanimous that no delay should be allowed to take place in the erection of this left wing. The enclosing wall around the general grounds might also be built at the time of the erection of this left wing; and one or two cottages for private patients paying a higher rate of board should also be provided, and would, in supplying a much-felt want, yield a good revenue. Corresponding to the line of workshops in rear of the right wing, a line of buildings should likewise be added, to be used by the females as a laundry, and should comprise a washing-room fitted up with tubs, an ironing-room with ironing-stoves, &c., and a properly-constructed drying-room, that the drying of the clothing might not be dependent on the weather. The ground behind this left wing should then be divided into airing-courts with walls, as is the case on the other side of the building; and bath-rooms for males and females should be erected near the kitchen, so that a supply of warm water might be available.