

8. It should be observed that expenditure on recreation is a real economy, because it conduces to the recovery and discharge of patients, of whom by far the greater number are unable to pay for their own maintenance, and are therefore a burden on the public chest. The same remark applies to reasonable outlay on building, ample space being essential for the patients' bodily health; and unless that is fully cared for, there can be no hope of their ceasing to be a charge on the public.

9. It is for these reasons that the stoppage, a week or two ago, of all work on the new building at Sunnyside can only be considered as a serious misfortune, and one that will operate most prejudicially against the early recovery of patients. But for the expectations so long entertained that the new rooms would have been habitable in August or September last, the admission latterly of fresh patients was hardly prudent, if justifiable. The male wards have long been so overcrowded that numbers of patients have to sleep in the day wards; and even there the space is so limited that they must sleep not only under, but on top of the tables. Such overcrowding, especially during the summer and the hot spring and autumn months, is most unhealthy for lunatic patients. But for the scrupulous cleanliness maintained by the keeper everywhere throughout the Asylum, there would be the strongest grounds for apprehending an outbreak of fever.

I found in the Official Visitors' remark book, two notes, by His Honor the Judge and by the Resident Magistrate, expressing very decided opinions on the evil of the present overcrowded state of the wards, and on the misfortune of the new building being stopped. Until it be completed, I think no further admission of patients should be allowed, unless in some very urgent and extreme case, and that notice should be given in other Provinces that no lunatics could be received from them.

Under present arrangements, the wear and tear and destruction of bedding used in the day wards must alone form a very heavy item in the cost of maintaining the Asylum.

The health and recovery of the patients, however, ought to be the chief consideration on which the Provincial authorities should be urged to provide, as early as possible, the funds requisite for completing the new building and other improvements at Sunnyside.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

I have, &c.,  
J. W. HAMILTON,  
Inspector, Lunatic Asylum.

### No. 9.

Mr. W. M. MASKELL to His Honor W. ROLLESTON.

Christchurch, 21st February, 1873.

SIR,—

I have the honor to report that yesterday I visited the Sunnyside Lunatic Asylum, as Deputy Inspector during the absence of J. W. Hamilton, Esq. As per clause 53 of "The Lunatics Act, 1868," I duly examined every part and building of the premises of the Asylum, inspected the books required by the Act, compared them with the lists of patients and the orders and certificates for admission and discharge of patients since the date of last inspection, and minuted them as correct. The buildings, wards, and yards I found in excellent order, and very clean. I saw every patient in the Asylum with the exception of one, who, as convalescent, was allowed to be away on a visit for the day. I found the numbers to correspond with the patients' lists—82 males, 40 females; total, 122.

The Medical Journal and Case Book is now properly kept and bound, as suggested by Mr. Hamilton.

I found one patient, Elizabeth Welsh, under restraint as being noisy and refractory.

On making the inquiries directed by the Act, clause 55, as to the care, treatment, mental and bodily health of the patients, I found that the last was, on the whole, good. The system pursued—generally of non-coercion—seems to be attended with good results. The arrangements as to comfort, dietary, occupations, and amusements of the patients are excellent, and reflect great credit on the keeper, Mr. Seager. The provisions supplied I found to be good and satisfactory.

There were no patients in the Asylum actually under curative treatment for drunkenness. But I was informed that if there were any sent for that purpose, they would still have to be mixed with the other patients; and I strongly recommend the immediate carrying out of Mr. Hamilton's suggestion that steps should be taken to remedy this evil. It is clear that as these persons are not actually insane, or at least in a very short time after their admission usually recover the full use of their faculties, they can hardly avoid giving cause for very considerable annoyance in many ways. I did not gather that anything had yet been done by the Provincial Government beyond giving this matter a preliminary consideration. I consider it absolutely necessary that steps should be at once taken to provide separate accommodation for these patients, the number of whom, being at no one time probably very large, would not necessitate a very elaborate or expensive building.

The staff of attendants appears to me to be too small, and an addition to be urgently required.

The wards are very much overcrowded, perhaps almost dangerously so. A new building is in course of erection for the female patients, but the work does not seem to be progressing very fast. I recommend that no time should be lost in completing the whole of the new buildings authorized by the Provincial Council at its last session. And in connection with this point, I should recommend that in erecting the new yards, &c., instead of constructing them like the present ones, small and square, with hard bare walls and asphalt pavement, which appears to be exceeding dreary and monotonous, and likely to produce depression in the patients, much larger spaces—say perhaps an acre or two—should be enclosed with open paling work or hedges, and laid out with turf and walks, so as to give the patients much more agreeable recreation grounds.

It appears that eight water tanks are being erected as a precaution against fire. I beg to support the recommendation of Mr. Hamilton that telegraphic communication be at once completed with Christchurch, as the present appliances seem likely to be very ineffective against the destruction of the Asylum.