

Dr. Philson was relieved of his duties by the appointment of Dr. J. G. Thornley as Medical Superintendent, and Mr. Hardy resumed his former place as Head Male Attendant. It is not desirable that in addition to the Medical Superintendent there should be, as formerly, a keeper,—an officer unknown in English public asylums, and sure to be a cause of weakness in management, by dividing authority and responsibility.

The Asylum has been repeatedly visited since the beginning of the month up to this date, at which the number of inmates is 195, of whom 138 are males and 57 females. Both male and female departments are clean and in good order: the health of the patients is good, and none are at this date confined to bed. Their clothing is much tidier and more comfortable than formerly, and there is, generally speaking, a marked improvement in their appearance and demeanour. Overcrowding, though still existing, especially in the male department, was greatly lessened when the women were, in consequence of the fire, removed to the old hospital, and latterly it has been still further reduced among the men by the restoration of the burnt portion of the Asylum, which is now in their occupation. The comparative tranquillity now prevailing is largely to be ascribed to the relief thus obtained, as well as to the greater amount of liberty now enjoyed by the patients, of whom much fewer than formerly are restrained to the airing-yards for exercise, and to the increased attention paid to industrial occupation. No patient is at present in seclusion or under restraint, but during the first few days of the month two women were wearing jackets on account of violent or destructive propensities. For some months past there has been hardly any use of restraint in the male department.

Owing to the separation of the two departments there is no weekly entertainment. Some kindly-disposed ladies visit the female patients once a fortnight, and play and sing to them. This, with almost daily walks beyond the Asylum grounds, and employment in sewing and house-work, relieves the monotony of their lives—to a large proportion of them. A few of the men find amusement in football and quoits, and reading books and journals, of which the supply is extremely meagre. Now that the Asylum has been placed under the charge of a Medical Superintendent of ample experience, gained in a large English asylum, it is hoped that recreation, and, above all, useful and interesting employment, will receive a greater amount of attention than hitherto.

The patients are now supplied with clean white table-cloths at their meals, which are more tidily served than they used to be; but another much-required improvement still remains to be made—that of supplying them with knives and forks, instead of allowing them all to eat with their fingers, as at present.

There is almost a total want of furniture throughout the male department, and upwards of fifty patients sleep on the floor for want of bedsteads.

A very serious defect in this Asylum is the want of gas, which results in the patients spending far too much time in bed, to their manifest injury.

The want of a washing-house and laundry is also a most annoying defect. At present the washing is done at the gaol; but this is an extremely unsatisfactory arrangement, both because it deprives the female patients of their most beneficial occupation, and, because the appliances at the gaol being apparently quite inadequate, the washing is not well done.

The male airing-court, which is laid down with scoria ashes, is a continual source of trouble, being so muddy in wet weather and dusty in dry, that the patients and the floors of the wards cannot be kept clean. The closets and urinals also in the court, though now well attended to, are an insufferable nuisance, and always will be until completely altered. The court should be gravelled or asphalted; the closets and urinals enlarged, lighted, ventilated, and properly drained; and a verandah should be erected along the whole length of one of the walls as a protection to the patients from sun and rain.

A new register of admissions has been opened since last visit, and the entries in the old and wonderfully-confused one are being corrected and transferred into it. The clerk deserves credit for the care with which he has been doing this. Even the new register, however, has not been kept quite in the manner obviously intended by the statute, but as this appears to be now fully understood by the clerk there is not likely to be cause again to complain.

The new wing now in course of erection will likely be ready in about eighteen months; it is intended for the men, being considerably larger than the one they now occupy, which will suffice for the women, whose number is much smaller. It will only, however, provide proper accommodation for 108, whereas there are already thirty over that number; so that, although overcrowding will be enormously reduced, it will still exist when the new wing is finished."

The appointment of Dr. Thomley did not result in the satisfactory manner which had been expected; and on the 30th June last he resigned on account of his health. He has been succeeded by Dr. Alexander Young, of Auckland, a gentleman of high standing in his profession.

*Napier Asylum.*—There were in this asylum on 1st January 18 patients. During the year 9 were admitted, 2 were discharged, and 2 died; and at 31st December there remained 23, of whom 17 were males and 6 were females. Among these numbers certified lunatics only are included; persons remanded for medical observation on suspicion of lunacy being now received into the jail instead of the asylum as formerly, and not being entered on the register of lunatics. The asylum was inspected on the 28th of September, and again on the 17th April, at both of which times it was found, as usual, in good order, very clean, but very bare of objects to interest the patients. The bedding and clothing have been much improved. The engagement of an additional attendant now permits of as many of the male patients as are capable of work—about half their number—being usefully employed out of doors, and of all of them, with the exception of three or four, enjoying frequent walks beyond the narrow confines of the asylum. At the last visit the drains were noticed to be in a very offensive condition, owing to the want of sufficient water. It was also stated that much inconvenience in other respects had been suffered from a prolonged scarcity of water. This was about to be remedied by the asylum being supplied from the town reservoir, instead of, as hitherto, being left dependent on rain water; and a concrete tank capable of holding 7,000 gallons has been built by prison labour at the rear of the asylum. A great improvement was in course of being effected by levelling the high ground which shuts out the view of the sea; and by filling up the deep hollow in front of the Asylum, so as to enable it to be converted into a garden.