

Last year I reported that plans for an inebriate asylum attached to the auxiliary asylum were ready, and that tenders would shortly be called for. I am sorry now to say that this, like many other things, is for the present unavoidably postponed.

NELSON AND HOKITIKA.

The two smaller asylums of Nelson and Hokitika are exceedingly satisfactory institutions. The management of both is admirable, and it would be difficult anywhere to find asylums which more fully serve their purpose.

SUNNYSIDE ASYLUM.

The central block of this asylum is now finished, and authority has been issued for suitably furnishing it, so that now at length the working of the whole institution will be much more satisfactory.

It was determined in May last to reorganize this asylum, and Dr. Levinge, of Wellington, was placed in charge.

SEACLIFF ASYLUM.

On the report of a Royal Commission Dr. Neill was called upon to resign his position as Medical Superintendent of this asylum. Dr. King, of Wellington, was appointed in his place, and I am very glad to say that at my last visit the asylum was in admirable working order, and that there was complete harmony among the staff, owing to the radical remedies which had been applied.

Until the decision of the Government is known as to what is to be done to remedy the defective portion of the building, no steps can be taken towards providing for the patients who must be removed, but I anticipate no great difficulty in making suitable arrangements without much extra cost.

ASHBURN HALL PRIVATE ASYLUM.

It is becoming more and more evident that at present the Government cannot undertake to provide separate wards, specially furnished, and having special attendants and other advantages, for such persons as are able to pay a sufficient price. In Seacliff the attempt had been made for some years to provide by means of special attendants for persons whose friends were willing to pay for them; but it was found impossible to make any real difference in their treatment and surroundings, and there were so many indirect evil results to the organization of the staff that the effort had to be abandoned.

Ashburn Hall is admirably adapted and managed with a view to provide for all such cases; and so long as the Government asylums are compelled to overcrowd their wards with poor and helpless people, and cannot find proper accommodation even for them, persons who can afford it ought, if they require exceptional treatment, to be sent to a private asylum.

MAINTENANCE.

A reference to Table XVI. will show that this year a further decrease of £1 8s. 2½d. has been effected in the cost per head of our lunatics. This demonstrates that a tendency towards economy is growing; and there is reason to believe that this can be carried a good deal further. For instance, I find that in the six months ending the 29th February, as compared with the same period in the previous year, Dr. Levinge decreased the consumption of gas in the Sunnyside Asylum by 106,300ft., *i.e.*, made a saving of £50 18s. 10d., or nearly one-half, in this one item.

Notwithstanding the great difficulties with which the Auckland Asylum has had to contend during the year, it is in the highest degree creditable to Dr. Cremonini's management that the cost per head in his asylum is 10s. lower than in the next on the list in order of economy—namely, Sunnyside. In Nelson there has been an increase in the average cost owing to exceptional circumstances which will not recur; and in Wellington the opening of the Porirua Asylum has led to increased expenditure. I hope that next year Seacliff will at length occupy the position in this order of merit which for various reasons it has hitherto failed to attain.

The Deputy Inspectors and Official Visitors at the various asylums have continued to fulfil their responsible duties with the most praiseworthy devotion. By their frequent visits and reports the Colonial Secretary is kept constantly informed of all that goes on, and in many instances their representations have been of great value. The services of these gentlemen are now entirely honorary; and though, in some respects, I think this is a pity, yet I cannot doubt that their peculiar function—namely, that of unpaid and independent inspectors—is more reassuring to the public on that account.

ENTRIES OF VISITS TO THE DIFFERENT ASYLUMS.

Seacliff.

26th March, 1888.—I have been engaged in examining the working of this asylum on the 1st, 23rd, and 26th March. Owing to the recent change of Medical Superintendent several other changes in the staff were thought desirable, and were carried out with my approval. Since my first visit on this tour of inspection I have had the organization of the staff constantly under consideration; and I am gratified to find that every one of Dr. King's suggestions has been such as there was no difficulty in carrying out, and he has now got the heavy task of reorganization well in hand. A good spirit animates the whole, and I look forward with confidence to a period of harmonious activity. A plan of outdoor operations has been agreed on in consultation with Mr. Ussher, the District Engineer, and Dr. King sees his way to employ in laying out the grounds and working the farm a much larger proportion of the patients than have ever before been occupied in outdoor work in this asylum. Already a very great deal has been effected in the direction of emptying the gloomy airing-courts at the back of the male side of the crowds of idle and listless patients that used to be confined in them. The airing-courts themselves also are being properly drained, and their gloomy appearance relieved by means of flower-plots. During the week ending the 17th March, 165 male