

1893.
NEW ZEALAND.

SEACLIFF ASYLUM.

(INQUIRY BY DR. MACGREGOR INTO COMPLAINTS MADE BY CERTAIN ATTENDANTS, WITH HIS REPORT THEREON.)

Return to an Order of the House of Representatives, dated 13th July, 1893.

Ordered, "That a Return be laid before this House, giving the whole of the evidence taken before Dr. MacGregor at the departmental inquiry which was held at Seacliff Lunatic Asylum about six or seven months ago."—(MR. D. PINKERTON.)

SIR,—

Inspector's Office, Wellington, 16th January, 1893.

According to your directions I made a careful and exhaustive inquiry into the complaints of attendants Arundel, Impey, and Clark, recently dismissed by Dr. King. I took all the evidence on oath, and wrote it all out myself, and had it signed by the witnesses. I lay all the documents before you.

There was a good deal of dissatisfaction on account of the fact that the meat, of which the quality was always good, was often underdone, according to the taste of the majority of the attendants. As soon as the doctor's attention was called to it, all cause of complaint was at once removed; and all the witnesses admit that he received their complaints in a fair spirit, and made immediate inquiry. Arundel magnified the grievance, and was constantly nursing dissatisfaction among the staff. I am satisfied he was the originator of the "round robin," but that he did his best by lies and other means to get the responsibility cast upon Impey and others. He denies having had anything to do with the drawing up of the document; but both Impey and Duncan swear that he took part in its preparation. He also denies having made statements to the doctor when he met him in the corridor; but there can be no doubt the doctor's statement is correct, as Arundel left the table for the purpose of making the complaint (Downes's evidence). There can be no doubt that nearly all the attendants, in signing the document demanding a retraction of certain words falsely alleged to have been used by the doctor, and only in the second place complaining of the cooking, which had been already rectified, thought they were merely showing that those who had spoken at the meeting were not the only grumblers about the cooking. The framers of the document, however, so devised it as to commit the attendants to statements which they never intended to make.

As to the charges against the doctor of having called the attendants liars, conspirators, and savages, the conclusion one must come to is that, except as to the last, "savages," the words were never used. It appears that at the meeting the doctor stated his reasons for thinking that the statements made by Impey and others were incorrect; and then, Buckley and others (Downes's evidence) asked the doctor "If he meant to call them liars?" This is the origin of this charge, and there is clear testimony that the doctor did not call any one a liar. There is no evidence that the doctor used the word "conspirators." He appears to have said something to the effect that the complaints were limited to a few; and the authors of the document used the word "conspirators" as a compendious way of expressing their version of the doctor's statement, and attributed to him the use of the word itself. As to the word "savages," the evidence shows that the doctor was amply justified in using it to describe such conduct. Though the complaints of the cooking were courteously received, and the matter rectified at once, yet the evidence is clear that Arundel made complaints that were quite groundless, and did so in an insolent way, about the fish, &c.

The action of Arundel and Impey in getting up the misleading document in such circumstances was such as could not be tolerated; and men capable of such conduct were clearly unfit for the positions they held. There was no other course open to the doctor but to dismiss them. As for Clark, his own evidence and written statement show that the doctor afforded him an opportunity of putting himself right, and that he declined to avail himself of it, and, consequently, the doctor had no alternative. The dismissal of all three was justifiable and necessary; and the evidence is conclusive that the doctor treats the attendants with every consideration.

I cannot conclude without saying that in all my experience I have never known of a more deliberate and skilful attempt to make mischief in a public institution on the basis of such a frivolous grievance.

The Hon. W. P. Reeves.

I have, &c.,

D. MACGREGOR, Inspector.