

PORT CHALMERS, TUESDAY, 3RD JANUARY, 1893.

FREDERICK HENRY BUCKLEY, sworn, examined.

168. *By Dr. MacGregor.*] I signed a paper complaining of the food and cooking. At times the cooking was inferior; often the joints were inferior. The doctor put this right as soon as the complaint was made. This paper was signed after the doctor's promise. I signed to prove our unanimity. I wanted to show that Arundel and Impey were not alone in complaining. The doctor said some of Impey's statements were fictitious. I never heard him call anybody "a liar," or "liars." The doctor apologized as soon as he found he was misled by Linton. In the office I said I was very sorry to see this unfortunate row take place. I admit that it was disgraceful to behave as was done about the fish. I will not say we deserved to be called "savages," but I say it was very wrong.

REPORT by MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT, Seacliff Asylum, to INSPECTOR-GENERAL of ASYLUMS.
 SIR,—

Seacliff, 31st December, 1892.

I have the honour to comply with your request for an outline of the essential facts bearing upon the recent disturbance here with regard to the food.

On the evening of 23rd November ultimo Arundel met me in the outer office, and stated that the food was unfit for human consumption; he had not been able to take anything all day, and asked if I would go to the hall. He said: "There's only half a loaf of dry bread on our table, tea, and no butter." In the corridor, attendant Impey came up and made a similar complaint. In the hall some half-dozen of the attendants spoke as to the quality of different items of the dietary. It was acknowledged that the full allowance of butter had been received, but that it had been eaten; the porridge was stated by one of them to have been lumpy; the potatoes were said to have been inferior for dinner; and it was contended that there ought to be something more than bread and butter for tea. No other complaints were raised in regard to that day's viands, but it was stated that the meat was frequently underdone, the porridge had sometimes been lumpy, the vegetables were from time to time badly cooked, no sauce was supplied with the cauliflowers, and attendant Watts stated that on three separate occasions he had found a slug in the cabbage. The leading objections appeared to be in regard to the cooking of the porridge, roast meat, and vegetables, and specially in regard to the quality and cooking of the potatoes. I said I would look carefully into the matter, with a view to having the food more to their taste. As regards the porridge, I said there could be no excuse for having it badly cooked; that the degree to which the meat should be roasted was largely a matter of individual taste; and that, as from what they had said they seemed on a whole to prefer it well done, I would see that their wish was complied with. I said that all vegetables should be well cooked, but that potatoes, at the extreme end of the season, could not be at their best. On inquiry, the matron informed me that it was very rarely indeed that things were imperfectly cooked, but that on one morning of the week porridge had been somewhat lumpy, owing to the illness of Mrs. Geeson, and the fact of some other person having to make it. That her meat was cooked precisely as the attendants' joints, and that it was never underdone. That the potatoes had only recently become somewhat inferior in quality, and that they and the other vegetables were well cooked. The statements of Messrs. Linton, Adam, and Stewart coincided with this. They had not complained, and neither meat nor vegetables were in their opinion underdone, though the cooking was identical.

The matron stated that the supply of extras during the winter had been unusually large; that, on the average, there had been hot meat or jam two or three times a week, and cold meat on the other nights. It did not happen once a month that there was only bread and butter. There would have been marmalade on the night in question, but for the fact that though perfectly good the attendants had refused to eat it on a recent occasion.

On inquiry as to the nature of the attendants' dinner on the day complained of, I found that it consisted of baked hapuka, and that most of it had been returned to the kitchen uneaten, the dish from one table being absolutely untouched. The fish had been kept, and I found on examination that it was of good quality. The clerk took the untouched cut the next day to the Deputy-Inspector, from whom the attached reply was received. Moreover, at my own table, we had dined on a slice of the same fish, cooked in the same way, and taken at random from one of the baking-tins in the general kitchen, and had found the quality and cooking excellent; indeed, we had no other meat. No badly cooked food was submitted to me in proof of the attendant's assertions, and no hint so far as I know was given that they disliked hapuka, a viand which they had had only a few times in the season.

I was informed that on the previous evening, before the assembled patients, there had been a quarrel in the hall among the attendants over some fried fish, during which cups of tea were overturned, and which ended in the large dish and contents being thrown out of the window. A new tablecloth was brought to me with three parallel gashes, each fully four inches long, which it was hard to suppose had been done accidentally. These facts had not been reported by the attendants in accordance with the rules of the establishment. Taking into account these things, and the fact that my own experience, from frequent and repeated tasting of the food in the kitchen, tended to confirm the statements of the matron and others, I decided to order the official rations for the day without extras, and in the evening called a meeting of the attendants to explain to them the cause of my action and the result of my inquiries. At the outset I said that an investigation of the matters they had brought before me had modified the views which, relying solely upon their statements, I had been inclined to entertain upon the previous evening. So far as any error might have been made in the cooking of viands I had given instructions that every care should be exercised; but I felt that the matter had not been fairly put to me. To show how large a quantity of extras had been issued I had allowed them for that one day the bare official ration only. I told them that I did not intend to make any reduction in their extras, but that in my opinion there was certainly no