

such cases is one of the most difficult and responsible with which the Medical Officer of an asylum is called on to deal, and it is often extremely hard to resist, in one's better judgment, the urgent but misguided importunities of relatives and friends who bring all sorts of pressure to bear to effect their purpose. They think that in offering to take all responsibility for the patient's behaviour and care they are doing all that should be required, and cannot understand, no matter how explicitly put before them, that there is a responsibility of which they cannot rid the Medical Superintendent—viz., that implied in his recommendation of the patient's release, which cannot be otherwise obtained.

With these exceptions, and a case of fracture of the neck of the femur and another of the neck of the humerus, with dislocation, both in old people, and from rough treatment by fellow-patients, there were no serious casualties.

The new airing-courts referred to in my last report as approaching completion have been long since out of the tradesmen's hands, and, with the exception of a small lavatory block, all the work was done by the Asylum employés, but the protracted drought has greatly retarded their laying out and planting with flowers and ornamental shrubs. They will, however, be completed and occupied during the coming winter, and, being situated on the sunny side of the building, will be a great boon to the patients using them. In the meantime the female patients have, as they also did last year, enjoyed less restricted exercise and greater freedom generally on the large cricket-ground and space adjoining it, as well as in walks two or three times a week along the country roads.

The extension of the ornamental grounds surrounding the building has been continued, but the prolonged and exceedingly dry weather had also sadly affected this work, as well as the appearance of the gardens generally.

In reporting on the condition of this Asylum last year, under date 2nd April, 1897, you referred to and approved of a scheme proposed by me for the employment of certain female patients in light gardening operations, but I regret to say that I have not yet been able to bring it into effect. To its success it would be necessary to obtain the services of some one of their own sex capable of guiding and instructing them in their employment—one who from her love and zeal for the work would be likely to infuse something of the same spirit into her pupils, and thus create an intelligent interest in their occupation. But so far, though I have made inquiries in various directions, I have not been able to hear of such a person. I have recently, however, read that an institution for the training of young women as gardeners is in full operation in England, under the name of the Horticultural College at Swanley, Kent, from which they are sent out to various positions in the gardening world. I desire very strongly to impress on you the advisableness of procuring the services of such a person for the asylums of the colony, who, after she had instructed an intelligent attendant in the elements of the work at one institution, might be available for similar work at the others in turn.

Such work as collecting and drying seeds, staking plants, preparing cuttings, gathering and arranging flowers for the wards, mowing grass lawns and borders, and sundry light gardening operations suitable for women, might, with great advantage to themselves from a curative point of view, be introduced into their daily occupation, and I believe might be even made highly remunerative if extended to the vegetable- and fruit-gardens. If the Government will provide such a person, I for my part can promise to put my best energy into the scheme, so as to insure its success, and the necessary start in the way of suitable grounds is already available.

In my last annual report I wrote, "It is a subject for regret that financial considerations still prevent the supply of uniform to those of the staff in direct attendance on the patients." I was, therefore, very gratified to find that a sum of money was voted on the estimates by Parliament last session for this purpose, and I am in hopes that ere long all the attendants will be so attired.

I may take this opportunity to draw your attention to the unsatisfactory provision for lighting the building. The gas supplied is frequently so very deficient in pressure and bad in quality, and the burners need so much attention, that I have had to bring into use the incandescent light at certain places most frequented by patients; but this, owing to its liability to accident and damage, cannot be regarded as suitable for an asylum. I therefore recommend to your favourable consideration the introduction of the electric light, for which the necessary plant is already to a large extent provided. Besides affording at all times a good and reliable light, I believe it would be a great improvement from a sanitary aspect, as the atmosphere of the wards, already greatly polluted by the emanations and exhalations of the patients, would be relieved of the products of the combustion of the gas. The initial expense might be considerable, but I believe it would be repaid in a couple of years, for be it remembered there would be no loss as from the various sources of escape and waste of gas, while the risk from fire would be reduced to a minimum.

Much useful work has been accomplished by the Asylum staff with the assistance of patients, including the asphaltting of two enclosed courtyards, which, owing to their situation preventing the growth of grass or plants, were formerly damp, unsightly, and neglected in appearance, but now constitute healthy lungs for an enclosed portion of the Asylum. A very large amount of painting, both indoors and out, has also been accomplished by the same means, including that of the entire male infirmary and another ward, to their greatly improved appearance and sanitary advantage. Two carpenter attendants and several patients have also been usefully employed in various departments of their trade throughout the year.

The steam service fitted up by the Public Works Department, as mentioned in my report last year, needed considerable alteration to prevent leaky joints, and this has been effected by the Asylum engineer, as well as many other works of great importance and utility, including the fitting-up of a new dairy on the Jersey creamery principle and a new scullery for the main kitchen, during the year; thus greatly reducing the necessity for the assistance of the public works officers.

The farm continues to be a valuable adjunct as a source of employment, and last year nearly £1,000 was paid to the Public Account therefrom, in addition to all the produce, amounting in