

The working patients were sent from Sunnyside and Porirua on probation to the care of Mr. Gribben. With one exception nothing is paid for their maintenance, but they are a specially selected working-party. Deducting their cost at the mental-hospital average, the value of the work done by them should go far, if not the whole way, towards making up for their more costly maintenance. The work is of a class that could not have been let by contract, and its value, therefore, is not easily estimated; but you yourself, Sir, visited the institution early this year, and will be able to appreciate the progress made.

PERSONS OF FEEBLE MIND.

Our chief concern is for those of tender age, and therefore more capable of training. Compulsory education of imbeciles and idiots (though in many cases it may reach no higher than training for the performance of simple necessary acts) is a natural sequence of the education system, and in asking for it we are assisted by precedents in the special case of deaf-mutes and the blind. The backward child and high-grade imbecile may be set apart as persons who may ultimately earn their own living, and be independent of tutelage. As this class—namely, the defectives—should not be the concern of this Department, one is pleased to learn that the Department of Education has the matter in hand. Our responsibility is with persons below that grade, and as such persons would inevitably be a charge upon charitable aid if their relatives were destitute, I consider it only fair to charge the district of their residence a certain fixed minimum. It must be remembered that with our system of subsidies half the district payment would be Government money. Of course, were the relatives able to pay a portion of the minimum charge the district would only pay the balance, and would pay nothing if the relatives had means to pay anything from a fixed maximum charge down to the fixed minimum. In return for such payments the contributing Boards should be permitted to appoint a visitor to look after the interests of their wards.

Our property at Richmond, near Nelson, is too small for the ultimate institution for the feeble-minded, and the expense of more than one such place for the colony would be too great. Pending legislation, the Home at Richmond is used as an outlet for the better classification of the inmates of mental hospitals. As it was not desirable to brand the place by proclaiming it an asylum, and transferring thither the more promising of the boy imbeciles from the mental hospitals, these patients were sent there on probation to the care of Mr. and Mrs. Buttle, the Steward and Matron. They appear in the statistics under the hospital from which they were sent. Though the best we had, it must be remembered that we had them because they could be kept no longer in their homes, and that, with respect to training, they are naturally an unpromising average.

The highest praise is due to the Matron and Steward, and to the nurse and attendant for the parental care bestowed on the eighteen boys resident. The keeping-apart of so small a number is expensive, but anything extensive in the way of additions is governed by the above considerations.

The expenditure for the year ended the 31st December, 1906, was,—

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Salaries and wages	522	19	9
Rations	257	1	5
Fuel and lighting	13	13	7
Bedding and clothing	45	12	3
Furniture	70	9	2
Repairs and additions to buildings	121	0	6
Farm—Live-stock and plant	71	12	8
Miscellaneous,—						
Refund of small expenses to Steward	29	9	7
Farm requisites, including seed and seed-potatoes	41	19	11
Farm-work and carting	20	5	0
Medical attendance	10	12	6
Gravel for yard and drive	11	14	0
Water-supply	6	0	0
Post and Telegraph Department	1	8	0
Sundry expenses	17	11	10
				139	0	10
				1,241	10	2

Some of the above expenditure is non-recurrent, and some is reproductive.

The following is a statement of the receipts:—

For maintenance of patients	...	...	...	144	5	3
By sale of pigs	...	...	...	11	1	4
„ sheep	...	...	...	28	5	0
				6	12	0
				190	3	9