

In general, nothing is more surprising and pathetic than the kindness and devotion shown by epileptics to their fellow-sufferers. Realizing that they are associated with fellow-beings who are the victims of the same malady, they tend to form intimate friendships, and to show great sympathy, care, and attention to one another, attending their associates in their fits, and proving helpful in every way.

Before separate provision was made at Waitati for epileptics (who were at first drafted from Seacliff Mental Hospital, but afterwards sent direct to Waitati on arrival), I myself was rather inclined to think that the claims made by the advocates of separation had been somewhat exaggerated, but personal experience proved quite the other way. There can be no doubt whatever that provision for the separation suggested is more than merely desirable—it ought to be regarded as absolutely necessary. Such provision for further classification of the insane would add little or nothing to the ultimate cost of our mental hospitals.

IV. *A Separate Institution for so-called "Criminal Lunatics" to serve the whole Dominion.*

This has long been recognized as fundamentally necessary. Indeed, some twenty-one years ago a property was specially purchased for this purpose, and considerable expenditure was actually incurred in preliminary work. Unfortunately, the general suitability of the premises and property was questionable, and when there was added to this the adverse pressure almost invariably raised by inhabitants of the surrounding district when any proposal is made to establish a hospital for mental patients in any new locality, the project was abandoned, and nothing further has been attempted since. Not unnaturally, local anxiety is specially liable to arise if proposals are made to establish quarters for so-called "criminal lunatics"—but who might more properly be described as persons who in a state of irresponsibility and insanity (which may prove to be either curable and temporary or incurable and permanent) have committed some dangerous and unjustifiable act, such as assault, homicide, or arson. The satisfactory solution of this extremely difficult problem is not simplified by the fact that the more remote the locality selected from a centre of population, the more anxious the surrounding community is liable to become on account of their relative isolation and distance from protection by the police, which they are apt to assume might become necessary.

The community has no idea that the so-called "criminal lunatic" is often not at all a violent or dangerous person if provided with suitable environment and necessary care, occupation, and treatment; and it rarely, if ever, occurs to them that the patient may recover—as, for instance, in the case of a mother who kills her child owing to sepsis and puerperal fever, or other temporary aberration caused by microbic poisoning. (This may serve to illustrate the point, though, of course, such a patient would not be sent to the type of institution under consideration.) On the other hand, every mental hospital has a small proportion of highly undesirable patients among its ordinary inmates who are quite as difficult to deal with as the more dangerous of the so-called "criminal lunatic" class. We feel very strongly that an institution is needed for dealing with all refractory "certified criminal lunatics," and also with any other specially difficult or refractory patients, especially chronics who have not been so certified. It would simplify and facilitate matters if a suitable institution were provided not bearing the objectionable, opprobrious, and alarming name, "criminal lunatic asylum."

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that, as matters now stand, every mental hospital in the Dominion has to undertake the care of and keep indefinitely some specially difficult, troublesome, dangerous, and refractory patients, without suitable provisions for their classification, care, or treatment. The results are doubly unfortunate: these patients themselves have a much more trying and restricted environment than would otherwise be necessary, and some of them are a source of serious trial and anxiety to their harmless fellow-patients. Further, the risks incidental to the escape of dangerous, irresponsible persons in connection with every one of our existing mental hospitals is far greater than would be the risks in connection with one centrally-situated properly-designed institution, suitably equipped for the special purpose of dealing with difficult and dangerous refractory types—of whom there are not more than about a hundred representatives in the whole of our mental hospitals. Both on humane grounds and as an economic measure, proper provision ought to be made for these patients without further delay.

V. *Nurses' Homes, suitable Staff Sitting-rooms, and other such Amenities are greatly needed.*

Admirable provision in this direction has been made at Christchurch, especially in the form of the nurses' spacious and well-furnished sitting-room; but in a number of the other mental hospitals the nurses' quarters are utterly inadequate. This is an unfair and very serious defect, because without proper staff quarters many people who would make good nurses or attendants are naturally prevented from applying.

VI. *Accommodation for Married Attendants and Artisans within Reasonable Distance of the Mental Hospital.*

The only instance in which this is a matter of urgency is at Seacliff. Some forty members of the Seacliff staff (mostly attendants) are now living at distances of from three to twenty-four miles from the institution. This is not only a serious inconvenience and handicap for themselves and their families, but it is an even more serious question for the Mental Hospital as such. In any grave emergency, such as fire, it would obviously be impossible to mobilize rapidly the number of men needed to cope effectively with the situation. Further, the lack of housing-accommodation in the district necessitates special concessions to the employees concerned, and consequent dissatisfaction of married men in other mental hospitals.

Judging from long practical experience as to the pros and cons of providing Government cottages and deducting rental from salary, as compared with promoting private ownership, I am strongly in favour of some scheme whereby married attendants could be enabled to acquire freehold property—say, under the State Advances Act.