

These remarks are deductions from my own observations, and although I do not wish to generalize from perhaps insufficient data, yet I cannot help thinking that the use of lock and key is in many asylums carried to a needless extent.

ROBERT W. D. CAMERON, M.B.

Midlothian and Peebles District Asylum,
Rosewell, Edinburgh, Sept. 7th, 1881.

Obituary.

The members of our Association will learn with regret the news of the death of Dr. Frederick W. A. Skae, Inspector of Asylums, New Zealand, which took place at Wellington, on the 26th June, in the 39th year of his age.

Dr. Frederick Skae was the third son of the late Dr. David Skae, the well-known physician of the Royal Asylum at Edinburgh. He graduated at St. Andrews in 1862, and after acting for several years as assistant physician to his father at Morningside, he became, in 1869, Superintendent of the District Asylum for Stirling, Linlithgow, and Dumbartonshire, then in the course of erection. At Larbert he spent some happy years working with a board of honourable and sensible country gentlemen, pleased with his duties, assiduous in his work, devoted to his family, and beloved by all. On the resignation of Dr. J. Batty Tuke, he became Secretary for Scotland to the Medico-Psychological Association, and the general manner in which he filled that post increased his popularity.

In 1876 he was appointed Inspector of Asylums to the Government of New Zealand. On the formation of a more centralized government in that colony, a desire was felt that some competent man should be procured from Great Britain to give a proper organization to the scattered asylums or places of imprisonment for lunatics which had sprung into existence under the rough necessities of the provincial governments. For such a task Dr. Frederick Skae was well fitted. Accustomed to lunatics from childhood, knowing their feelings and their needs, well skilled in the treatment of insanity, and versed in all the details of the administration and construction of an asylum, possessed of great *savoir-faire*, a gentlemanly manner, and gifted with a powerful and colossal frame, Scotland could have sent no better man than Frederick Skae. He was thoroughly sensible, never in extremes, having the prime wisdom to know the relative importance of things, with a happy command of temper, and a keen sense of the ludicrous.

Dr. Skae's first Report on the State of the Asylums in the Colony was laid before the Parliament in 1877, and fully proved the necessity for reform. He showed that there were 788 lunatics in the asylums, but there was only an approach to fit accommodation for 270 of them. The treatment was bad and the situations of the buildings altogether unsuitable. But while the legislators of New Zealand seemed anxious that the condition of their lunatics should be amended, they were by no means prepared to vote the large sums needed to erect suitable buildings or to pay salaries sufficient to get medical superintendents. With a debt amounting to twenty-seven millions and a revenue above three millions to be paid from the taxation of a community of about 450,000 souls, the Government did not even venture to ask for the necessary sums, and it was thought sufficient to eke out the accommodation by making additions to the asylums already erected. Dr. Skae's excellent reports were used in the strife of parties, as weapons of offence against the

Colonial Governments ; and with a weak tenure of office his position was one of great difficulty and anxiety.

In the course of a debate upon the Lunatic Asylums in October, 1879, Dr. Pollen, a member of the Colonial Parliament, remarked "that the strain which had been put upon Dr. Skae by the difficulty of obtaining the attention of the Government, by the manifest deficiency of the machinery of which he had the control, and by the work which he was obliged to perform, was almost sufficient to drive any man out of his senses." Nevertheless many useful changes and considerable progress were made towards getting more accommodation, and improving what already existed, and the error of lay superintendents and visiting physicians with a divided authority has been exposed by deplorable experience.

Much remains yet to do ere the real needs of lunatics in New Zealand will be provided for ; but the Colony will get the benefit of the work which Dr. Skae has done ; and his successor may reap the fruit of his experience which he has left. We know that he found some who had the sense to appreciate his good qualities in the far distant island where he now lies. It pains us much to think that his race is so early run, and that we shall never see his manly form again. The immediate cause of death was erysipelas.

Appointments.

BOWES, J. I., M.R.C.S., to be Medical Superintendent of the Wilts County Asylum.

BROWN, M. L., M.B., to be Junior Medical Assistant to the Haywards Heath Asylum.

BENHAM, H. A., M.B., C.M., L.S.A., to be Assistant Medical Officer to the Royal Lunatic Asylum, Dundee.

CHRISTIE, J. W. S., L.R.C.P.Ed., L.R.C.S.Ed., to be Assistant Medical Officer to the Leavesden Asylum.

HUXTABLE, L. R., M.B., C.M.Ed., to be Assistant Medical Officer to the Border County Asylum, Melrose.

JONES, D. J., M.D.Ed., M.R.C.S., to be Senior Assistant Medical Officer to the Kent County Asylum, Barming Heath.

SHAPLEY, F., M.R.C.S., L.S.A., to be Assistant Medical Officer to the Glamorgan County Asylum, Bridgend.

SUFFERN, A. C., M.D., to be Assistant Medical Officer to the East Riding Asylum, Beverley.

WADE, A. L., M.D.Dub., L.R.C.S., to be Medical Superintendent of the Somerset and Bath Asylum, Wells.
