

specially trained for the duties of his post by a residence as assistant physician in a first-rate county Asylum at Home. The difference between the salary of the present Visiting Surgeon (£300) and of a Resident Medical Superintendent (say, £600) would not add thirteen shillings a year to the average cost of maintenance of each patient, and he would probably effect a saving in several directions. A similar appointment is required to be made at the Auckland Asylum, the present Medical Superintendent being, as I have already reported, in my opinion, incompetent. Similar appointments would also require to be made at the proposed new Asylums for Dunedin and Wellington some time before these were ready for occupation.

COST OF MAINTENANCE.

The total cost of maintenance of the insane during the year 1877 was, as shown in Table XIII. £34,757 15s. 8d. From this has to be deducted £4,124 14s. 7d. repaid to the Treasury, of which £3,288 15s. 6d. was the amount collected for the maintenance of private patients, and £835 19s. 1d. was received for produce sold and work done in the Asylums. The actual cost to the Government was thus £30,633 1s. 1d., which is £347 6s. 1d. greater than that of last year. A much larger sum than this small increase is accounted for by the fire at the Auckland Asylum, which destroyed an immense quantity of bedding any clothing, and in many other ways occasioned sudden and unusual outlay. But, leaving this fact out of view, and taking the figures as they stand, there having been a daily average of 70 more patients than the previous year, there was relatively a considerable decrease in expenditure, the average cost per patient having been reduced by £8 12s. 5½d.

The average cost of maintenance was £37 8s. 11½d., or, exclusive of general expenses, £35 0s. 3½d., which is 7s. 7½d. more than in the Asylums of Victoria in 1876. It will be seen, however, from Table XIV., that it differed enormously in the different Asylums, ranging from £23 9s. 3½d. at Dunedin to £52 3s. 4d. at Hokitika. It is principally the excessive price of everything which makes the rate of maintenance so high at Hokitika, wages alone, for example, being £26 a head, which is considerably more than the whole cost of a patient at Dunedin. The comparatively great expenditure at several of the other Asylums is partly accounted for by the necessity that existed of improving and adding to the clothing and bedding, and furniture, which were extremely poor and deficient; partly also to wastefulness, especially in the consumption of "medical comforts," which was not checked before several months of the year had elapsed. Matters were better by the end of the financial year in June, when the total expenditure, credit being taken for repayments, amounted to £29,222 17s. 10d., which is £2,258 19s. 2d. within the vote.

I have, &c.,

FRED. W. A. SKAE,
Inspector, Lunatic Asylums.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.