

1884.
NEW ZEALAND.

LUNATIC ASYLUMS OF THE COLONY

(REPORT ON) FOR 1883.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

The INSPECTOR of ASYLUMS to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Lunacy Department, Wellington, 7th June, 1884.

I have the honour to present my second annual report upon the lunatic asylums of the colony, and upon matters connected with the welfare of the insane.

On the 31st December, 1883, the number of lunatics under care and treatment is shown by the following table:—

Asylums.	Males.	Females.	Total.
Auckland	196	95	291
Ashburn Hall (licensed house)	10	5	15
Christchurch	218	119	337
Dunedin }	230	120	350
Seacliff }			
Hokitika	64	27	91
Napier... ..	18	8	26
Nelson	53	42	95
Wellington	103	67	170
Total	892	483	1,375

An increase is here shown, upon the number of the previous year, of 106 persons, viz., 75 males and 41 females. The additional patients have been thus accommodated: At Auckland, 17; Ashburn Hall, 5; Christchurch, 30; Dunedin and Seacliff, 15; Hokitika, 4; Napier, 7; Nelson, 10; Wellington, 18: total, 106.

This increase is very large, and cannot be accounted for by any addition which has been made to the population of the colony during the year. The proportion of the insane to the population as shown in my last report was 1 to 413. The estimated increase of inhabitants, excluding Maoris, was (*vide* Registrar-General's reports) 23,170 on the 31st of December, 1883. The proportionate increase of insane persons should therefore be 56, whereas this number is nearly doubled, and the ratio is now 1 to 393. In England and Wales the ratio is 1 to 348; in Victoria, 1 to 286; in New South Wales, 1 to 354; in the United States (1880), 1 to 545; and in Ontario, 1 to 652.

These two last-named calculations are the more remarkable as they are based upon the total number of insane in the country, and not merely upon those under care and treatment in asylums. It would also appear that, in the United States (1880), 44½ per cent. only of the lunatics were in asylums, 45 per cent. at home, and 10½ per cent. in poorhouses.

I cannot help thinking that New Zealand is not fairly treated in this matter, a large number being placed in the colonial asylums from economical and other motives, rather than from urgent mental symptoms; and I have also good reason to think that persons who have recently been in English asylums, or have shown insane tendencies, are not rarely shipped to this colony, with the view of escaping the burden of their maintenance at home. It would appear only right that persons of this kind should be sent back to their own country, and left in the care of their relatives: in fact, such a course has, I believe, been already taken by one of the leading shipping companies, to avoid the penalties of the Imbecile Passengers Act.