

TOTAL NUMBER OF LUNATICS.

The total number under treatment during the year 1883 amounted to 1,690, and the daily average number to 1,335.

ADMISSIONS.

On the 1st January, 1883, there were on the register 1,269 patients: 255 males and 166 females were admitted during the year, 85 of these being readmissions.

With regard to the causes of the mental affection in these patients, I have only to remark that the present state of the law renders the information, given on admission, of little value. The "statement" of the patient's history, and other circumstances, is furnished by the medical practitioners called in by the Magistrates to certify as to his or her mental condition; and, as a rule, they have never seen the lunatic on any previous occasion.

DISCHARGES.

During the year 1883, 232 patients received their discharge. Of this number, 180 are registered as having recovered, 33 were relieved, and 19 had not improved. The proportion of recoveries to admissions was 42·75 per cent., which compares very favourably with last year's return, and also with the statistics of other countries.

DEATHS.

Eighty-three patients died during the year. With the following three exceptions all the deaths were from ordinary causes: At Auckland two are attributed to typhoid fever, and one to fracture of the skull: the injuries were inflicted by a homicidal patient, who had already been found guilty of murder, and who took advantage of the negligent conduct of an attendant.

The death-rate was even lower than the exceptionally favourable return of the previous year. Calculated upon the total treated, it amounted to 4·91 per cent.; and upon the average number resident to 6·21 only.

The proportion of deaths to admissions was 19·71 per cent.

REMANDS.

Under section 17 of "The Lunatics Act, 1882," no less than 137 persons were admitted "pending examination by medical practitioners." I will here renew the protest, made in my last report, against this practice. A large number of these patients were never examined by medical practitioners; and nineteen, when so examined, were found to be "not insane." There is much hardship here; and the power given to the Magistrates or Justices leaves room for abuse. In one city the object of these remands is said to be the saving of medical fees. The Medical Superintendents have assured me that in several instances the so-called lunatic showed no symptom whatever of insanity, and considerable delay occurred in procuring his or her release. No remand should be permitted without previous examination by two medical practitioners, where obtainable.

INEBRIATES.

Under the heading of "Habitual Drunkards" there have been five admissions, and eight altogether under treatment, during the year 1882. These persons, and those also who were "remanded" and afterwards discharged as "not insane," are not included in the accompanying statistical tables. They materially add, however, to the cost of maintenance.

ACCOMMODATION.

Attention was strongly directed to this matter last year. Since my last report the auxiliary asylum at Auckland has been opened, and will provide for sixty male patients. The Seacliff Asylum is in partial occupation, and will eventually accommodate 300 patients; or 446, if the temporary buildings be retained for this use. At Nelson overcrowding has been relieved by the purchase of a cottage, in which twelve quiet patients sleep, with two attendants. Hokitika, though full, is not now overcrowded, as the Immigration Barracks—removed to the asylum grounds by asylum labour, and at very trifling cost for repairs—provide dormitory space for twenty-six persons. Napier Asylum has three in excess of its accommodation. All who were very troublesome, or were likely to be benefited by treatment, were removed some time since from thence to Wellington. At Wellington improvements have been made of a very important nature, but they do not relieve the overcrowding, which, on the male side, is great. No additional accommodation has been provided at Christchurch, but the fitting-up of a large attic as a dormitory will shortly permit the abandonment of certain portions of the old building, long unfit for occupation by lunatics.