

1885.
NEW ZEALAND.

LUNATIC ASYLUMS OF THE COLONY

(REPORT ON) FOR 1884.

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, 24th June, 1885.

I have the honour to present my third annual report upon the state of the lunatic asylums of the colony, and upon other matters relating to insanity.

On the 1st January, 1884, there were under detention 1,375 lunatics. At the close of the year this number had risen to 1,452.

The increase of 77 persons here shown compares very favourably with the corresponding numbers of 106 and 93, which represented the increase of the two previous years, when the population of the colony was considerably less, and when such an annual accession of insanity could not but be regarded as unaccountably and alarmingly great.

The proportion of the insane (under detention) to the population of the colony is almost the same now as it was one year ago, viz., 1 to 390 persons.

In the year 1884 the proportion in England and Wales was 1 to 345; and in 1883, in New South Wales, 1 to 361.

New Zealand therefore still compares favourably with older countries, as might be anticipated. It is, however, important to go a little further, and inquire as to the proportion to the general population of new cases of insanity, admitted for the first time into our asylums during the past year. These first admissions amount to 5·49 per 10,000 of the population. The proportion in England and Wales of first admissions is shown to be 5·41, although it is stated in the report of the Commissioners that exceptional circumstances increased it last year, and that the true proportion is 5·15 per 10,000 persons.

It is important to note that, whereas the whole of the insane under treatment in this colony are detained in the Government asylums and in one private establishment, in England and Wales no less than one-fourth of the total number are housed in workhouses and large institutions for harmless or demented patients and idiots; and that this large number (17,377) is not included in the above calculation. Were they so included, I have no doubt that New Zealand would compare more favourably with the old country in its proportion of new cases of insanity to the general population.

The total number of patients treated in the asylums during the past year amounted to 1,768, and these figures do not include 9 persons confined under the provisions of the "habitual drunkards" clauses of the statute, nor those who were placed in the asylums "on remand," and without any medical certificate of insanity.

Sixty-three persons were so remanded in the year 1884, 30 of whom only were afterwards certified as of unsound mind.