

CHRISTCHURCH ASYLUM.

SIR,—

I have the honour to forward the usual statistical tables relating to the admissions, discharges, and deaths of this Asylum for the year 1900, together with a few remarks on their significance and matters affecting the Asylum generally.

—					Male.	Female.	Total.
<i>Admissions.</i>							
Admitted, first time	...	...	...	...	24	26	50
Readmitted	...	...	...	...	9	7	16
Totals	...	...	...	...	33	33	66
<i>Discharges.</i>							
Recovered and relieved	...	...	...	...	21	18	39
<i>Deaths</i>							
Deaths	...	...	...	...	11	4	15
Number discharged who were admitted during year	...			...	16	11	27
Number died		"		...	5	2	7
Number remaining		"		...	12	20	32
Totals	...	..	...	...	33	33	66

Percentage of discharges of first cases on admissions	...	...	...	46
" all discharges on admissions	...	...	...	59 $\frac{1}{11}$
" deaths on admissions	...	...	...	22 $\frac{3}{4}$
" deaths on number under treatment	...	...	...	2 $\frac{3}{8}$

At the beginning of the year there were 502 patients on the Asylum books—viz., 282 males and 220 females—which, together with sixty-six admitted during the period covered, gave a total of 568 under treatment for the year.

The admissions of first cases (fifty) were remarkably low, and fifteen fewer than the previous year. Taken with the readmissions (sixteen), they were thirteen less than the total admissions for the year 1899, which must be considered highly satisfactory, whatever the cause may be.

Of those admitted for the first time during the year twenty-three, or 46 per cent., were released during the same period, while the percentage of all those recovered and relieved on the admissions was slightly over 59, which is far higher than the average Asylum recovery-rate, and compares more than favourably with the same rate in English asylums, when we take into account the different class of patients committed to those of this colony. Many of the helpless senile cases—persons merely suffering from the mental infirmities of old age—and weak-minded children who are sent here would be committed to workhouses or other suitable institutions in England, but in this colony are sent to the asylums to become permanent burdens and lessen our recovery-rate.

The discharges and deaths totalled fifty-four, and, deducting this number from those under treatment during the year—viz., 568—we get 514 as the number remaining on the books at the end of 1900, which is an increase of twelve on that of the previous year.

The death-rate—viz., 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ per cent. of those under treatment—was again remarkably low, being 2 per cent. lower than the low rate of the previous year, and the lowest for the last fourteen years—probably in the history of this Asylum. This to a large extent accounts for the increase referred to in the last paragraph (the recovery-rate was also slightly lower), which, as pointed out last year, must lead to a greater accumulation of the insane in our asylums proportionate to the general population than obtains in those where the mortality-rate is higher.

The necessity for isolation in the treatment of cases of consumption has been more publicly advocated as regards the general community in the recent report of Dr. Mason, the Chief Health Officer of the Department of Public Health. If it is not carried out in an institution of this nature under the control of the Government, where the only difficulty need be the financial one, and where from the careless habits of the patients as regards expectoration it is more needed, how can it be expected that the general public will adopt it?

I have more than once drawn your attention to the marked unrest and desire for change prevailing amongst the staff for some time past, and in December last wrote you exhaustively on the subject. This more especially applies to the female attendants and the tradesmen, and is mainly, almost entirely, due to the improved labour conditions and demands for those classes of employes. There can be no doubt that the class of girls from which our attendants are drawn have had many more channels of employment opened up to them of recent years, such as private nursing, the telephone and telegraph service, typewriting, and other forms of clerical or office work, while many others prefer factory or shop life on account of its greater freedom. This latter in many cases obliges the elder sister to remain at home to assist with the housework, as the factories absorb nearly all the younger class of general servants.

I fear asylum employment has not the same interest and attraction for young women as hospital nursing, while the stricter discipline and control necessary, the nature of the duties, and the disagreeables incidental to asylum life are irksome in the present-day aspirations of refinement,