

PORIRUA ASYLUM.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit the following report on the Porirua Asylum for the year 1902.

At the beginning of the year there were 515 inmates, and at the end 508. The average number resident was 504 (258 males and 246 females), and the total number under care, 564, exactly the same as in 1901. Forty-nine cases were admitted, of whom 21 males and 22 females were admitted for the first time, and 5 males and 1 female were readmissions. Thirty-three patients were discharged recovered and 2 relieved, the proportion of recoveries to the number admitted being 67·3 per cent. Twenty-one patients died, as in the previous year, making a death-rate of 41·6 per thousand on the average number resident. The recovery-rate is therefore high and the death-rate low as compared with what usually obtains in asylum records.

Of the 508 patients remaining in the Asylum on the 31st December, only 34 were supposed curable; the rest were chronic cases or cases in which there was no reasonable hope of ultimate recovery; but many of these, although classed as incurable, have symptoms of a mild type and could very well be cared for outside if they had suitable homes to go to and friends to look after them.

The bodily health of the patients has on the whole been remarkably good. No epidemic of any kind has visited the Institution, and seldom have there been more than two or three confined to bed on account of serious ailment, and sometimes none at all.

No building-operations have been in hand, but I am pleased to say that the work of enclosing new and much larger airing-courts, the plans for which I submitted to you some years ago, is at last in hand, and the adjoining cricketing oval, upon which so much of our labour has been spent, is approaching completion. I hope that by next summer these improvements will at any rate be so far completed as to be in use for the recreation of patients.

Very few changes occurred in the staff of officials. Mr. Drysdale, the farm-manager, resigned in November, and I much regretted the loss of his services. During his term he initiated important improvements in the methods of working the farm, and did good work in developing the property. Owing to his careful management the dairy-produce was largely increased.

The usual amusements for the patients have been provided, and my colleague, Dr. Barraclough, has, with the assistance of members of the staff, produced several dramatic plays, which have been greatly appreciated by the inmates. Sometimes visitors have kindly come to our aid, and at the dramatic entertainments the Messrs. Bradey, of Pahautanui, very kindly provided an excellent orchestral band.

To Dr. Barraclough my thanks are due for his able assistance, and of the senior and other members of the staff I have to express my appreciation for much good work done throughout the year.—I have, &c.,

The Inspector-General of Asylums, Wellington.

GRAY HASSELL, M.D.,
Medical Superintendent.

WELLINGTON ASYLUM.

SIR,—

I have the honour to present to you the annual report of this Asylum for the year ending the 31st December, 1902.

I regret that I have to report unsatisfactorily as to the accommodation for the patients during the year. Overcrowding has again asserted itself. As I stated in my report of last year, the relief afforded by the opening of the new wards at Porirua was only temporary. At the beginning of the year we had 11 males and 10 females over the statutory number, our figures being 152 males and 100 females. At the end of the year these numbers had increased to 177 and 104 respectively, and as before this overcrowding is reflected in the recovery-rate.

There is very little difference in the admissions for the year, 5 fewer men and 1 woman being admitted. The numbers are 62 and 37. Readmissions have slightly increased, the total readmissions being 10 males and 12 females.

The death-rate is very satisfactory, there being only a total of 12—9 males and 3 females. The percentage of deaths to admissions is 14 for males and 8 for females, and on the average number resident the percentage has decreased from 7·1 to 4·5. Five of the 9 males died within a year of admission, 2 from general paralysis, 1 from senility, 1 from acute phthisis, and 1 from pneumonia. We are wonderfully free from phthisis here, there being only one other death from this cause. One patient died after a residence of forty-four years, exactly half his lifetime, and another after twenty-five years. Of the women, one died of acute mania, with exhaustion, after two days' residence, another with heart-failure, three weeks after admission, her age being seventy, and the other died of bronchitis and heart-failure, after nine years in the Asylum.

As regards recoveries, there were 25 males and 29 females discharged, giving a rate calculated on admissions of 40 per cent. and 78 per cent. respectively.

Our numbers are kept up owing to the sending into the Asylums of the old and feeble, who are certainly certifiable to be insane, but who really are in their dotage, and only require careful nursing, such as might be given them in some other institution, which could be managed at a cheaper rate than is possible for an asylum for the insane. If there were such institutions a yearly draft could be made of the old and infirm who are bound to be kept in the Asylum for life, because there is no other place to send them to.

An inebriate home is also urgently required in the North Island, as there are a good number of drink cases sent here who recover their sanity in a few days, but who should be kept six months or a year away from contact with alcohol. It is obviously impossible to treat this class among the ordinary insane.