

a great increase of nurses provided in the infirmary branch of asylums, and more especially is there an immense increase in the number of nurses who are in attendance upon patients during the night, the proportion given in this year's report is 1 to 33·7, thereby securing a very much-needed increase of attention to such patients as would otherwise be very restless and noisy, thus disturbing the whole dormitory. Of course this would involve a very great increase in expenditure, especially if we insisted on such a large number of hospital-trained nurses being employed on the staff. Under this system, many of the single rooms are fitted up as sitting-rooms, so that the nurse may be constantly with her patient.

For many years in my reports to the minister, I have drawn attention to the anomalous position of our lunacy statistics. In 1876 the proportion per 1,000 was 1·97, whereas last year it was 3·53. The proportion of discharges and deaths of the patients treated in our asylums was in 1878 23·33, and last year this had sunk to 16·39. That is, the proportion of admissions to the population was in 1878 0·83 per 1,000, while last year it was 0·70 per 1,000. I need not say that there is no more complex social problem than the question of an absolute increase of insanity in proportion to population, especially in a new country like this. We started with a select population, amongst which there were very few old people, all—or an immense proportion—were in the prime of life, and had undergone such a sifting and selection as was involved in immigration to begin with, and the numerous gold rushes afterwards. Since then our people have been steadily ageing. The first element that in my opinion must have the greatest weight attached to it, is the steady accumulation of chronic cases in our asylums, where safe keeping, good feeding, and suitable clothing has preserved the aged in a far higher degree than would have been the case even if they had been free men and women. It is impossible to say what proportion of our diminished deaths and discharges this cause accounts for. It is certain, however, that the increasing age of persons admitted is largely responsible for the fact that in 1878, as the following Table shows, 17·03 of the patients in the asylum were over fifty years of age; and that last year, by a steady progression through all the intervening years, the number of persons over fifty years of age was 39·07. The per centage of admissions of patients over fifty years of age was 13·26 in 1878, and has steadily increased to 31·27 in 1903.

Proportion of the Insane to the Population.

1876	..	..	..	..	..	..	1 in 509 or 1·97 per 1,000
1878	..	..	..	..	..	..	471 „ 2·12 „
1883	..	..	..	..	..	..	393 „ 2·54 „
1888	..	..	..	..	..	..	361 „ 2·77 „
1893	..	..	..	..	..	..	330 „ 3·03 „
1898	..	..	..	..	..	..	300 „ 3·33 „
1903	..	..	..	..	..	..	284 „ 3·53 „

Proportion of Discharges and Deaths on Patients treated.

1878	..	..	23·33	1893	..	..	14·22
1883	..	..	18·64	1898	..	..	18·39
1888	..	..	18·27	1903	..	..	16·39

Proportion of Persons over Fifty Years of Age in Asylums.

1878	..	..	17·03	1893	..	..	36·09
1883	..	..	21·08	1898	..	..	38·35
1888	..	..	28·77	1903	..	..	39·07

Proportion of Admissions to Population.

1878	..	..	0·83 per 1,000	1893	..	..	0·68 per 1,000
1883	..	..	0·78 „	1898	..	..	0·63 „
1888	..	..	0·59 „	1903	..	..	0·70 „

Percentage of Admissions over Fifty Years of Age on Total Admissions.

1878	..	..	13·26	1893	..	..	27·97
1883	..	..	16·50	1898	..	..	25·61
1888	..	..	21·60	1903	..	..	31·27

This it is that causes our discharges by death and recovery to be what it is. Another very important element in the case has been that for many years there has been a constant struggle on the part of those local bodies who are in charge of charitable aid, to get rid of persons suffering from senile decay, whose faculties are enfeebled, and who are often very troublesome, to cast the maintenance and care of such people on the asylum authorities. In fact, this has long reduced itself merely to a struggle between the representatives of the local ratepayers and the defenders of the consolidated revenue.

ENTRIES OF VISITS BY THE INSPECTOR-GENERAL TO THE DIFFERENT ASYLUMS.

AUCKLAND ASYLUM.

9th January, 1904.—As usual, I find this institution is administered in a most satisfactory manner. The care and treatment of the patients cannot I think be improved on until the old laundry is ready for occupation. In about three months this addition will give great relief on the female side. The delays in getting on with the building were caused by the bad quality of the old bricks, which we counted