

attendant; but when her turn for promotion according to seniority arrives she expects it, and is indignant and grievously disappointed if passed over. Something should accordingly be done, not only to attract a better class of applicants, but also to retain them in the service; and the only inducement I can see to the former end, is an increase of salary to meet the exigencies of the labour-market. I would suggest that the salary commence at £50 per annum, and that there be no increase until the attendant is promoted to the position of charge of ward, but that, in lieu thereof, she should receive an amount of, say £50, as deferred payment at the expiration of five years' service, on the recommendation of her superior officers, and if in the meantime promoted that the salary should be raised to £60 per annum. There might be initial difficulties in the adoption of this proposal, but they could be readily overcome, while it would be a strong inducement to lengthened service and good endeavour, and would provide a substantial sum for many, not otherwise very thrifty, when about to marry and start house-keeping.

The work of the institution, both indoor and out, has progressed as usual, and I do not think there is anything in it deserving of special mention here, especially as I have already dealt with it in many aspects in former reports.

To my colleague Dr. Crosby and my fellow-officers I desire to express my appreciation of their loyal support and ready co-operation at all times.

I have, &c.,

EDW. G. LEVINGE, M.B.,

Medical Superintendent.

The Inspector-General of Asylums, Wellington.

SEACLIFF ASYLUM.

SIR,—

Seacliff Asylum, 9th April, 1904.

I have the honour to submit to you the following report on the Seacliff Asylum for 1903:—

The proportion of patients discharged, relieved, or recovered during the year—viz., 40 per cent. on the admissions, was below the average, but this may be regarded as mainly accidental and compensatory to a high discharge-rate during the previous year.

It will be noted that the number of admissions during the year—viz., 135, shows an increase of nine over the previous year, but there is no special significance in this. It is unfortunate that a widespread opinion prevails among the public that insanity is increasing in the colony in spite of repeated assurances that such is not the case. This mistake arises from a confusion as to the meaning and significance of a mere accumulation of chronic patients, due to longevity, as compared with the graver question of cases arising *de novo* during the year. It was to be hoped that Professor Seager's remarks in his paper published in the transactions of the New Zealand Institute for 1901, and copied into some of the newspapers of the colony, would have finally cleared up the misconception; but this has not been the case. Professor Seager said, after showing that our statistics proved "an undoubted falling-off in liability to insanity" in the colony: "But the concern about the increase of insanity, which inspires so many articles, is founded on the figures as roughly put in statistical works, and I have shown that these figures, properly interpreted, afford no justification whatever for the inference usually deduced from them, but rather indicate a strong tendency in the direction of growing sanity. If the reasons usually assigned to explain the commonly supposed increase in the tendency to insanity have really any force, if many are now classed as insane that would not have been so classed some years ago, and if many are now placed in institutions for the care of the insane that some time since would not have been so provided for, then there must indeed have been in recent years a very real and very marked diminution in the liability of the New Zealander to insanity, in spite of modern competition and the disadvantages of city life. In fact, explanations are now wanted to account for statistics indicating a falling-off, and not a growth, in the tendency of the race to insanity."

Structural changes on the female side, rendered necessary by the slipping of the ground, have greatly handicapped us. To minimise the evil effects of the temporarily increased overcrowding, some thirty women had to sleep in the recreation-hall for a considerable period. Added to this, there was a prolonged epidemic of scarlet fever during the winter among both patients and staff. So many of the nurses were attacked, that it necessitated the employment of two additional nurses for a whole year to overtake the work, and provide for the usual holidays. Lately we have installed a nurse in the male division of the Asylum to take care of the sick patients. The change is greatly appreciated, and is working well.

The fishing-station established at Karitane promises well. During the past month we have received 8 tons of fish, and have sent full supplies to the various public institutions throughout Otago and Canterbury, besides supplying our own needs. The food-value of this output of fish in a single month is equivalent to over £200, at the current contract rates for ordinary meat. The direct manifest saving to our own institution is considerable after paying all expenses, but when fairly estimating the economic results of the fishing-station, the supplies given to other institutions would have to be taken into account. An important aspect of the matter is the welcome change of dietary afforded by a full supply of fresh fish in all the varieties abounding on the coast, and if we could secure regularity of delivery throughout the year by having a small refrigerator on the premises, the utility of the station to ourselves and other institutions would be much enhanced. Apart from all other considerations, the fact of having several boats available for picnic parties from the Asylum is highly appreciated; while the two patients directly employed on the coast are alive to the advantage of a more absolutely free life than would be possible in any large institution.

The farm and garden continue to supply our needs satisfactorily. The value of eggs and poultry alone delivered during the year amounts to £650. A new building for men employed at the farmsteadings will soon be begun, and will afford a welcome addition to our accommodation, besides adding greatly to the comfort of the men.