

WELLINGTON ASYLUM.

SIR,—

Lunatic Asylum, Wellington, 19th March, 1904.

I have the honour to submit the annual report on this Asylum for the year ending the 31st December, 1903.

The overcrowding which I spoke of last year has been still more accentuated, and as I formerly pointed out, has been followed by the natural resultant, a decreased recovery-rate. At the beginning of the year the numbers were 177 males and 104 females—46 males and 14 females over the statutory numbers. As the year went on, these numbers increased, until in July there were 50 males and at one time 29 females in excess of accommodation. These numbers do not seem very excessive until we take into consideration the small numbers provided for, and then the position is startling when we find that there was one-third more patients than the accommodation provided for. In October there was relief afforded by the transference of 50 male patients to Porirua, but the female side had no relief, and at present patients are having to be put to sleep on shakedown in the corridors.

There have been fewer admissions during the year, but this does not imply any decrease in the insanity-rate, but inability to accommodate patients, and they had to be sent elsewhere. The actual numbers are 47 males and 45 females admitted, five males and 11 females being readmissions.

There were 18 males and 24 females discharged recovered, which gives a recovery-rate of 38·3 per cent. and 53·3 respectively. Of the 50 male patients sent to Porirua, 14 were transferred as relieved, and some of these besides some of the unimproved would probably recover, but we do not receive the benefit of these in our percentages.

The death-rate has not altered much, although 5 more deaths for the year have to be recorded, yet the average number resident was much increased, and the percentage of deaths to the average number is 5·8, as against 4·5 for the previous year. In all there were 17 deaths, 15 of these taking place within two years of admission, showing the unsatisfactory condition of the patients when sent to asylum care, thus leaving only two patients who had been more than two years in residence, which shows a very healthy state of affairs among the ordinary asylum community.

Since writing my last report, electric lighting has been installed, and has proved a great boon, both from the view of better lighting, and also from that of diminished fire-risk. But even with the electric light and the automatic alarms risk of fire is a great danger here, and with the memory of the fire in the wooden annexe at Colney Hatch Asylum still fresh, one feels that something more must be done here at Mount View. Owing to the long corridors, if a fire did get a hold, it would travel with appalling rapidity, and it would be well nigh impossible to save all the inmates. Some means should be adopted for holding the fire in check even for a few minutes, to give our own and the town fire brigade time to tackle the fire, and also time for the attendants to open the locked doors for the patients to escape; and I would suggest that the Public Works Department take this in hand, either by erecting brick dividing-walls or applying some fire-resisting substance, such as "Uralite," to the existing walls.

There have been the usual dances and other amusements for the patients, and this summer the men have very much appreciated a game of bowls in the evenings.

To Dr. Ulrich and the various members of the staff, I have to express my thanks for their hearty assistance in the carrying-out of the work of the institution.

I have, &c.,

W. BAXTER GOW, M.D., C.M.

Medical Superintendent.

The Inspector-General of Asylums, Wellington.

I feel that I must express my appreciation of the thoughtfulness that led the Minister to appoint Dr. Frank Hay as Assistant Inspector at a time when I was seriously ill, and I feel the benefit of so capable and experienced a colleague. Dr. Hay has had the advantage of being trained under Dr. Urquhart, one of the most sagacious and capable of British alienists, in Murray's Royal Asylum, Perth. Since coming to this country Dr. Hay's work at Ashburn Hall Private Asylum has passed under my own observation, and has met with my fullest approval.

D. MACGREGOR, M.A., M.B.,

Inspector-General of Asylums.