

MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENTS' REPORTS.

AUCKLAND MENTAL HOSPITAL

SIR,—

Mental Hospital, Auckland.

I have the honour to furnish you with my report on the Auckland Mental Hospital for 1906.

On the 31st December there were 675 patients, of whom 406 were males and 269 females, on our register. This represents an increase for the year of 43 patients, 10 of these however being transfers from Christchurch.

The admissions numbered 179—103 males and 76 females. This again constitutes a record, 169 having been committed from the Auckland Province, as compared with 160 last year.

Our insane population continues to increase at a rate which is disproportionate to the sane provincial increase. It seems to be generally asserted that this increase does not indicate a real increase in the insanity of the community, but rather a shuffling off of responsibility whereby old and infirm persons are now committed to the mental hospital who, in former times, would have been treated at home or in other institutions. A reference to our statistics for the past ten years will disprove this general assertion. The increase that is taking place is unquestionably taking place at the 20–60 age-period—at a time therefore when the sexes ought to be both mentally and physically most vigorous. This is not the place for a thesis upon the causation of insanity, but I may be permitted to say that I am convinced, as I have been for years, that heredity and alcohol are the two greatest factors in the production of our increasing insane-rate. I have been able to trace hereditary influences in a large proportion of the cases admitted last year, and I have been very much struck with the large number of cases in which one or other parent of the patient was an excessive drinker.

The death-rate for the year on the average number resident was 7·83 per cent.—males, 7·9 per cent.; females, 7·7 per cent. This is a considerable reduction from last year, when the rate was 10·72 per cent., but has no significance. One death was due to typhoid fever, 1 to shock following scalding, and 6 to tuberculosis, as compared with 10 last year.

The recovery-rate, calculated on the admissions and excluding the ten incurable females transferred from Christchurch, was 46·15 per cent.—males, 40·77 per cent., and females, 54·54 per cent. This rate is above the average.

Our female accommodation is now more than exhausted, and special arrangements will have to be made during the year to meet new admissions. When the Reception Home is completed we shall be able to tide over the difficulty for a little while.

The male new airing-court is practically finished, and ought to prove a great boon to patients whose maladies restrict them to more or less confinement in the yards.

A greater amount of classification is being effected year by year. We are now coming to the end of what can be done in that direction with our present buildings.

A new bakehouse and store have been erected. The bakehouse has proved a great acquisition, besides effecting a considerable saving in the cost of bread.

For several years now I have urged, without effect, the absolute necessity for laundry machinery. I trust that this year a vote for the purpose will be given.

I desire to thank Dr. McKelvey and the staff for their support, the proprietors of the *Herald* for daily papers supplied for patients' use, and Mrs. Knox for the gift of a new piano.

I have, &c.,

The Inspector-General, Mental Hospitals, Wellington.

R. M. BEATTIE.

CHRISTCHURCH MENTAL HOSPITAL.

SIR,—

Sunnyside Mental Hospital, Christchurch.

I have the honour to submit the annual report on this Hospital for the year ending the 31st December, 1906.

During the year there were 110 admissions, of whom 65 were males and 45 females. Of these, 11 males and 10 females were readmissions.

At the end of December, 1905, there was a total of 541 patients, and at the end of 1906 the number was reduced to 529. The discharges and removals were made up of 54 recoveries, 13 discharges not improved, of whom 10 were transferred to Auckland, and 55 deaths.

The death-rate this year has been very high, giving a percentage on average number resident of 11·5 for males and 9·6 for females, or a mean death-rate of 10·7. This high death-rate is principally due to the great number of patients of an advanced age who died, there being 32 out of the 55 who died over sixty years of age, and this high mortality amongst the aged bears out my remarks of last year about the necessity of proper hospital accommodation with a northern aspect.

On the female side, a small hospital with six beds was made at the end of one of the corridors, and this has been a marked benefit; but there is no suitable place on the male side that can be converted, and I would therefore ask that a small wing with a northern exposure should be put in hand at once. The lines of single rooms ought also to be heated by steam.