

INSANE ALIENS AND OTHER IMMIGRANTS.

An unfair tax upon our accommodation and upon the finances of this country is imposed by reason of the large number of patients of non-British races who are permanently mentally defective and likely to remain in our institutions for the rest of their lives. On the 31st December last we had 211 such persons, whose average length of residence in the institutions was thirteen years. The amount expended up to date upon those 211 aliens has been approximately £188,612, and they cost the country £14,509 annually for maintenance.

It does not appear possible to take any action in regard to those people already here, but it would be desirable that steps should be taken to prevent any increase in their numbers. I suggest that the Immigration Restriction Act should be amended to allow the deportation of aliens who become insane within five years of the time of their arrival in New Zealand.

The existing law as to the immigration of mentally defective persons to New Zealand is so imperfect as to be practically a dead-letter. It is provided in section 14 of the Immigration Restriction Act, 1908, that a person shall be prevented from landing if he is an idiot or insane. As an idiot is incapable of travelling alone, and as section 16 exempts him from the provisions of section 14 if he is accompanied by his parents, the position is a *reductio ad absurdum*.

The position in regard to the insane is in little better case. It is extremely unlikely that a patient suffering from delusional insanity will have an opportunity of communicating his false ideas to the Port Medical Officer during the brief period available for the inspection of each individual passenger, and the detection of other psychoses must in these circumstances be largely a matter of chance. Once such cases as these have landed in New Zealand, as the law stands at present, the country is liable to be faced with an addition to the large expenditure above mentioned.

THE NURSING STAFF.

It is due to the nursing staffs of our institutions that I should express my appreciation of the manner in which they carry out their duties. It is all the more fitting that I should do so because the work of our nurses and attendants seldom comes under public notice except by reason of regrettable incidents such as the recent assault case, when the Department had to prosecute an attendant.

Our nursing staff comprises 958 nurses and attendants, and it would indeed be surprising if amongst the many probationers engaged there were none found to be temperamentally unsuited for this work, which calls for qualities of a high order. When consideration is given to the various types of patients to be dealt with, the natural discontent engendered by loss of liberty, and the conditions attendant upon overcrowding, it is not to be wondered at that complaints as to treatment are received from time to time. A few of these have some justification, but the majority are due to delusions or some other form of mental unbalance.

The letters of appreciation which the Medical Superintendents and I receive from ex-patients and their relatives far outnumber the complaints, and I know that many members of the staff take patients for outings and perform other acts of disinterested kindness which are quite outside the scope of their official duties.

The Department is well served by the nursing staff, to whose loyalty and devotion the smooth running of the institutions is largely due.

MEDICAL STAFF.

Consequent upon the increasing amount of time devoted to the clinics, and in order to render more fully effective the provisions now made for the reception and treatment of recent cases, it has been found necessary to augment our medical staff by the appointment of four additional physicians.

A selection committee consisting of Sir Hubert Bond, of the English Board of Control, Dr. H. de M. Alexander, Medical Superintendent of Kingseat Villa Mental Hospital, and Dr. J. D. Hunter, one of our medical officers who was in Britain on study leave, chose for us the following gentlemen, who have now joined the Department: Frederick Robertson Martin, M.D., Ch.B., D.P.M.; Gilbert Mortimer Tothill, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., D.P.M.; Gilbert Marshall, M.B., Ch.B., B.A.O., D.P.H.; Malcolm Brown, M.B., Ch.B. All these appointees come to us with excellent credentials, and a record of good work done in positions previously held, and I consider that the Department is to be congratulated upon securing an accession of strength to its medical staff.

Dr. J. D. Hunter has resumed duty at Seacliff after eighteen months' study leave in Britain. In addition to taking the diploma in Psychological Medicine, Dr. Hunter paid particular attention to recent developments in the villa system, and held a temporary position at Kingseat Mental Hospital.

Dr. R. T. Hay, Assistant Medical Officer at Nelson, has been granted study leave for one year, and is at the Maudsley Hospital, London, studying for the diploma in Psychological Medicine.

I desire, in conclusion, to acknowledge my indebtedness to my colleague, Dr. John Russell, Deputy Director-General, and to the Medical Superintendents, for their unfailing loyalty and help at all times. I have also to thank Mr. Holder and the staff at the Head Office for good work done throughout the year.

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THEO. G. GRAY.