

1935.
NEW ZEALAND.

MENTAL HOSPITALS OF THE DOMINION.

(REPORT ON) FOR 1934.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to Section 78 of the Mental Defectives Act, 1911.

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL to the Hon. SIR ALEXANDER YOUNG, Minister in Charge of the Department of Mental Hospitals.

SIR,—

Wellington, 1st July, 1935.

I have the honour to present the annual report on the Department of Mental Hospitals for the year ended 31st December, 1934.

At the end of the year there were 7,814 persons on the registers of the mental hospitals of the Dominion, including 43 patients and boarders at Ashburn Hall private licensed institution, and 548 persons who were on probation in the care of friends and relatives.

In actual residence in Government mental hospitals there were 7,224 persons at the end of the year, an increase of 145 over the figure for the previous year, and of this number 6,890 were detained under a Magistrate's reception order, whilst 334 persons were under treatment as voluntary boarders at their own request.

It is pleasing to record that the number of admissions was 129 less than in last year.

A certain number of patients who suffer from chronic and relapsing forms of mental disorder are able to be discharged each year, and in due course many of them return to swell our admission rate, and allowance must be made for these cases when we are trying to ascertain the incidence of mental disorder. The best approximate indication of "occurring insanity" is gathered from the figures relating to first admissions, and it is gratifying to note that there were 115 fewer first admissions than in the previous period of report. The total first admissions, including voluntary boarders, amounted to 1,050, as against 1,165 for the previous year.

We were able to discharge 666 patients and boarders during the year, or 51·4 per cent. calculated upon the admissions, but of these only 511, or 39·5 per cent., could fairly be classed as having recovered; the remainder were removed to the care of relatives or friends.

The relative figures for the county and borough mental hospitals of England and Wales were: Percentage discharged, 53 per cent.; percentage recovered, 31·9 per cent., which goes to show that there is certainly no undue detention in mental hospitals after recovery.

The number of deaths was 436, or 6·28 per cent. calculated upon the average number resident.

CLASSIFICATION OF MENTAL PATIENTS.

The last decade has witnessed a substantial improvement in New Zealand in the means provided for classifying patients according to the needs of each case, and particular attention has been directed towards shielding the recent and presumably recoverable patients from contact with those of a more chronic and sometimes degraded type. In this connection one may cite with satisfaction the establishment of the outdoor clinics at the general hospitals, our reception cottages, the separate homelike neuropathic units, and the great development of the villa system in all our institutions.

All these provisions, combined with the different system of admission introduced in the Mental Defectives Amendment Act, 1928, have done much to lay emphasis upon the curative and preventative functions of mental hospitals, to individualize the treatment, and to lessen as far as possible the disadvantages associated with the temporary loss of personal liberty.