

1881.
NEW ZEALAND.

LUNATIC ASYLUMS OF NEW ZEALAND

(ANNUAL REPORT ON).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

SIR,— Inspector of Lunatic Asylums' Office, Wellington, 15th May, 1881.
I have the honor to lay before you the following report, for the year 1880, on the lunatic asylums of the colony
The number of registered insane on the 31st December, 1880, was 1,125. Their distribution is shown in the following tabular statement:—

Asylums.	Males.	Females.	Total.
Auckland	173	79	252
Napier ..	14	8	22
Wellington ..	84	59	143
Nelson	33	31	64
Hokitika	51	22	73
Christchurch	163	93	256
Dunedin ..	211	104	315
Total	729	396	1,125
Increase over previous year	34	35	69

Compared with the numbers at the end of the previous year there was a decrease of 4 at Hokitika, an increase of 23 at Auckland, of 3 at Napier, of 7 at Wellington, of 4 at Nelson, of 24 at Christchurch, of 12 at Dunedin, and a total increase of 69.

The increase at the end of each of the last eight years was as follows: 1873, 55; 1874, 77; 1875, 56; 1876, 61; 1877, 81; 1878, 85; 1879, 101; 1880, 69: total, 585.

It was smaller last year than any of the three preceding ones; and the proportion between the number of males and females, which composed it, was altered, there being a greater number of females than males. Thus, at the end of 1875, there was an increase of 34 males, 22 females; 1876, 33 males, 11 females; 1877, 58 males, 23 females; 1878, 57 males, 28 females; 1879, 58 males, 43 females; 1880, 34 males, 35 females. There was a corresponding difference in the number of males and females admitted into asylums during the year, to which reference will afterwards be made.

The proportion of the insane to the estimated general population at the end of the year was 1 in 435. In 1879 it was in England 1 in 315, in New South Wales 1 in 365, in Victoria 1 in 297. It has gradually been increasing in New Zealand, thus: In 1875 it was 1 in 514; in 1876, 1 in 509; in 1877, 1 in 478; in 1878, 1 in 451; in 1879, 1 in 445; in 1880, 1 in 435.

It is naturally to be expected in a colony that the number of insane persons should have a tendency to increase by the mere accumulation of incurables, until the same proportion is established between it and the general population which is found in older countries.

In New Zealand this accumulation is hastened by the fact that the amount of insanity annually occurring is very large—larger than in England, where in 1879 the number of persons who became insane was only 1 in every 1,944 of the population, as against 1 in every 1,282 in New Zealand. This difference is no doubt partly due to the great amount of insanity caused by drink in this colony, but that is an explanation which hardly makes matters any better. Besides this, the maintenance of the insane being in this country entirely a burden on the General Government, many persons of weak and impaired mind appear on the register of lunatics who would not do so in England, where the maintenance of the insane is a heavy local charge. Nothing can be more certain than that it is not alone the state of a man's mind which settles the question of whether he is to be considered a lunatic. It is well known, for instance, that one result of the Imperial grant of four shillings per head a week towards the maintenance of a lunatic in English asylums was that many persons of impaired mind, who had hitherto been supported exclusively by their unions, were rapidly discovered to be lunatics and fit subjects for Imperial aid; and that, consequently, a considerable accession to the apparent number of lunatics was made. But in this country there are no parishes or unions charged with even a part of the maintenance of the insane, and interested in guarding against imbeciles and persons of decayed mind being regarded as lunatics; and, so long as the cost of supporting the insane is entirely a charge on the General Government, while the relief of the sane poor is wholly or partly a charge on