

1892.  
NEW ZEALAND.

# LUNATIC ASYLUMS OF THE COLONY

(REPORT ON) FOR 1891.

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

The INSPECTOR of ASYLUMS to the Hon. the MINISTER of EDUCATION.

SIR,—

1st April, 1892.

I have the honour to lay before you the following report on the lunatic asylums of the colony for the year 1891:—

The number of registered insane persons in the colony on the 31st December, 1891, was 1,849, showing an increase over the preceding year of 52 persons, being 20 males and 32 females. These are distributed as follows:—

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Auckland ... ..	258	129	387
Christchurch ... ..	228	186	414
Seacliff (Dunedin) ... ..	296	215	511
Hokitika ... ..	65	35	100
Nelson ... ..	67	47	114
Wellington ... ..	181	106	287
Ashburn Hall (private asylum) ... ..	20	16	36
	1,115	734	1,849

The proportion of the insane to the population is—

New Zealand (exclusive of Maoris) ... ..	2.92 per 1,000, or 1 to 343
New Zealand (inclusive of Maoris) ... ..	2.74 per 1,000, or 1 to 365

At the end of 1890 New South Wales had ... ..	1 in 377
Victoria had ... ..	1 in 304
England and Wales had ... ..	1 in 341

To explain the state of things in this and the other Australasian Colonies I cannot do better than quote the remarks of the Inspector of Lunatic Asylums for Victoria in his report for 1890. Writing of the high rate of insanity he says, "The cause of the high rate of insanity can only be surmised, though various influences at work suggest an explanation. Chief among these are— (a.) The facilities offered by our lunacy system for safely and cheaply disposing of weak-minded persons who have become a burden to their proper guardians. The cost of medical examination of persons suspected of being insane, as well as of the transport of lunatics, and their maintenance in the asylums, is here largely borne by the State, not by municipal or district authorities, as in other countries. (b.) The poorhouse system of Britain has no equivalent here, and in so far there is wanting this outlet for a large class of our asylum inmates. (c.) The standard of mental unsoundness in use leads to many persons suffering only from old age, and harmless as regards themselves or others, being certified as insane. (d.) The mortality among patients has been low, resulting in an accumulation of the old and incurable. (e.) A large number of our population follow nomadic pursuits, and so are especially exposed to some of the most potent causes of mental disease."

The new asylum at Porirua, now rapidly approaching completion, will enable me for the first time since I took charge of the department to provide sufficient cubic space for every insane person in the colony. The central block now under contract makes provision for over two hundred patients of the chronic class, and the plans are so arranged that at a comparatively small cost the accommodation can be extended as population increases.

There is still no prospect of my being able to provide separate buildings for insane criminals, for idiots, nor for inebriates. I am authorised, however, by the proprietors of Ashburn Hall private asylum to say that they are now building a separate block of buildings furnished with all the modern requirements for the treatment of inebriates. Of course, this will benefit only such persons as are able to pay. The necessity for obeying the requirements of the law by providing separate accommodation for inebriates has recently been pointedly brought before the country by a