

The officers in all departments of the Mental Hospital, as well as their subordinates, have carried out their several duties loyally and conscientiously. The welfare of patients has been the first consideration. The useful occupation of as many patients as can be induced to work has been insisted on, while both indoor and outdoor amusements have not been neglected.

I very much regret the loss sustained by the death of Mr. F. H. Fraser, who had for many years been Deputy Inspector, and who always took a keen interest in this Mental Hospital.

The Inspector-General, Mental Hospitals, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

GRAY HASSELL.

SUNNYSIDE MENTAL HOSPITAL.

SIR,—

I have the honour to forward you herewith my annual report of this Mental Hospital, along with the statistics, for the year 1911.

The total number of patients under treatment was 801, and the average number of patients was 661.44. The number remaining on the last day of the year was 689, as compared with 679 at the corresponding date of last year.

There were 97 patients admitted for the first time, 20 readmissions, and 5 transfers from other institutions. This is the lowest admission since 1908, but I cannot find that it is due to any specific cause, and if we strike the average between the admissions of this year and last we find it conforms to the normal of previous years. There were 56 recoveries, which gives a recovery-rate of 45.9 on the total admissions, which corresponds very closely with the 46.5 of last year.

There were 53 deaths, making an average of 8.1 on the average number resident, of whom 9 were general paralytics, and 25 were over sixty years of age.

As you will notice from the above figures, the total increase for the year was only 10, but I fear that, with the incoming of the new Mental Defectives Act, the increase in the coming year will be much greater, as the Act has widened greatly the possibilities of certification, and we must be prepared to deal with larger numbers in the near future. I have noticed already that we are getting patients committed to our care—namely, higher-grade imbeciles and epileptics—who would formerly not have been committed, and these most rightly must be provided for. It is bound to be a strain for the present, but the segregation of those types who have the power of transmission of their mental defects is sure in the future to have beneficial effects on the race. During the past few weeks the hereditary history of several of the patients has been appalling. Two sisters were admitted in one day, one of whose brothers died here, and two others committed suicide. Another woman was admitted who had been in a mental hospital before, after child-birth. Her father is a patient at present, and her mother has also been a patient here. A man was admitted recently whose mother is at present an inmate here and whose cousin has just been admitted, and then we hear by a side-wind of the intermarriage of another relation with the son of another patient here.

The new addition on the female side is progressing rapidly, and will afford accommodation for 50 patients, but this will provide only for the present and near future, and further extensions or liberal transfers will soon be a necessity. The provision in the new Act for voluntary patients should also be provided for, so as to encourage those who feel a breakdown coming on to seek for that rest and care which might be the means of tiding them over their trouble and so avert a total collapse. The same remarks as to extension or transfer apply equally to the male division.

I am pleased to say that with our own labour we have completed our new reservoir, and now we have an unlimited supply of water.

The extra boiler I asked for last year has not yet been supplied; but you have my special report on the installation of electricity, and I trust that one of the schemes suggested will be proceeded with as soon as possible. We should get greater efficiency with a marked economy and a greater sense of security.

The farm has furnished handsome returns, and I am pleased that the Government so favourably recognized our efforts here by granting us the money for the importation of new stock, which should prove a valuable aid to the improving of the dairy stock of the Dominion. I should like it to be understood by the farming community that this is really not a grant, but a return out of the profits from the sale of stock.

The usual fortnightly dances, cricket, football, and bowling matches have been carried on during the year, affording recreation both to the patients and staff, whilst frequent visits to the theatres and other places of amusement in town have been possible owing to the generosity of many kind hearts.

A serious matter at present is the scarcity of female attendants. The conditions of the service seem quite satisfactory, as we have very few changes among the older members of the staff, whose reason for leaving in most cases is for the commendable purpose of getting married. The difficulty of replacing them seems due to the general scarcity of female labour in the Dominion, and also probably from a preconceived idea that conditions in a mental hospital are bound to be disagreeable and irksome. That this idea is not founded on fact may be proved by the fact that our nurses when once settled stay so well with us.

During the year we lost the valuable services of Dr. Scannel, but his place is being worthily filled by Dr. Ramsbottom, to whom and to all the other members of the staff I have to tender my heartfelt thanks for their loyal support, which means so much in the harmonious working of the institution.

I have, &c.,

W. BAXTER GOW, M.D.,

Medical Superintendent.

The Inspector-General, Mental Hospitals, Wellington.