

DISCHARGES.

The total number removed by discharge and death during the year was 354—males, 209; females, 145.

The percentage of recoveries on admissions during the year was 47·69. Percentage of recoveries—New Zealand, 47·69; Victoria, 44·36; New South Wales, 44·36; South Australia (1888), 38·47; England, 38·71.

DEATHS.

The percentage of deaths on average number resident during the year was—New Zealand, 6·29; Victoria, 6·92; New South Wales, 7·23; South Australia (1888), 6·6.

For the last five years most persistent efforts have been made to extend the system of out-door employment of every patient, as being by far the most effectual means of improving health and securing sleep. An immense improvement has thus been effected in the physical appearance of the patients in all our asylums, and that without any fatal accidents until this year, when we have had three suicides in Seacliff and one in Wellington. Such immunity from suicides for so long a period proves the great vigilance with which the patients have been looked after.

I hope most earnestly that these painful cases will not discourage the officers concerned in their praiseworthy efforts to reduce to a minimum the necessity for restraint of any kind in our asylums.

NEW BUILDINGS AND IMPROVEMENTS.

Notwithstanding that nearly the whole of the money voted last year for all our asylums had to be impounded to enable the Government to accept a contract for the central block of the new asylum at Porirua, we have been able to provide a commodious new farm-stead and complete the new workshop block at Seacliff, besides building a neat lodge-cottage at the entrance-gate, and carrying out much-needed improvements in the drainage and ventilation of the main building.

At Auckland the materials of the old shelter-sheds in the female airing-court have been utilised for the building of a cottage for the clerk and steward, and the drainage of the whole Asylum has been laid down in the most thorough-going way, according to plans prepared by Mr. Bell.

At Wellington a fine new airing-court has been laid out on the female side, but no new buildings have been erected.

At Sunnyside the continued neglect to build the front block, which was omitted from the last contract, has left the building in a most unrepresentable state, and even Dr. Levinge's well-known enthusiasm for improving the grounds and gardens has been largely paralysed thereby.

Our most urgent requirements at present are a residence for the Medical Superintendent at Seacliff, so as to permit of the rooms he now occupies being used for their proper purpose as public offices. So long as the present absurd arrangement is allowed to continue, it will be impossible to get a good married man to remain, and the whole working of the Asylum will be greatly hampered. The fact of allowing the main entrance of the Asylum to become merely the front door of the doctor's rooms compels the main entrance to the Asylum and the public approach thereto to be by the back door. The effect of this has been, ever since the Asylum was opened, to turn the whole of its working topsy-turvy—to exclude the patients, practically, from the sunny slope in front and confine them to sunless courts in the rear, all to save the cost of a wooden house for the doctor.

As I have already pointed out, the front block of Sunnyside was dropped out of the last contract, and must now be built at a cost of £2,000. The large male airing-court must be shifted to the sunny side of the building, and the fence of the female airing-court requires immediate renewal.

At Auckland a new farm-stead has been required for many years. The old buildings have reached such a degree of dilapidation that it is impossible to use them any longer. The older side of the main Asylum building is in such a state that at least £1,000 must be spent in securing efficient ventilation.

CHANGES IN THE MEDICAL STAFF.

Dr. T. Radford King, an old and valued officer of the department, has been compelled by ill-health to leave for England. Both in Seacliff and Auckland Asylums he was intrusted with the difficult task of re-establishing order and harmony after long-continued turmoil. His long experience and his high sense of justice and his kindness enabled him to place both those institutions in a satisfactory condition, and I am sorry that his health should have suffered in the process.

He has been succeeded by Dr. Hassell, of Wellington, whose place has been filled by Dr. Fooks, formerly assistant medical officer at Seacliff.

FINANCIAL RESULTS OF THE YEAR.

It is gratifying to find that, owing to the vigour and vigilance with which the various officers of the department have looked after the expenditure, we have been enabled to still further reduce the cost per head for the 1,763 patients in average residence by £1 0s. 1d. for last year, and that, too, in spite of increased prices in several items of expenditure.

A reference to Table XVI. will show the position occupied by the different asylums in economy of working. It will be observed that there is a very great difference for the better in the cases of Nelson and Wellington. In the former the cost per head has been reduced by £9 5s. 2d., and in the latter by £5 19s. 3d. during last year. Dr. Levinge, of Sunnyside, Christchurch, who used to stand first in this order of merit, has, apparently, all but reached the limit beyond which the most careful administration cannot carry economy without sacrificing efficiency. If, however, it should prove that there have been this year non-recurrent causes of expense, I am confident that next year there will be a still further reduction in this well-managed institution,