

characteristics of these blue books. The great advance in this respect opens a new era in the value and interest of the Reports, will bring the Commission and the Asylums in much more sympathetic co-operation, and will greatly strengthen the influence of the Commissioners.

The Fiftieth Annual Report of the General Board of Commissioners in Lunacy for Scotland, 1908.

On January 1st, 1908, there were in Scotland 17,414 registered insane persons and 494 non-registered insane persons (in the Criminal Department, Perth Prison, and in the Training Schools for Imbecile Children), giving a total of 17,908.

Of this number 2,633 were maintained from private sources and 15,226 from parochial rates. These figures, as compared with the previous year, show a total increase of 293, due to an increase of private patients by 59, and of pauper patients by 234. The total increase occurred in the number in establishments for the insane. The number of patients in private dwellings remained unchanged. The average increase of pauper patients during the preceding five years was 204, so that the increase of 228 during the year 1907 has been above the average increase for that quinquenniad.

Of the 494 non-registered insane persons, 49 were maintained at the expense of the State in the department of Perth Prison for the criminal insane—a decrease of two as compared with the previous year. Four hundred and forty-five were in training schools for imbecile children—24 more than on January 1st, 1907. Of the 445 imbecile children, 199 were maintained from private sources—an increase of 16 as compared with the previous year.

Increase of insanity in proportion to population.—For the year 1907 there is a slight increase in the numbers of the insane compared with 1906. There is nothing in the figures of the year under review to discourage the hope expressed in the last report that the burden of pauper lunacy in proportion to population has reached, or is fast reaching, its limit, especially when due consideration is given to the number of insane admitted, and to their age distribution. The Commissioners repeat the reminder contained in the previous report that there are still known to be in the country a large number of persons of unsound mind not at present on the register, and that it might be possible by administrative changes to bring many of these under official cognisance, and so to increase the amount of registered lunacy without any change having occurred in the actual proportion of mental unsoundness in the community.

An interesting table, which shows the number of lunatics placed on the register during each year from 1874 to 1907, reveals the fact that the increased number of lunatics on the register is merely the effect of accumulations due to a decreased rate of removal from the register by discharge or death.

The maximum number of admissions, *viz.*, 3,660, was reached in 1902. That number has never since been attained, and was markedly less in the years 1905–6. An increase of 247 took place during the

past year over the year 1906, but the figures of the table show that the number of removals by discharge and death did not keep pace with the number admitted, so that the increased number on the register is to some extent due to mere accumulation. It has further to be borne in mind that the population of the country is increasing, and that a corresponding increase of admissions to the register must therefore, under normal conditions, be looked for.

Number of first admissions registered.—The table from which the statistics under this heading are dealt with cover a period of thirty-four years. In regard to the private patients, the proportion to population has fluctuated within somewhat narrow limits throughout the thirty-four years, and is for 1907 lower than it was in 1875. In the case of pauper patients there was a fairly steady rise in proportion to population until 1902, when it attained its maximum of 52·6. It has since fallen, the proportion for the last four years being respectively 50·5, 47·9, 45·1, and 48·3.

Admission to establishments during 1907.—The number of private patients admitted during the year was 608—72 more than in the preceding year and 39 more than the average for the quinquenniad 1900—1904. The number of pauper patients admitted was 3,010—154 more than the number during the preceding year, and two more than the average for the quinquenniad 1900—1904. Transfers are necessarily excluded from these calculations, which deals with persons only.

Voluntary patients admitted into asylums during 1907.—The number of voluntary patients admitted was 120. This is 33 above the average number admitted for the ten years 1898—1907. The Commissioners are of opinion that the admission of voluntary patients is a useful provision of the law which permits persons who desire to place themselves under care in an asylum to do so in a way which is not attended with troublesome or disagreeable formalities. Simple, however, as the process at present is, a certain amount of time must necessarily elapse before application can be lodged and sanction issued. The delay involved is short, but it has on more than one occasion had serious consequence, and they are therefore in favour of a change in the law which would permit of a person being received into and kept in an asylum for three days on his own written application to the superintendent, provided the sanction of the Board be at once applied for in the usual way on admission, and that no voluntary boarder be retained for any longer period than three days without such sanction.

Discharges of the recovered.—The recovery-rate for the year was 38·2 per cent. in private patients and 40 per cent. in pauper. With regard to private cases it is 3 per cent. less than the previous year, and in the case of pauper patients 6 per cent. greater. The average recovery-rate shows very slight variations since the year 1880, in spite of the increased knowledge regarding the insanities and the advanced care of the insane. The Commissioners point out that in recent years the recovery-rate has probably been affected by the increased use of observation wards connected with the parochial hospitals of several large parishes, which receive persons suffering from passing attacks of mental disorder, of whom some, in the absence of such wards, would have been removed to asylums and would have been discharged recovered shortly after admis-

sion. Further, the slight lowering of the recovery-rate is probably to be mainly ascribed to the accumulation of chronic patients and to the fact that the development of nursing and the improved means of hospital care in asylums have led to their being more freely used for the reception of patients whose age and mental physical condition are such as to preclude hope of recovery. Persons in moribund states, or suffering from incurable physical diseases, complicated with mental unsoundness or decay, are now sent to asylum hospitals instead of being sent to ordinary infirmaries or of being kept at home until death takes place. The number of persons admitted at ages so advanced as to render recovery almost impossible has, as subsequently shown in the report, largely increased. The following statement shows the recovery-rate from all establishments during the past twenty-seven years among private and pauper patients respectively.

Average of 5 years.	Recoveries <i>per cent.</i> of admissions, excluding transfers.	
	Private.	Pauper.
1880-84	41'0	47'6
1885-89	39'0	45'1
1890-94	39'3	44'1
1895-99	43'0	44'1
1900-04	44'3	42'9
Year 1905	44'8	41'6
„ 1906	41'2	39'4
„ 1907	38'2	40'0

Discharges — not recovered.—The number of private patients discharged not recovered, excluding transfers, during 1907, was 135, which is nineteen more than the previous year and seven above the average of the five years 1900-1904. The number of pauper patients discharged unrecovered was 376, or seventy-five below the number so discharged in the preceding year, and thirty-seven below the average for the five years 1900-1904. Two hundred and eighty-seven pauper patients were discharged by minute of parish council and forty-seven on expiry of liberation on probation. Twenty-three pauper patients were removed by warrant of sheriff and sent to England, Ireland, or other countries.

Deaths in establishments.—The death-rate during 1907 was 9'6. There has been a gradual increase in the death-rate from the years 1896-1899. The tendency to an increased death-rate, in spite of improved sanitary arrangements, of lessened overcrowding, and of more efficient means of treating special diseases, such as pulmonary consumption, is, as the Commissioners point out, what might be looked

for in view of the large and increasing number of senile cases that are being sent into asylums.

Removals from establishments on statutory probation.—The total number of patients thus removed from establishments was 167. Patients liberated on trial for periods not exceeding twenty-eight days are not included in this number. These trials can be made without the sanction of the Board, and they are frequently made use of by medical superintendents instead of the system of probation. The Commissioners, from their experience, are of opinion that the more frequent use of removal on probation in some establishments would probably lead to a larger number of permanent discharges than takes place at present.

Insane persons in private dwellings.—On January 1st, 1907, there were 2,780 pauper patients living in private dwellings with the sanction of the Board of Commissioners. This is a slight increase as compared with the previous year. One thousand eight hundred and nine of these patients were boarded with strangers and represent the number to whom alone the term "boarded out" is practically applicable.

Dr. John Macpherson, one of the Commissioners, in his report on the visitation of boarded-out patients, writes: "While some of them were as comfortably situated and as well cared for as any in Scotland, a few fell below the average standard of the country. In no single instance, however, did the welfare or comfort of the patients appear inferior to that of their guardians. Other reports on the subject, and of much interest, are given by Drs. Sutherland and Charles Macpherson. The former calls attention to figures relating to certified lunatics in certain parishes of the Western Isles, and to the great and unaccountable difference in the number of insane people there and on the neighbouring mainland, shown between parishes which adjoin each other, and which in all respects are subjected to like local conditions. "So far as Highland parishes are concerned," writes Dr. Sutherland, "all the main factors of life contributing to, and perpetuating insanity, save heredity, may be disregarded." He is of opinion that poverty is not a factor in the causation of insanity of any moment in the Highlands and Islands. The food in common use may be less varied and not so costly as it is elsewhere, but it is both abundant and nutritious, and the physique of the population as a whole bears this out. He suggests that excessive daily infusions, or rather, decoctions of tea may have an unsettling effect on subjects mentally unstable from birth, at adolescence, or at the climacteric. With all due deference to Dr. Sutherland's opinion, and writing as one with a knowledge of some of the conditions in the Highlands and Islands, the nature of the alcoholic liquors supplied is worthy of attention. One sample of whiskey the writer tried with a lighted match, and it failed to burn. Again, there is a complete absence in many of the homes of ordinary hygienic conditions, fresh air being at a minimum. Dr. Sutherland makes reference to the most important factor, which has often been referred to in the previous reports of the Commissioners, namely, migration and emigration of the able-bodied of both sexes to the large centres of industry, which leaves mostly the weakest specimens behind, with tainted histories, to intermarry. Dr. Charles Macpherson, referring to the conditions of boarded-

out patients, writes : " In some cases, and especially in houses licensed for three or four patients, there was reason to suspect that the patients did not enjoy the full family life which is regarded as essential if the best results are to be obtained. The guardians in such cases were warned that unless it was made clear in future that the patients had full liberty in the house, and were treated exactly as the ordinary members of the family, the result would probably be the removal of the patients entirely, or of such a number of them as would remove the excuse that there was insufficient room at the family table for them. Dr. Macpherson narrates an interesting case of a man removed from an asylum against the wish of the asylum superintendent. He was boarded in a small farmhouse in his native parish, and supplied with the necessary tools of his trade, which was that of a shoemaker. This man was found steadily at work repairing boots, cheerful, and pleasantly talkative, though slightly childish. He bought supplies of leather from a wholesale merchant, and regularly met his liabilities. The Commissioners are to be congratulated on the efficiency of a system which takes cognisance under such favourable conditions of so many cases of chronic and harmless insanity.

Accommodation for the poorer class of private patients.—The Board of Commissioners makes reference to the want of accommodation for the poorer class of private patients. This has already been dealt with in the thirty-ninth annual report. The Commissioners are of opinion that permissive power should be given by statute to District Lunacy Boards to provide accommodation for private patients under the conditions which they indicated as desirable, and they have reason to believe that legislation in this direction would tend to relieve the rates, and would be approved of by District Lunacy Boards.

The number of private patients admitted to district asylums has been steadily increasing. On January 1st, 1895, it was 143 ; on January 1st, 1908, it was 302.

Ages of the insane.—An interesting part of the Report is that which deals with the ages of the insane. Throughout the past ten years the proportion of insane persons to the general population between the ages of 20 and 60 has been no greater than in the ten years preceding, so far as that number can be gauged by the number resident in establishments. As regards the later period of life, however, the results are very different. Between 1887 and 1897 the section of the insane of 60 years and over showed an increase of 25 *per cent.* In the following ten years a further increase is shown in this section amounting to 30·6 *per cent.* During the past twenty years the proportion of the insane 60 years and over to every 100,000 of the general population at the same age has risen from 519 to 848—an increase of 61·2 *per cent.* In the year 1887 the largest proportion of the insane in establishments to population occurred in the period of life from 30 to 60 years. In the year 1897 the largest proportion appeared in the ages of 60 and over. In 1907 the preponderance of the number who have attained late life is much more marked. It will be observed that in 1887 the figures relating to middle life exceed those relating to late life by 10 ; that in 1897, on the contrary, the figures relating to late life exceed those relating to middle life by 11 ; and that in 1907 the excess of late life over the middle life figures had risen to 207.

There is an absolute proof that patients of 60 years and over have during the past twenty years been constituting a rapidly increasing proportion of the insane resident in establishments. In order to prevent misconceptions to which the proportions and percentages above stated are apt to give rise, it is necessary to bear in mind that they in no way disclose the relative numbers actually resident at each age period. The actual numbers at the late life period are even now only about one-fifth of the total number resident, of whom much the largest number belongs to the period of middle life.

The question of age incidence, especially with regard to the admissions, is also noteworthy in respect of private patients. The gradual advance of the age at which private patients are being admitted may be otherwise shown by the percentages which those admitted at ages exceeding 50 years bear, at the three decennial points taken, to the total admissions. This percentage will be found to be in the earliest two years 28·3, in the second two years 32·7, and in the latest two years 38·5.

The argument that the opening in recent years of wards in connection with a few of the larger poorhouses in Scotland for the observation and treatment of incipient cases of mental disorder may have had an influence in causing the falling-off in the proportion to population of those admitted to asylums in the earlier periods of life might be suggested. The Commissioners, however, point out that the wards are, in most cases, not large, and the number of patients passing through them is comparatively small; that they are not confined to the treatment of persons in youth and middle age; and that it cannot by any means be assumed that all the patients placed in them would necessarily, had such wards not existed, have been placed in asylums. The most important argument against this statement lies in the fact that the changes which have been pointed out as characterising the returns for the years 1906-7 are equally marked in the figures relating to private patients alone, which certainly cannot have been in any way influenced through the wards referred to.

Expenditure for the maintenance of pauper patients.—The average total cost per patient in all district asylums for the year 1906-7 was £45 10s. 4d. a decrease of 5s. 8d. compared with the preceding year. There was a decrease in the annual assessment per patient to provide land and buildings of 11s. as compared with the previous year. The net annual cost per patient of food, clothing, management, etc., has increased to the extent of 5s. 4d. as compared with the year 1906. The increased expenditure for the maintenance of patients is wholly due, as most Asylum Reports show, to the unusual prices that have been paid for almost all food stuffs, fuel, etc., during the year under review.

It would serve a very useful purpose, from the point of view of the ratepayer, if a table could be introduced in the report of the Commissioners giving the net cost per patient to each parish. This could only be arrived at by averaging the cost of patients under private care and the cost of patients in asylums. Boarded-out patients cost a good deal less than patients in asylums, and comparisons are apt to be instituted between these two classes of cases—comparisons which sub-

serve no useful purpose, for all that concerns the ratepayer, apart from the humane treatment of the registered lunatic, is the actual cost of each lunatic to the parish. A table such as suggested would be of advantage in dispelling a prejudice which exists in some quarters against boarding-out.

Pathological laboratory.—An interesting part of the report is that which deals with the Pathological Laboratory of the Scottish Conjoint Asylums. The Board of Commissioners ensures the favourable report of the Medical Commissioners upon the amount and nature of the work that is being done in the laboratory. The Commissioners point out that the laboratory is supported by the voluntary contributions of most of the Royal and District Asylums in Scotland, and regret that some asylums have withdrawn from the scheme. They would prefer to see work of this importance placed upon a more secure financial basis than the voluntary payment of annual sums, which are liable to be withdrawn by, it may be, a chance vote in elected bodies varying from time to time in their constitution. Scientific research of this kind, they point out, is necessarily laborious, and moves slowly step by step, and for that reason, among others, it is of the first importance that it should be uninterrupted and as liberally endowed as possible.

A study of the annual reports issued by the Board of Commissioners in Lunacy is always interesting. No single report has been issued that has not contained some illuminating and informing matter which amply repays the careful student, and the present report is not an exception to this rule.

Fifty-seventh Report of the Inspectors of Lunatics in Ireland, for the Year ending December 31st, 1907.

The total number of insane in Ireland on January 1st, 1908, according to the Inspectors' report, was 23,718, of whom 19,511 were in district asylums, and 3,053 in workhouses, the increase being only 164 over that of the previous year, and the lowest on record within the last twenty-one years, except in the year 1893, when it was 152.

A perusal of the Inspectors' reports for the past four years ought to have one beneficial result—it should tend to allay the fears of many who are apt to receive without questioning the conclusions of alarmist writers as regards the increase of insanity in Ireland. In 1903 the annual increase in the total number of insane reached its highest figure, 656; during the past four years which have since elapsed the respective increments were 202, 369, 189, and in 1907, 164. This is a big drop in the rate of increase. The average rate of increase for the last four years was 231, or not one half of that of the previous four years, which was 483, so that there has been a reduction of over 50 *per cent.* during the later period.

With respect to the number of insane in district asylums, there has also been a notable decrease in the rate of increase, amounting to about 35 *per cent.* for the same period.

Lastly, as regards first admissions, the crucial test of the increase of insanity, the statistics show an absolute decrease for each of the past