

occupied by thirteen old men. The Jubilee Home (sixty-eight inmates) has had a wing added for married couples, and is now one of the most complete and comfortable homes for aged persons in the colony. The Linwood Female Refuge is for unmarried girls with their first baby. On the 5th December there were seventeen mothers and fourteen babies. I can give nothing but praise to the humane and kindly management of this institution.

The Otago United Charitable Aid Board raises the money required, pays for children in the Industrial School, and supports a Female Refuge. On the 20th December there were nine girls and six children in the latter. Dunedin has one "separate institution"—the Otago Benevolent Institution. Its expenditure for the year ending the 31st March, 1899, was £6,975 on outdoor relief, and £4,180 on indoor relief. Its conditions of management are very similar to those of the Wellington Benevolent Trust, except that the Dunedin Trustees undertake no boarding-out of children. Contracts for ration supplies are let. There is no woman Visitor; the duty of inquiring into cases devolves upon Mr. Mee, the master of the Caversham Home. On the 8th December there were 289 inmates in the Caversham Home, 227 men and 62 women. The matron has no trained nurse as permanent assistant, nor has Mr. Mee either a night- or a day-assistant on the male side. A much-required laundry has been added this year. One ward of fifteen beds is entirely occupied by Chinese men.

In Timaru relief is carefully administered by the South Canterbury Charitable Aid Board. This Board also has taken the progressive step of supplying its own ration-orders. Mr. Orwin, the secretary, finds that it works far more satisfactorily than the old contract plan.

Country districts as a rule distribute rations by orders on local stores, and I have seen returns where articles supplied by no means come under the head of necessaries of life. There is a feeling that country districts pay rates for distribution amongst the town population, and a corresponding inclination to bring some of the money back into the country whenever possible.

The old buildings at Napier, Ashburton, and Oamaru should be condemned as unfit for their present purpose. Utterly inadequate provision is made by the Boards for infirm, imbecile, paralytic, and incurable cases. There is no efficient, and but little even humane, nursing of helpless old age, the sick and infirm being usually left to the tendance of one of their own kind. The west coast of the South Island must be excepted from this, for in that district the hospitals are largely used as old men's homes.

In dealing with deserted and neglected children there is room for reform. Under "The Infant Life Protection Act, 1896," the homes where infants are boarded out for payment must be licensed, and come under the supervision of the Police Department. Infants taken into a home, if payment is not avowedly made, come under no public guardianship. Deserted, orphaned, or neglected children may be committed by a Magistrate to an industrial school, and thus come under the care of the Education Department, whilst the Charitable Aid Board of the district is responsible for their maintenance. Or the Board, if of economical inclination, may place out these children at a lower rate of payment within its own town or district. In some instances small settlers have taken such children off the hands of the Board without legal adoption. Again, a "separate institution" may board out these little ones in town slums with very poor families and but slight and perfunctory supervision. Perhaps a family is orphaned, and some neighbour with a small shop and a large family offers to take a girl of ten or twelve years, who then becomes an unpaid little drudge, and unless actual cruelty can be proved no one interferes. There is no definite or comprehensive State guardianship of children, responsible for their development into healthy, self-respecting members of the commonwealth.

I have, &c.,

The Inspector-General.

GRACE NEILL, Assistant Inspector.

ARROWTOWN HOSPITAL.

Number of patients on 31st March, 1898	...	...	...	2
Admitted during the year	...	...	...	102
Total under treatment	...	...	...	104
Discharged	...	...	...	93
Died	...	...	...	3
Remaining on 31st March, 1899	...	...	...	8

Sex.—76 males, 28 females.

Localities from which Patients came.—Arrow, Macetown, Cardrona, Skipper's, Wanaka, Bannockburn, Arrow Flat, Cromwell, Gibbston, Miller's Flat.

Country.—England 12; Ireland, 10; Scotland, 11; New Zealand, 46; Australia, 8; Tasmania, 5; Germany, 3; Denmark, 1.

Religion.—Church of England, 26; Presbyterian, 36; Wesleyan, 4; Roman Catholic, 23; Agnostic, 1; Lutheran, 3; Baptist, 2; Quaker, 1.

Total collective days' stay in Hospital, 1,668; individual average days' stay, 16.03. Daily average cost per head, 8s. 9½d.; less patients' payments, 5s. 8½d.

Outdoor Patients.—Individual cases, 130; attendances, 183.