

services, motor-hire, drugs, &c., and is attached hereto. Even at this date occasional belated claims come to hand, but the attached table gives a close approximation of the expenditure. Claims paid to date amount to over £190,000, and there are a few reimbursing vouchers to Hospital Boards in transit which will bring the expenditure up to over £200,000. Further credits resulting from equipment have yet to be brought to account, and it is anticipated that the total cost will thus be reduced to approximately £200,000.

Most accounts of over £40 in amount were submitted to and paid by the Department, thus lessening the pressure on Boards' finances pending reimbursing vouchers being passed. It was customary, however, for wages, and also for small accounts, to be paid direct by Hospital Boards and reimbursement subsequently obtained from the Department. The volume of work entailed by these claims necessitated the appointment of a special temporary branch under the supervision of Mr. Crichton Smith, of whose energy and initiative I cannot speak too highly.

Discounts and Reductions in Claims.—Claims, which numbered several thousands, required in every instance careful scrutiny. It was found in a large number of instances that no steps had been taken in the direction of obtaining discounts or rebates on the claims made. In few instances was it found that the claims could be passed without question, and it was found desirable that the officer in charge of the epidemic accounts or some other officer should visit, as far as possible, every district and investigate the expenditure upon the spot.

Despite the pressure of work arrangements were made by which every district has been visited for this purpose, with the exception of a small portion of the Auckland Health District and a portion of the South Island. In this connection the thanks of the Department must be expressed towards such firms as gave generous discount when asked to do so. The Department's officer was met in most instances in a most public-spirited manner, reductions amounting in many cases to 10 or 15 per cent., and in one or two cases as high as 20 per cent., having been obtained. There were, of course, a few isolated instances where claimants showed a mean spirit and, in the face of the calamity and despite the fine spirit showed by voluntary workers, insisted upon extracting from the Government every penny that could be legally claimed.

In many instances accounts, though certified to as fair and reasonable and as such could have been presented to audit, did not bear close investigation upon the spot. Numerous instances could be quoted, but the following will suffice as examples: In one district claims for wages were reduced from £185 to £50. In another claims under the same heading fell from £315 to £205 upon a visit from our officer. A picture-theatre was taken as a temporary hospital, and claims in consequence were lodged for compensation and repairs amounting to £180. This was reduced to £90 as a result of a personal visit from our representative. A chemist's account for £250 was settled at £200. In all, discounts and reductions amounting to over £9,000 have been obtained after the accounts were received by the Department.

Hospital Equipment. From every account passed was extracted a full list of all equipment under the headings of "Drapery," "Bedding," "Hardware," "Crocery," "Fittings," &c., and these were assembled on stock-sheets, which numbered some hundreds of pages. Such action has been conducive to a further saving by the recovery of large quantities of material which had been overlooked in the various temporary hospitals; it also acted as an inventory and a very necessary check upon such equipment.

Boards having been informed that they should carry full stocks of equipment so as to be prepared for the eventuality of a future epidemic were given an opportunity of acquiring such of the epidemic equipment as they required, and steps have recently been taken to dispose of the remainder. Difficulties in storage, carelessness in handling, and lack of proper custody show that there would be loss or deterioration, and made it desirable that all the equipment should be disposed of without further delay. Systematic sales have been effected to Hospital Boards, the Department's own institutions have taken considerable quantities, and the newly erected quarantine-stations at Somes Island and Motuihi have been equipped with some thousand pounds' worth of the surplus equipment. The remainder has been disposed of to the public, and in many cases more than cost price has been obtained therefor.

Relief to Epidemic Widows and Widowers with Children.—Full particulars regarding the relief given to widows and widowers with children are published in the August number of the *Journal of Public Health*. The total number of widows receiving relief is 828; the number of children dependent thereon, 2,323. The total number of widowers receiving relief is 89, and the total number of children dependent thereon, 366. The total annual commitment of the Department in regard to such relief is £75,374. Detailed table is attached.

Children orphaned by reason of the epidemic are entirely under the administration of the Education Department, and are not included in the above.

Relief to adult Maoris is administered by the Hospital Boards on lines decided upon by the Native Department. In most cases goods being supplied rather than cash. Such expenditure is refunded by this Department, and is not included in the commitment above mentioned.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, I have to express my appreciation of the excellent work done by the permanent officers of the staff of this section of the Department. It would be invidious and, indeed, contrary to the recognized procedure to mention any one name, but it suffices to say that without a well-trained and efficient staff with expert knowledge of their work no good results could be obtained.

E. KILLICK, Secretary.