

The work at these offices continues to be considerable. It entails a great deal of searching of files, arrangements for the granting of treatment, admission to hospitals, and travelling of patients; the supervision of work in connection with the artificial-limb, splint, plaster, and surgical-boot workshops; the boarding and reports on patients in connection with pensions; the keeping of records, provision of medical attention and, in some cases, of massage for out-patients. In addition, there is a great deal of general correspondence of a miscellaneous nature.

ARTIFICIAL-LIMB SUPPLIES.

The artificial-limb factory in Wellington continues to run very smoothly, and has the work thoroughly well in hand. There are no patients whose stumps are ready for fitting who are not provided with artificial limbs. In the case of lower-limb amputees duplicate limbs have been supplied, and in many cases also peg legs. Upper-limb amputees have been provided with a second artificial arm where it is desired.

In addition to the artificial-limb factory in Wellington, workshops have been established in Dunedin, Christchurch, and Auckland. At these workshops repairs are effected to artificial limbs; and at Christchurch and Dunedin new limbs are completed from the rough, prepared in the artificial-limb factory. It is probable that this also will be done at Auckland in the future.

The amount of work carried out by the artificial-limb factory may be judged from the following figures, which cover the period under review: New lower limbs made, 85; new upper limbs made, 15; repairs to artificial limbs, 543; accessories issued, 4,435.

All employees of the artificial-limb factory and workshops are limbless men. Those who were not already trained in England have received their training in the artificial-limb factory in Wellington.

In the early days of this factory it was found difficult to secure a sufficient supply of seasoned willow for the manufacture of buckets for artificial limbs. In the process of seasoning the timber would crack and become unserviceable, this especially if by artificial means it was attempted to expedite seasoning. It appears that the most satisfactory way of providing seasoned willow without considerable loss through cracking is to ringbark the trees and allow them to stand until dead. The Hawke's Bay River Board and Farmers' Union have very kindly given free of charge to the Department a number of willow-trees for this purpose. About a hundred of these trees have been ringbarked, and it is anticipated that this supply will last for a very considerable time.

The total number of amputees on the register is 1,043. These are distributed as follows: Lower-limb amputations in New Zealand, 617; upper-limb amputations in New Zealand, 350; proceeded overseas, 17; died, 23; discharged in United Kingdom, 34; unable to trace, 2. (Note: This number includes 22 cases of double amputation.)

MEDICAL STORES.

The supply of drugs, dressings, and equipment for the various military medical institutions has been maintained throughout the period.

Owing to the economical buying of drugs, &c., by this Department, other Departments have requested to be allowed to obtain their supplies from these stores. To give an idea of the activity of these stores the following figures are quoted: Medical stores supplied to military hospitals, £10,771 13s. 1d.; medical stores supplied to Department of Health, £7,132 1s. 3d.; medical stores supplied to Hospitals and Charitable Aid Boards, £15,847 4s. 6d.; sales of dental equipment, £3,009 4s. 2d.

An estimated saving of £116 8s. 4d. has been effected by making up ointments, tinctures, solutions, &c., instead of purchasing them elsewhere already prepared.

Garrison dispensaries established in the different centres have effected an estimated saving in prescriptions of £2,849 15s.

PATRIOTIC BODIES.

The Red Cross Society has during the year continued its very valuable activities on behalf of returned disabled soldiers. The Y.M.C.A., Salvation Army, and other patriotic bodies have also rendered services for which no expression of appreciation is adequate. The residence of many of these patients in hospital is often very long, and without the provision of recreation and entertainments by these organizations life would be one of almost intolerable boredom. Thanks, however, to these societies and to the provision of vocational training, the patients need not have an idle moment. The advantages of this are not only moral, but conduce very considerably to the physical recovery of the individual. A note has already been made of what the Red Cross and patriotic bodies have done in the way of provision of homes for chronic cases.

The Wellington Centre of the Red Cross Society conducted a convalescent home for nurses and V.A.D.s in the house of Mr. George Scales at Lower Hutt, which he very kindly lent the Department for the purpose. This home served a very useful purpose; but, as the staff has diminished in numbers and other accommodation become available, it has now been closed.

ECONOMY.

As far as has been possible, consistently with efficiency and the maximum welfare of the disabled soldier, economy has been carefully studied by this branch. It has already been pointed out that the maximum use is made of these necessary institutions by the admission of civilian patients to beds not required by service patients. The personnel of staffs is carefully supervised, and figures already quoted show great reductions. Where it has been possible Medical Officers previously on full-time duty with the Defence Department have been made part-time officers, and in this way not only is an economy effected but the repatriation of these Medical Officers assisted.