

Kingseat (£65,191).

Four villas were completed and occupied during the year. The new store has been erected and equipped.

A commencement has been made with the new laundry, boiler-house, bakehouse, and butcher's shop. Roadmaking, sewerage-construction, lighting, and drainage have all been carried forward.

Tokanui (£18,839).

Two villas for male patients have been completed and occupied. Alterations have been made to the store accommodation. Roading and sewerage works have been carried out.

Porirua (£6,510).

Erection of a new store has been commenced, and alterations to "Vailima" carried out.

Ngawhatu (£16,218).

Three new villas have been equipped. A new telephone system has been installed. A new refrigerator has been installed. New coal-bunkers have been built. Roading has been improved and extended.

Hokitika (£7,579).

One new villa has been completed and equipped. Extensions have been made to the laundry. A residence for the clerk has been erected.

Christchurch (£23,971).

A new bakehouse has been erected. Additions have been made to the female dining-room. The water-supply has been improved.

At Templeton Farm Colony the erection of a new laundry has been commenced. Two villas have been completed at Jenkins' Farm for male patients. A workshops block for vocational training of boys has been erected.

Seacliff (£2,958).

The dining-room accommodation at D Ward has been improved. A new bath and shower room for male patients has been completed. A new dairy has been erected.

SHORTENING OF NURSING STAFF WORKING-HOURS.

At the conference of Medical Superintendents last year a discussion took place as to the best means of reducing the working-hours of our nursing staffs, in conformity with the general Government policy of reducing working-hours. Those present were unanimously of opinion that a substantial reduction was desirable from the fifty-three hours then being worked, but it was stressed that any amelioration of working-conditions should be accompanied by a corresponding benefit to the patients. With your concurrence, a committee, consisting of Mr. Ellwood, Head Attendant at Christchurch, and Mr. Millar, Secretary of the Public Service Association, was set up to report upon the matter, and after consideration the recommendations of this committee were adopted and the scheme came into operation as from 1st September.

In addition to a reduction of hours from fifty-three to approximately forty-two per week, the scheme provided for an extra shift to cover the evening hours, so that a larger number of patients are now enabled to sit up to a reasonably late hour at nights.

In spite of the fact that the change-over involved the engagement of 270 new officers and the provision of their accommodation its inauguration took place with remarkably little inconvenience or disturbance of the institutional routine.

The innovation is of too recent date for me to report adequately upon its general effect on the hospitals, but the reports which I have so far received are favourable.

The only adverse comments are in regard to a lack of continuity of supervision by the higher officers, but certain proposals to deal with this are now being discussed with the Public Service Commissioners, and in any event the position will improve as the new junior staff get to know the work. So far as nursing staff is concerned, the reports are to the effect that there is a definitely increased keenness in the work.

To the credit of the nurses I would like to record that two Medical Superintendents have reported that there is a marked increase in the number of nurses who take patients out for the day of their own accord, in their own time, and at their private expense. A considerably increased number of patients now retire to rest at a later and more reasonable hour than was formerly possible, and there is a heightened interest in recreations.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY.

I was very deeply impressed on my visit to Great Britain two years ago with the enormous progress made in the provision of suitable occupation for all classes of patients in mental hospitals and with the obvious benefits to the patients and the institutions. In New Zealand a large percentage of our patients have always been employed on the necessary work of the institutions—the men on the farms and gardens, the women in the laundries, kitchens, &c.—but many patients are unwilling or unable from various reasons, mental and physical, to do institution work. For these people we have lately introduced the teaching of handicrafts, and the results are most encouraging. To begin with we have had classes for the more recent and recoverable types who benefit by some such congenial way of passing the time, but I am hopeful of extending the classes to the more chronic cases, and I have no doubt that the tranquillising effect of useful occupation which I have seen elsewhere will soon become apparent in our own institutions.