

St. Helens Hospitals.

The good work of these hospitals continues, but it will be seen that the maintenance rate has risen. This to a large extent is due to the fact that, owing to the outbreak of sepsis in two of the hospitals, arrangements had to be made with private hospitals to accommodate these applicants, with whom the Department was under contract. General renovation of the hospitals was naturally needed before they were again opened to the public. It is doubtful if the cases were true sepsis; certainly the symptoms were most anomalous, and it is possible that the outbreak was due to pneumococcus infection. In a subsequent outbreak, presenting precisely similar clinical symptoms, that organism was present in the discharges, and not the organisms generally associated with puerperal sepsis.

Eight hundred and six births took place in these hospitals during the year, and 322 confinements were attended outside the institutions by St. Helens nurses. Of the 1,128, there were 27 stillbirths, and 6 maternal and 10 infantile deaths.

The total cost of maintenance and administration for the four hospitals was £5,086 (care has been taken to include every item, and a proportion of head-office expenses has been included therein). The recoveries in the shape of patients' and pupils' fees were £3,569, leaving £1,517 to be found by the Government, or a cost of about 25s. per head for each of the 1,126 infants born.

It is not possible to make an exact comparison between the costs and maintenance in a St. Helens and a general hospital, as the St. Helens have the advantage of obtaining fees from their pupils instead of having to pay them; but, on the other hand, the proportionately larger staff swells the cost of maintenance, and the generous diet given, and the cost of the infant—and a baby takes a lot of looking after—has to be taken into consideration. The following shows the cost of maintenance in the four hospitals:—

Hospital	Daily Cost.		Fees recovered.		Net Cost.	
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
Auckland	7	6½	3	5	4	1½
Wellington	9	6	3	8	5	10
Christchurch	6	6	3	8	2	10
Dunedin	7	10½	4	3	3	7½
Average	7	10½	3	9	4	1½

In connection with the above, the following is a return on infant-feeding compiled from 100 circulars received from mothers in the St. Helens Hospitals:—

Suckled entirely for nine months or over	50
Suckled for nine months or over, with other food in addition	13
Supply failed entirely before nine months	27
Supply plentiful, but did not agree with infant, causing vomiting and constipation	1
Suckled for four months, and then gave up because disinclined to continue	1
Suckled for three months, but too hardworked to continue	1
Unable to suckle through ill health (one gave no reason)	7
	100

CHARITABLE AID.

Table V shows the receipts and expenditure on charitable aid.

<i>Receipts.</i>					1907-8.	1908-9.
					£	£
Balance in hand .. .. .	..	..	..	..	17,855	18,313
From Government .. .. .	..	..	..	..	48,862	49,413
From local authorities .. .. .	..	..	..	..	39,220	40,774
Voluntary contributions .. .. .	..	..	..	..	5,942	3,520
Rents, interest, and dividends .. .. .	..	..	..	..	1,260	5,607
Payments on account of persons relieved .. .. .	..	..	..	..	12,560	14,634
From other sources .. .. .	..	..	..	..	9,624	4,629
Totals .. .. .	..	..	..	..	£135,323	£136,890

The decrease in the amount of voluntary contributions, £2,422, was not unexpected, but nevertheless it is to be regretted.

Of the £14,634 received as payments on account of persons relieved, £10,274 was from old-age pensioners (this amount is net—i.e., less any refunds made to the pensioners).

<i>Expenditure.</i>					1907-8.	1908-9.	
					£	£	£
Indoor .. .. .	..	..	..	..	41,587	54,840	Increase 13,253
Capital expenditure .. .. .	..	..	..	..	9,300	13,172	„ 3,872
Total indoor relief .. .. .	..	..	..	..	50,887	68,012	„ 17,125
Outdoor relief .. .. .	..	..	..	..	33,998	37,538	„ 3,540
Other expenses .. .. .	..	..	..	..	6,258	597	Decrease 5,661
Administration .. .. .	..	..	..	..	13,273	6,671	„ 6,602
Grand totals .. .. .	..	..	..	..	£104,416	£112,818	Increase £8,402