

DIVISION OF NURSING.

Miss Maclean's report as the Director of the Division of Nursing is always interesting. Indeed, she may be proud of the results achieved during the past fourteen years. The New Zealand nurse ranks high in many lands, and that New Zealand nurses have achieved such distinction is largely due to the efforts of their devoted Matron-in-Chief.

Nor, despite the recent criticisms in connection with maternal mortality, do New Zealand midwives rank low in their profession. Before being eligible for State registration they have to undergo twelve months' training, which is certainly double, if not treble, the training necessary for eligibility to the examination of the Central Midwives Board of the United Kingdom.

ST. HELENS HOSPITALS.

In view of the recent criticisms in connection with maternal mortality, the reports of the St. Helens Hospitals and other maternity homes will be read with interest.

As regards the mortality in private maternity hospitals, it will be noted that of 15,838 confinements there were only thirty-eight deaths over a period of two years, a mortality rate of approximately 2·4 per thousand. These returns, though undoubtedly they may be improved, do not justify the very strong criticism to which these private maternity hospitals have been subjected by some people. There is no doubt ample room, however, for improvement, and such will be effected.

MEDICAL INSPECTION OF SCHOOLS.

That 1,356 schools were visited by Medical Inspectors during the year and 78,980 children examined is not a bad record for the division under the control of Dr. E. H. Wilkins.

I have every reason to believe that the results of medical school inspection are already bearing good fruit, and all credit is due to those lady members of our profession who were the pioneers of this country in the medical inspection of schools. In fact, as to the value of the services of these officers, I have no hesitation in saying that very few officers of this Department get down to the actual bed-rock as to how families are living in this country as do the School Medical Officers; and Dr. Wilkins and his staff will, I am sure, play a great part in the development of this Department.

DIVISION OF DENTAL HYGIENE.

Mr. T. A. Hunter, the Director of Dental Hygiene, has undoubtedly had a great many obstacles to overcome in connection with the development of his branch, and he is distinctly to be congratulated on the progress made despite considerable opposition from quarters where he might have expected support. However, I feel sure that Mr. Hunter is developing his division on right lines, and that he will in time bring about that improvement in the teeth of children that he so ardently believes is possible.

DIVISION OF MAORI HYGIENE.

The report of the Director of the Division of Maori Hygiene stresses his dissatisfaction in some respects with the subsidized medical services. It has been recognized for some years that in a few instances the services rendered have been of a very perfunctory nature. For this reason the services of some doctors were replaced with nurses, and the results have been exceedingly satisfactory. It is possible that this nursing system will have to be extended.

CHARITABLE AID.

No special report has been submitted on charitable aid, and the cost of the same for this year is not yet to hand, but will be shown in appendices to this report to be published at a later date.

The way in which charitable aid is distributed in this country, as mentioned in previous reports, makes me feel very uneasy; and but that the time is somewhat inopportune for asking for additional appointments I would suggest that an officer well versed in the administration of charitable relief be obtained from the United Kingdom, there being very few persons in this country, fortunately, who have had the opportunity of obtaining the experience necessary to deal with this very complex problem. That the question is an important one is evidenced not only from the increase in expenditure, but by the fact that we have already in this country people of the third (if not the fourth) generation seeking and obtaining alms.

SECTION 5.—BOARD OF HEALTH, ETC.

The new Board of Health, established under the Health Act, 1920, has held a number of sittings, and has dealt with various important matters, including applications from five local bodies for the Board's permission for the execution of certain sanitary works without a poll of the ratepayers being taken. In only one case, so far, has the Board seen fit to grant the application. Some of the cases, however, are still under consideration.

Among other matters considered by the Board have been two important subjects—viz., New Zealand's maternal mortality, and the control of surgical operations. A report on the former of these will shortly be made available by the Board.

MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS ACT, 1921.

During the year the Medical Board established under this Act continued its periodical meetings under the presidency of Dr. H. L. Ferguson, C.M.G., who is now Chairman. The following table,