

Spa for some years, have been transferred to the Hermitage, Mount Cook, and Mr. J. B. Gould, formerly of Wellington, has been appointed to manage the Spa, baths, gardens, plantations, &c. This arrangement is a considerable improvement on the unsatisfactory dual control which previously obtained. A masseur and masseuse have been added to the staff. The massage-rooms were opened in October last, and up to the 31st March the value of treatment was £204 5s. for 919 patients; this amount includes treatment to the value of £11 5s. which was given to indigent patients. In order to provide proper attendance at baths and facilities for bathers to obtain bath-tickets, two additional bath-attendants and two ticket-clerks have been appointed.

During the year it has been found necessary to partly refurnish the Spa in order to increase the comfort of visitors. This refurnishing has, of course, added to the expenses of "maintenance."

The receipts from the Spa for the year 1902-3 were £1,200 16s. 10d., to which should be added £94, being value of free accommodation given to indigent patients, showing a total of £1,294 16s. 10d., as against £1,344 1s. 2d. for 1901-2, and £1,139 19s. 10d. for 1900-1. The receipts for 1902-3 therefore show a slight decrease when compared with the previous year. This is due, no doubt, to the prevailing impression amongst the public that the Spa is for the accommodation of invalids taking the baths for rheumatism, &c., whereas the major portion of the building is maintained as a comfortable residence for holiday guests.

The number of baths and the receipts therefrom have been much greater during the year under review than in any other year, the figures being as follows: 1900-1, 17,964 baths, valued at £487 6s. 10d.; 1901-2, 19,985 baths, valued at £552 6s. 4d.; 1902-3, 21,719 baths, valued at £846 19s. 6d. The figures for 1902-3 included 2,012 baths, valued at £68 10s., given free to indigent patients.

The gardens have been maintained in their usual condition.

The receipts from players for use of tennis-court, croquet-lawn, and bowling-green amounted to £11 19s. 11d. for the year. For previous years no charges were made for the use of the playing-grounds.

Proposed Improvements.

Plans have been prepared for a tea and mineral-water house, doctor's consulting-room, stable, and cow-shed. The Public Works Department has been asked to put the works in hand at an early date. Plans are also being prepared for a cold-water swimming-bath, with necessary dressing-boxes, which, it is hoped, will be ready for use early next season. A bath of this sort is much needed during the summer months. The work of constructing a track to the top of Conical Hill, and the erection of a pavilion there, will be undertaken at an early date.

Inquiries are being made with a view to providing a suitable water-supply for the whole village, and also to ascertain the cost of providing a system of lighting.

The question of using motor cars for the conveyance of passengers between Culverden and the Hot Springs has also been under consideration; but, as far as can be ascertained, it is not possible at present to obtain cars capable of continuous daily running with heavy loads over rough roads. It is therefore not at present proposed to take action in this matter.

The Department will resume control of 15 acres of land contiguous to the landscape gardens, and part of this will be gradually absorbed for gardens and recreation-grounds.

It is intended to appoint a competent head gardener, and push on the work of extending and beautifying the Spa-grounds.

Arrangements are being made by the Lands Department to carry out an extensive scheme of tree-planting at Hanmer. This work is to be done with the aid of prison labour.

In June last the Department made representations to the Railway Department with a view to accelerating the train journey to Hanmer, and also suggested that the morning train to Culverden should start later than 7.35, as that hour was an inconvenient one for visitors bound for Hanmer, it not allowing a connection with the steamers from North arriving at Lyttelton. The Railway Department replied to the effect that the requirements of the traffic would not justify changes being made in the directions suggested.

PUKAKI HOTEL.

In accordance with the direction of the Government, this Department purchased the Pukaki Hotel from the Mackenzie County Council in January last for the sum of £450. It comprises nine bedrooms, two dining-rooms, office, kitchen, and bar.

Mr. and Mrs. Ross, formerly caretakers of the Hermitage Hotel, were transferred to Pukaki and placed in charge. The principal object the Government had in view when purchasing this hotel was to improve its condition and provide the accommodation necessary for visitors to the Southern Alps, which should be given effect to next spring.

Arrangements are being made for an officer of the Public Works Department to report on required improvements, and the Government will be asked to provide the necessary money to carry them out.

The receipts from January to the 31st March amounted to £131 11s.

THE HERMITAGE, SOUTHERN ALPS.

The Southern Alps have attracted a much larger number of visitors this season than hitherto. In February the Hermitage Hotel was unable to supply the demand for accommodation. I am of the opinion that should the traffic still continue to increase it will be necessary to effect considerable improvements in the hotel at an early date. The present house is erected on a site which is by no means the best available; it will be necessary to change the position when additions are undertaken. During the year the hotel has been partly refurnished to meet the requirements of visitors, and a considerable amount of repairs undertaken and some outbuildings erected. Ambulance stretchers have been placed at the Hermitage and at the alpine huts, so as to have means of