

Sea training.

In connection with the general training of the boys, a most valuable suggestion was made by Professor Haslam, of Canterbury College, in the evidence which he tendered. He strongly advocates a system of training boys for the sea without the aid of a training-ship, by the erection of certain material in the school grounds. This system of training on land is most successfully followed at the Liscard Sea-training Home for Boys. I commend very heartily this scheme to the favourable consideration of the Education Department. Its trial would not involve any very large outlay of money, and, apart from its practical value as affording a training-ground for those boys who might desire ultimately to become sailors, I believe it would be most valuable as a means of extra physical training of a most interesting nature.

Burnham, healthy locality.

It speaks well for the healthy locality of Burnham that, considering the constitutions of many of the boys there, and the fact that they are drawn from all parts of the colony, there is so little sickness of a serious nature. Since Burnham was established as a reformatory in 1900 there have only been two deaths, and one of these was the result of an accident.

Sexual degeneracy.

I have previously indicated that a large number of boys at Burnham are sexual degenerates. To counteract the effect of their vicious tendencies is one of the greatest troubles and anxieties that the Medical Officer, ably assisted as he is by the Manager, has to contend with. I cannot here refer in any detail to this subject, but it seems to me a matter for serious consideration whether the State should not seek statutory authority, and surround it with rigid safeguards, to apply the operation of vasectomy to many of these degenerates. The results of the few instances available appear to support this view. The matter is a weighty one, and one may well hesitate to express any very decided opinions upon it. Dr. Symes, the Medical Officer of the institution, has given a very great deal of special attention to this subject in all its bearings. His evidence on this and many other matters affecting the school will well repay perusal.

Manager's absences. Deputy manager. Sub-matron a trained nurse.

During the progress of this inquiry I have been impressed with the fact that the institution has suffered in some degree from the very frequent absences of the Manager. I have been astonished to find that in one year he was absent on no less than 132 occasions, an average of 2.5 days per week. He is able to show that all these absences were on the business of the institution, and he has submitted a detailed statement of the causes of these frequent absences; but it must be apparent that other arrangements must be made, by which many of the almost trifling matters that now require the personal attention of the Manager, either in Christchurch or elsewhere, shall be performed by a subordinate officer specially appointed for the purpose, and who shall be a sort of deputy- or sub-manager, to assume absolute control at Burnham upon the occasions when the Manager is unavoidably absent. In the past this matter of deputy control has given rise to a considerable amount of friction, and has seriously interfered with the discipline of the school. This sort of thing will be entirely avoided by a permanent appointment such as that indicated.

The position of Sub-matron of the institution is one of great weight and responsibility. Upon her devolves, in addition to her other duties, the care of the sick boys. There is a general consensus of opinion on the part of all those best qualified to speak that the position should be filled by a trained nurse, who, as such, would be able to render invaluable service when need arises. I entirely agree with this view, and I strongly recommend that in future only a qualified nurse be appointed to the position.

IMPROVED CLASSIFICATION.

Impossibility of effective classification. Moral lepers and defectives. Disciplinary reformatory.

The one weak spot at Burnham is the absolute impossibility of carrying out an effective system of classification, owing to the presence of a large number of hopelessly bad boys, who are a constant source of contamination to the others, and who, having shown themselves to be absolutely incapable of being reformed, are retained there only to become an ever-present menace to the safety of the institution. Such boys as these have no right to be in Burnham. They have ceased by their conduct to be entitled to such humane treatment as that. They are moral lepers, and must be treated as such. They number about 12 per cent. of the present inmates, who total 112. They should be removed without delay to a separate institution, which should be a sort of disciplinary reformatory, as distinguished from a first-class reformatory such as Burnham ought to be. I know of no place that would be better suited for such a purpose than the present Timaru Gaol. It is very little used now for its original purpose, and, if obtainable, could be very easily adapted for use as a disciplinary reformatory. I strongly recommend this suggestion to the favourable consideration of the Government. I can scarcely overestimate the importance of this change. And, in addition to the inherently vicious boys that I have referred to, there are at least 10 per cent. of the others who are mental defectives, and who on no account should be allowed to remain at Burnham. These are boys who by their lack of mental development are incapable of being benefited by ordinary reformatory methods. In a sense they are just as vicious as the others, and quite as fruitful sources of contamination, but their sense of responsibility is not, of course, as great. They are not subjects for a mental hospital, but they are equally not subjects for Burnham. They should be separately and specially treated. I see no reason why they could not be adequately provided for in such a disciplinary reformatory as I suggest the Timaru Gaol should be made into.