

FARM AND GARDEN.

Owing to the prolonged drought throughout the whole of the district, our farm and garden crops suffered considerably. By means of irrigation, however, we were able to keep our grass paddocks green when the whole of the surrounding country was dry and parched. With the assistance of the Department of Agriculture we are establishing a pure-bred Ayrshire milking-herd, and throughout the very dry weather we were fortunate in maintaining our milk-supply. Our potato crop was not at all up to the average, partly owing to the excessively dry season and also to the ravages, later on in the season, of the potato moth and grub, which caused so much damage to all the potato crops of this district. Despite the dry weather, our mangolds are very fair. We have had a plentiful supply of vegetables and fruit, which form a valuable part of the children's diet.

Several acres of new kitchen-garden have been formed by the combined efforts of the farm and garden staff and the boys. This involved a vast amount of work, owing to the fact that the timber on the land had first to be felled and the ground stumped before the land could be worked. Apart from the drought, a very successful year's work has been performed.

FUTURE SCOPE OF THE WORK.

The contemplated extension of the scope of our work by providing for the care, control, and training of the feeble-minded girls of the Dominion is a step which will meet with the approval of all sections of the community. Apart from the eugenist's point of view—and all who have the future welfare of the race at heart are agreed as to the undesirability of the multiplication of the unfit—the providing of accommodation for girls at Otekaike will prove a distinct advantage, inasmuch as in every institution there is always ample work which can be more profitably undertaken by the girls. By including girls in our scheme we shall be able to devote more time to the manual training of the boys. From all points of view it is desirable that this contemplated extension should be entered upon with all speed.

In conclusion, I would draw your attention to the following facts which have come to my notice during my visits of inspection of cases for admission :—

- (1.) The number of cases of feeble-minded persons (children and adults) which come to light incidentally, and which go to show that there are a good number of cases of whom we have no official record.
- (2.) The number of cases of feeble-minded adults over the age of twenty-one years who cannot be accommodated at Otekaike, and who are still outside institutional control. Several that I have seen are quite capable of work under direction and supervision. They are a menace to society, and should be segregated as soon as discovered.

The question of the segregation of all mental degenerates who are over the age of twenty-one years at the present time, and who are at large but are not suitable cases for admission to the mental hospitals, could be dealt with by means of a farm colony, as is the case at Templeton Farm Colony, near Waverley, Massachusetts, where at the present time 182 of the older cases are leading useful lives. In speaking of the Templeton Farm Colony, it is stated in the report of the Waverley Institution, "They [the inmates] are like those in charge, interested in their work, and delighted when they see the groaning wagon-loads carrying to their fellows at Waverley the products of their efforts. They feel the interest of ownership, and are happy when they can show the largest and best potatoes or carrots or onions in the State."

New Zealand is a young country, and is to be congratulated in having set to work on the question of dealing with the feeble-minded at so early a stage and with a full appreciation of the problem. In speaking of the work undertaken by the New Zealand Government, a monthly journal published in New Jersey State, in February, 1911, states, "We are in receipt of a very interesting report from the Principal of the Institution for the Feeble-minded at Otekaike, New Zealand. This report is most encouraging, as it reveals the fact that they are taking hold of the matter seriously." In concluding the article, the editor of the New Jersey journal gives us a word of timely warning, thus: "All this is most encouraging, only we hope the people of New Zealand will not make the mistake of turning even high-grade feeble-minded persons out into the world to marry and reproduce their kind. Europe and America are beginning a struggle with a problem which New Zealand can avoid by starting right."

Having passed a Bill last year which provides for the compulsory notification of all feeble-minded persons of school age, and also for the compulsory education of all afflicted children up to the age of twenty-one years (results which our co-workers at Home are earnestly hoping for as a tangible result of the prolonged deliberations of the Royal Commission which presented its report as far back as 1908), with power for further detention in all cases needing continuous supervision, can we not go one step further and say that all the feeble-minded persons over twenty-one years of age at the present time who are yet outside the care and control of an institution specially adapted for the purpose—and who from my own observation and personal examination are unable to control their own lives, and whose presence in the outside world is a possible menace to, and a probable source of further pollution of, the race—must be segregated? I venture to suggest that no better solution of this problem is to be found than the establishment of a farm colony similar to the one referred to at Templeton, near Waverley, Massachusetts. There can be no question of the violation of the rights or liberty of the subject, as it is unquestionably the State's duty to take charge of the lives of all those persons who are unable to control their own, irrespective of age.

Referring to the work of the institution generally, I may say that, though but yet in our infancy, we may regard the work of the past year as satisfactory, and as part of the solid foundations upon which to build up the great undertaking which we have before us.

I have, &c.,

GEORGE BENSTEAD, Principal.

The Inspector-General of Schools, Wellington.