

The development of the Borstal Farm has made good progress; an up-to-date dairy building has been erected in reinforced concrete, and equipped with a six-cow milking plant and separator, electrically driven; also a 4 horse-power boiler has been erected to furnish a hot-water supply, and with an automatic jet to steam milk-cans and utensils. A water bore has been sunk with 3 in. casing to a depth of 124 ft. As a result an artesian supply was obtained which overflows into an underground concrete tank; from there the water is lifted by a centrifugal pump, electrically driven, to an overhead supply tank which circulates water to the various farm buildings. A building has been erected for use as a calf-feeding house and storeroom for fodder. The bath buildings purchased from the Town Council have been conveyed in sections to the farm area, the foundation now being ready for the re-erection of the building as a cell-house to accommodate nineteen prisoners. Temporary piggeries have also been erected, and a number of pigs are being fed and fattened for market. An area of waewae ground, over 100 acres, was burnt off and sown in grass during last autumn, and should on appearance produce a large quantity of hay very shortly. Several miles of fencing have been erected. All the posts required were got from the old tramway and old jetty timbers. Numerous temporary ditches have been dug for surface drainage of the grass areas, and now the excavating of the permanent farm drains and formation of farm roads has been taken in hand. Shelter-belts have been planted along the southern, western, and part of northern boundaries, but the trees have grown only on the higher ground.

The work carried out at the institution has been—Completion of the western boundary-wall, with large double-gateway entrance giving access to the proposed kitchen and store buildings; completion of northern boundary-wall; lowering and otherwise completing eastern boundary-wall, with a new front entrance built in; two of the new exercise-yards have had walls and shelters constructed; a new storm-water drain system has been laid along the area between the boundary and inner-yard walls. Concrete-block making and gardening have been carried on as usual. The Prison lighter has been fully employed conveying grit and gravel for building purposes and farm roading.

In conclusion I desire to state that the conduct of the staff on the whole has been satisfactory, and in most instances keen interest has been shown in carrying out the various works and the development of the farm area.

REPORT OF THE SCHOOLMASTER AT INVERCARGILL.

On resuming my duties at the Institute after spending two years with the Expeditionary Forces I found the following conditions existent:—

The roll number was fifty-three, and this number has been maintained throughout the term.

Mr. Menzies, who relieved me during my absence, found the same difficulties as I experienced—viz., the absence of a thorough grounding in any subject, even among the better-educated men who attend the school. A great many of these profess to have passed Standard VI, but a Fourth Standard test is usually too difficult for them. There are exceptions, of course, and on satisfactorily passing such a test they are exempt from attendance at school. Of the fifty-three men attending, over thirty are in Standard IV. Shortly after my return, by successive tests in English and arithmetic I divided this class into senior and junior sections in arithmetic. Reading, English, dictation, and spelling are taken collectively by the class, but better results in arithmetic have been obtained by the aforesaid subdivision. As soon as men of the junior section justify promotion they are placed in the senior division. Standard III is a small class, and the members of it, without exception, are good workers, anxious, at least, to improve their knowledge of the more elementary subjects. The work presented by this class is fairly uniform in quality. Standard II consists of twelve men of very unequal attainments, with the consequent result that the work presented by them is very uneven in quality. However, on the whole good progress has been made. In Standard I there are two men only, and progress on their part is painfully tedious. They both try honestly, so I look forward to being able to report more favourably anon.

Speaking of the work generally, I find that arithmetic is fairly well done after a short period in the school. English is weak—that is, the formal parts of it—but the matter contained in essays is much above the requirements of the standards in which the men are placed. This is, of course, easy of solution when we consider that these are young men who have had a fair amount of intercourse with the world—at any rate, much more than the average public-school pupil. There is one persistent enemy to good written English, however, and that is the very frequent use of slang terms and phrases. This is, no doubt, due to the previous social environment of the men, but it is ever manifesting itself. I have begun a crusade against it, and hope in some measure to reduce its use.

In reading the same might be said—that is, it is rather above the standard requirements so far as the actual recognition of words is concerned, but pronunciation, enunciation, and comprehension are seriously at fault. The men also read much too quickly, and this, coupled with the faults already named, render the reading at times unintelligible. I have done a good deal in minimizing these faults, especially in the matter of speed, and the result has been rather gratifying.

Spelling is, beyond doubt, the most distressing problem to be encountered, as of the fifty-odd men not more than three would be able to satisfy Fourth Standard requirements in the subject. In some cases it is simply vile. However, as spelling is a matter for the eye alone, I am doing my best to encourage the men in the reading of books, thus hoping that frequent acquaintance with words may lead to the assimilation and retention of the spelling of them.

Writing is generally good, in some cases very good. Maoris seem to excel in this direction.

Geography, history, and civics have been the subjects of various lessons delivered collectively to the whole school. The men pay marked attention to these lessons, and have no doubt improved their mental store in some small degree.