

The conduct of the officers has been good, and in most cases keen interest has been shown by the staff in carrying out the various works.

The quality of the rations has been good, and the changes and additions recently made in the dietary scale have been much appreciated. The complete renovation of the wings and cells is nearly complete, and the interior of the building is now all that could be desired.

The North Wing is now complete and taken into use. The boundary-wall is nearing completion, and the foundations of the exercise-yard walls are being laid. The gymnasium is now being used for school purposes, and is also being equipped with up-to-date appliances for physical culture. The old schoolroom in the church basement has been fitted up with seventeen shower-baths and dressing-cubicles, and is a much-needed improvement. Reinforced-concrete telegraph-pole making has been commenced as an industry, and blockmaking and gardening have been carried on as usual. The demolition of the old Otatara Jetty has been partially carried out, and much valuable timber has been obtained from it for fencing purposes on the farm area. The Prison lighter has been in constant use during the year carrying shingle and grit for concrete-work, removing timber from the old Otatara Jetty to farm area, and carrying manuka and timber for fencing purposes. An area of about 40 acres of the newly reclaimed land belonging to this Department is now well grassed, and has recently been ring-fenced and subdivided. About 35 tons of hay has been harvested and stacked. The value of this crop is at least £150. There have been purchased thirty-nine crossbred heifers and two pedigree Holstein Friesian bulls as the nucleus of a future dairy herd. Two horses have also been obtained for general farm-work. Roadmaking, bridging waterways, and draining has also been proceeded with on the farm area, and a good commencement has been made towards establishing a dairy farm, which no doubt will eventually prove a splendid employment for the youthful inmates of this institution and a valuable asset to the Department.

REPORT OF THE SCHOOLMASTER AT INVERCARGILL.

I took over the class in February, 1917, with an attendance of about fifty. This average has increased lately, and now there are fifty-six in the school. Of these, twenty-nine are in Standard IV, thirteen in Standard III, eleven in Standard II, and three in Standard I. The three pupils in Standard I are very much below Standard I in most subjects, and to do them justice I would require to give them at least half the period each night, which is not possible.

Instruction has been given in reading, writing, spelling and dictation, arithmetic, English and composition, and the work is varied by more elementary tuition in geography and drawing. I also allow half an hour a week for a course in general knowledge, which has had the effect of arousing interest in the class.

In arithmetic the pupils lack that accuracy which only comes through long practice. This inaccuracy I find to be the chief barrier in teaching this subject. Because of it results are slow of coming. The pupils all read fluently, but the articulation and enunciation are very poor owing to the fact that their speech is so poor. Perhaps the most difficult subject is spelling. All their lives these men have been used to a colloquial jargon, and this inevitably makes itself felt in the spelling. However, since the pupils have been allowed to take their books to their cells I am pleased to say there has been a distinct improvement in this branch of the work. All are interested in writing, and as a result there is more advancement in this subject than in any other. English and composition are weak throughout the school, and the improvement in these must of a necessity be slow, as results are obtained only by long practice.

The work of this type of school is necessarily broken and varied, because so many leave ere they have completed the Standard IV course, and so many new ones come in. The majority of the pupils who enter the class are of about Standard II quality, and to pass Standard IV requires about eighteen months' tuition. There are also a number entering who have previously done Standard IV work, and a few who have had Standard VI education. Very few, however, can pass a Standard IV test, although these latter ones usually pick up quickly, and so pass out of the class.

As the class is held only three nights a week and for an hour and three-quarters each night, it is not easy to cover the programme in the usual time. Also, these pupils for the most part require individual instruction, and with a class of fifty-six in four different standards this is impossible in the short time I have at my disposal. In this respect a prison officer renders me valuable assistance by taking one class each night off my hands. In this way I manage to take one class thoroughly each night and two others less thoroughly, and by taking a different class each night I embrace every subject thoroughly with the whole school once a week. In spite of the above drawback I am very well pleased with the results, for during the year twenty-seven pupils have qualified for a pass in Standard IV, and this number would have been substantially increased had the other men not been leaving the institution.

The mental power of the men is, generally speaking, below average. Of course, it is not possible that I obtain a maximum of effort, for prior to coming to me they have done a day's manual labour, and as a result are bodily tired, and so cannot concentrate on anything mental to the degree I would wish. Indeed, the men deserve credit for the effort they do make under these conditions.

The men on the whole evince a keen spirit for learning, and as a result the working-tone of the class is very good indeed. Previously I endeavoured by all the means in my power to appeal to their best side. I pointed out as strongly as I could the special benefit to them of even a Standard IV education, and as a result of a lot of endeavour had worked up an enthusiasm amongst the class. This was doomed to failure, as there were a lot of difficulties in the way, chiefly the fact that new-comers were constantly changing the tone of the class. The new-comer always seems to be a man with a grievance, and until that feeling passes he injures the class. Then, again, there are those who have no desire for education, and it is difficult to make the work up to Standard IV so interesting as to arouse the enthusiasm of these. Among such there is the