

NG TO LIVE WITHOUT LIMBS



At an American hospital three soldiers exercise the stumps of their left legs in preparation for the use of artificial limbs.



Artificial arm is made of plastic and metal to lessen weight. To bend arm at elbow, the soldier contracts muscles of his back, which pull on a leather thong attached to his wrist.



Hand grasps matchbox. Thong which controls elbow action (as in picture above) also controls a movable thumb, which can be made to close on fixed fingers when back muscles are contracted.

the league as its agent for dealing with men who were disabled and who, because of this, could not go back to their previous occupations. We have several departments — cabinet-making, basket-making, jewellery-manufacturing, leather work, boot-repairing, and now we are opening up a watch-repairing department, and are negotiating for opening a department for printers. In all these cases, men who can't go back to their previous occupation are given a period of training. They are, of course, personally studied to ensure the right man for the right work. Then we try to place them with private employers. Those men who will be unable to retain positions with private enterprise will be retained by the league, which is in business for no other reason than to assist them. Some men after training start business on their own account. In those cases the league assists in every way possible.

"Our headquarters are in Wellington, and we have branches at Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Invercargill, each with a retail shop and a training factory. We still deal, of course, with men from the first world war. Only recently we admitted a returned man from that war, who, because of his disabilities, had had no work since 1929. You can imagine the bad mental effect this enforced idleness has on a man already suffering from disablement. That is one of our endeavours — to restore their mental happiness. You see, the longer a man is away from work the worse he gets. But when he is working, particularly when he is working with his hands, the pride of craftsmanship can dispel all this neurosis. And he no longer feels a burden on the State, because he is independent. But come and see the men themselves."

Men At Work

The building that houses this branch of the league is large and rambling, three stories of it. In the office was a young man with one arm. In the corridors men were limping. In the rooms, disabled men were everywhere. They didn't say much, but they were all interested and busy. Such a variety of work was going on from one room to the next that the effect was like a kaleidoscopic glimpse of a complete city at work.

The first room was dim and green—the basket-makers' room. The products of their craft were stacked up everywhere. Round the walls were baskets of every description and trays of every shape. Wartime shortages have brought New Zealand materials into play here. They weave with supplejack and willow.

The room across the corridor was not a room to enter alone at night. In various stages on the tables were realistic arms and legs—the prosthetics department. The work is still very much in its infancy in New Zealand. The fitting and prescribing are highly technical work, and a specialist is coming to help from Rockhampton, England. Each limb has to be specially prescribed and fitted for the individual, because, of course, what will fit one, won't fit another. But even though the work is in its infancy here, the men in this room seemed very busy. They were assembling plaster

casts and making the metal casings, out of a light non-corroding metal. Some of them were wearing limbs of their own manufacture.

At the end of the passage the scene changed. This was the cabinet-making department, which provides a three-year course. At the end of that time the men in this room will be qualified craftsmen.

"They do their work well and correctly," said the manager, "though, of course, they are not quick." Finished articles, this time bedroom suites, were lined along one wall, the veneer shining, the drawers fitting perfectly.

Silver, Shells And Leather

Upstairs we visited the jewellery room, where the men were working with painstaking care, fashioning their pieces with tiny instruments. They work mostly with silver and paua shell, the silver from the Waihi mines, the paua shells from Stewart Island. Dainty bracelets, glistening pendants, brooches, spoons, lay in tempting groups along the benches. We saw granulated silver ready for smelting and paua shells waiting to be ground. Pauas don't need to be taken alive, by the way, but they do need to be thick. The grinding is done under water. "The polishing," added the manager, "is sheer hard work."

These men were learning a craft that could be carried on in their own homes since they, like the others, were learning to adapt themselves to new conditions.

The next room smelt of leather. Here the men were making and adorning an astonishingly wide range of articles. They were working out their own designs for poker-work, for purse shapes, and for tobacco pouches. They were binding up slippers and stitching down school bags. Great piles of hides in the cupboards were witnesses to the amount of work they hoped to achieve.

The smell of leather still lingered in the boot-repairing room opposite, where two dozen potential bootmakers cobbled together.

"Those are our watch-repairing and printing rooms to be," explained the manager as he limped down the passage past two large, empty rooms. "And here's our cafeteria. To-day's menu—fish pie, cottage pie, ordinary pies, or sandwiches."

Food And Pleasant Reflections

It was a happy room with plenty of little tables and comfortable chairs, shining floors and bright curtains. Behind the counter voluntary women helpers from the Red Cross were putting the last touches to the fish pie, cottage pie, ordinary pies, and sandwiches. Here the men have a hot lunch every day, and morning and afternoon tea. Here they can sit back and enjoy fellowship with one another and watch their bowling-green under construction below them. Here they can complete the cure that this new life of craftsmanship has made possible for them.

Back in the city we passed the Returned Soldiers' Shop, stocked full of well-made and beautiful articles made by disabled servicemen working contentedly in their own homes, ex-pupils of the Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment League. It was a reassuring sight.