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Fifty per cent. of spastic children (who would otherwise reach adulthood as useless members of the community) can become self-supporting if they are given a chance. All of them can be improved with treatment and training. This has been proved in the United States where there are several modern clinics. Unfortunately such clinics are provided only for wealthy people who can pay the fees, and children whose parents are even moderately well off are not given a chance. Existing hospitals and schools in Australia cannot meet the special needs of the spastic child.

From Humble Beginnings

That is why the Spastic Centre at Mosman came into existence. Its founders are Mr. and Mrs. Neil McLeod, formerly of Western Australia. Their own little daughter was once a helpless spastic. Her parents originally intended to take her to the United States for treatment, but during the war that was impossible. While they were staying in Sydney, the McLeods met other parents of spastic children, chiefly through the Crippled Children's Association. A Spastic Parents' Group was formed and the foundations were laid for the present organisation.

The Mosman Spastic Centre was opened in January, 1945, with 16 pupils. Its assets were a house on a half-acre section, a small amount of equipment and £34. From this very humble beginning the Centre has been developed into an institution where 80 children are given full-time academic education and special treatment on a free non-residential basis. A Medical Director comes daily to supervise the treatment of each child in co-operation with the orthopaedic surgeon of the parents' choice. Every day each child receives treatment from the staff of occupational and physio-therapists. For this highly specialised work, a beautiful modern treatment block was recently opened. Eighteen months ago the Centre had no funds or materials to build the block which was urgently needed to cope with increasing numbers of pupils. An appeal for funds and building materials brought a magnificent response. The fathers set to work during the week-ends on construction. To their aid came a voluntary band of helpers—bricklayers, plasterers, plumbers, carpenters, labourers, clerks, electricians and handymen. All cheerfully gave a helping hand with one purpose in mind—a better deal for the spastic child.

Special Equipment

The schoolrooms are staffed by the Education Department. Here again special equipment is needed to assist the children. Some of them cannot hold a pencil. They learn to type instead, steadying their arms against the edge of the desk. Two typewriters are already

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Te Karaka District High School, Gisborne.

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R. K. CAMERON, Hon. Sec.,
Te Karaka D.H.S. Old Students' Assoc.,
Te Karaka, Gisborne.

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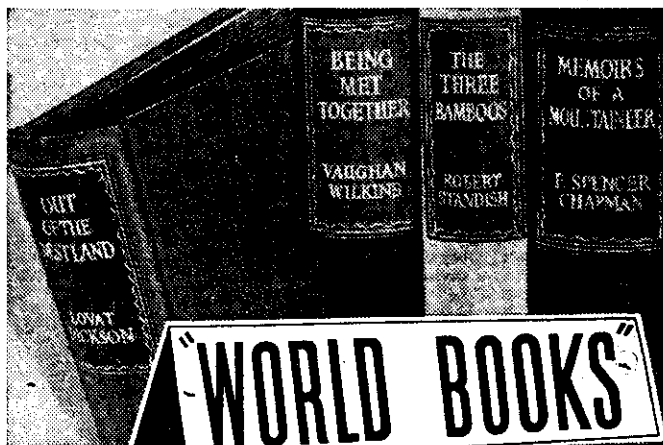


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