

The photographs: (opposite, left to right) Peter finishes a cottage-mat; 20,000 strawberry-boxes a day; weaving tough cane into a chair; (below), two of the huge bow-fenders almost ready for sea

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as deft with a rug needle and copra fibre with my two good eyes and my untrained hands as he was with his strong hands, which seemed to have an eye in each finger. And—a doormat a day, five days of the week, four weeks of the month, 12 months of the year. . . . He looks happy. He says he is happy.

They all look happy; they all talk cheerfully, from the children to the men and women who have been there up to 30 years. There was no feeling of an institution about the place, I said to J. E. Broadfoot, the secretary.

"But it isn't an institution to them, it's their home," he said. "They live here and work here and find their contentment here. We find we don't need discipline—in three years I've had only one chap on the mat! We tell them we want them to tell the truth, because then we know where we are. This is their home and the right place for them."

The blind can't see, but they can hear. So in every room but one (a fascinating one, too, where strawberry-boxes are noisily stamped out of thin kahikatea and deftly shaped by a team of men at the tune of one million a year) a radio is installed. This is their source of news (certainly not all of them have all of the newspaper read to them), and largely their source of views. The radio is news, views, music, and story all in one for them, and therefore they are its eager champions. And as they love music they also have their pianos and their organ, and many of them have their own smaller instruments as well.

Along the sunny stone veranda walked an elderly man, tap-tapping with his cane against the wall. Footsteps approached. He stopped and stood leaning against the wall. "Hullo?" he said to the footsteps, which belonged to a young man. "Hullo — Jim," said the young man, and kept on walking with a swinging walk, lighting his cigarette as he went, his white cane tucked under his arm.

"I suppose you're wondering how much he can see," my guide said.

"A good deal, I suppose," said I.

"No. Not a thing. He's totally blind, but very confident."

Totally blind. But young, and in excellent spirits. I can count the young men who walk in Queen Street these days with such a springing step, cane under arm. . . .

### No Looking Glasses: No Pictures

Dormitories with 10 to 15 beds, long, large rooms without pictures on the walls, with plain white covers on the beds and dressing tables, and a solitary electric light for the use of the matron when she needs it. Tidy dormitories, nothing out of place, every brush and comb square with the table edge. Large plain bathrooms with the baths distributed evenly and openly across the floor, rows of wash-basins side by side, no mirrors. Smaller dormitories for the older children, single rooms for the adults, all in perfect neatness, always that shoulder-to-shoulder, right-dress look about the brush and comb, the handkerchief sachet, the Braille book. Everywhere in the hostels one is struck by the regimented, exact neatness, and by the absence of colour and decoration.

Reading, by day or night, with delicate fingers flying over the pin-dots of the Braille, and with their heads lifted, their eyes seeming to gaze into space, the blind use the thousands of books and magazines in their library. The stock of 8000 books is continually added to from the United States or England; and there is, besides, a library of 12,000 talking book records for gramophone reproduction. If you happen to walk into the library in the evening you will perhaps catch yourself criticising the lighting facilities — but only visitors and members of the sighted staff ever turn on the switch.

### They Go to Talkies and Races

"What do they do in the evenings mainly?" I asked.

"Some read or listen to the gramophone or do their handwork—particularly beadwork or knitting—others have music (many of them are first-rate performers on more than one instrument); others play cards; and others go to the pictures."

Yes, it seemed that they were avid movie-fans. Each one has a companion to explain what is happening in those breathless pauses between conversation on the screen; otherwise, they follow everything and say they have "a good picture" of what it is all about.

(Six of them were going to the pictures the night of my visit; but I found

more astonishing still the news that some of them were going to the Town Hall to hear Mr. X give his election address. Political discussions became warm at all hours of the day; I overheard one in which the victor stumped away, tapping with his cane, saying with conviction "Rot! I bet you he'll forfeit his deposit. You'll see!").

The racing clubs send complimentary tickets and the fans go to the races with companions. "And how do they manage about the betting?" I wanted to know. The supervisor laughed. "You can quite safely leave that to them," he said. "They get along very well."

—J.

(To be continued)



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