

*By Captain Jean Brown*

**M**ANY hundreds of years must have passed since the dusky aboriginal inhabitants of our land were terrified by quaking earth, lurid flashes, and sulphurous fumes emanating from a high hill which forms part of what is now known as Darling Range. The smouldering fires have long since subsided, and nothing remains but the extinct crater, the volcanic sub-soil, and the otherwise inexplicable earth rifts.

The golden mantle now overspreading this hill is not of sulphur, but of wattle, and the smoke that daily fills the valley arises from a far different source from that which caused the ominous column of bygone centuries. For at the foot of the hill are groups of cottages, where, under the consecrated influence of experienced Army Officers, young lives are being moulded.

Few travellers on the South-West Railway fail to notice and remark upon the village-like estate which about fifteen miles from Perth lies sandwiched between the flower-decked railway line and the Darling Range. Five years ago one building alone would be visible peeping through dense scrub. Now there are acres of smiling wheat-fields, groves of oranges, trim gardens, neat white fences, and numerous buildings. These, though not equalling the original structure from an architectural standpoint, represent a worthy effort to provide a home for the young folk who find shelter there.

Moreover, the closer observer will find abundant evidence that "the best is yet to be." When Nature and Time have done their work, and brought to maturity the three or four hundred ornamental trees which skirt the drives, the fences and the paths, and surround the whole property, the appearance will be most effective. There is no part that does not show promise of greater things to come. On every hand are lawns and gardens in various stages of progress. Land is continually being cleared; high parts being brought low and low parts raised up in order to make more playing room for the inmates; and bridges being built to span the gullies separating different parts of the Institution.

It must be daily to spend one's hours in the continuous company of these unfortunate ones. Yet she must feel gratified at the visible results. There are, too, results that are invisible which no one can ever measure, not the least of which is the rescue of young lives from the monotony of workless days.

Thus, while politicians and educationists are discussing the burning topic of "What to do with our feeble-minded," and while journalists are writing freely on the subject, here in our midst is a veritable manufactory of mental ability, and things are actually being done that other people are merely dreaming might some day be possible. Nowhere else in the Commonwealth is such a work being carried on. Here and there it is being touched upon; but in this place the work is being carried out on a solid foundation which will be strong enough to bear the weight of the larger edifice which there is every possibility of being built upon it.

This Home for the backward boys is a concern entirely separate from the other Homes. The lads have their own dormitories, their own dining-room, gardens and playground, and, with the exception of the Manager, an entirely separate staff of Officers. Being thus separated from the other boys they do not suffer from the feeling of inferiority which such intercourse would bring.

The central building, a fine brick structure, is used for the accommodation of about fifty boys, ranging in age from five to fourteen, who are in the main orphans or semi-orphans. During the day these dormitories preserve the unruffled demeanour which is characteristic of all Army Institutions—shining floors, snowy quilts, and mot-toed pillow-shams giving the tasteful finish and dignified appearance so dear to all who take pride in home.



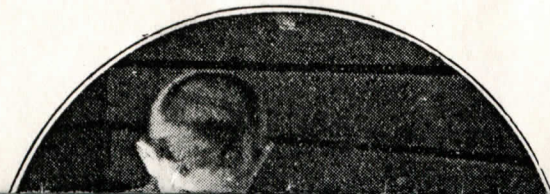
STAFF-CAPTAIN  
KEMSHALL

hind the building is a recently cleared patch where football is indulged in, and where a cricket pitch is now being made. These boys are the farmers of the place, and when they have learnt the art of mastering the soil, as well as the greater art

of mastering themselves, they are sent out to use their acquired knowledge on farms and stations. Good prospects are ahead of every boy who is willing to work at himself, and no doubt the future will find many Western Australian agriculturists who learnt their first farming lessons at Seaforth.

At present the Manager has banked in trust for boys already out at situations an aggregate of about £3000. This portion of the work is one which calls loudly for workers—men with nerve and brain and sinew to consecrate to God's service, as well as men with hearts big with love and sympathy, and with the inner vision to see "the hidden good in that which is bad, the hidden best in that which is worst." Given sufficient men of this stamp and the reformatory work at Seaforth will become a potent factor, not only in the making of useful citizens, but in the production of vital Christians; for where sin abounds does not grace much more abound? To woo from evil habits and sinful lives and turn into channels of virtue and usefulness the energies of these young men, must be an aim worth while for any young man who has learned the Elder Brother's love, and who wants to do something of value for God and humanity.

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## A BACKWARD BOY AT WORK.

But to the lover of human nature the night-time aspect is even more interesting. Fifty "bundles of possibilities," brimful of boyish life and vigour, and overflowing with fun and mischief, cuddling down among clean sheets and warm blankets for a night in dreamland, is a sight which must surely rejoice the heart of Him Whose baby-bed was but a manger, and Who in manhood had not where to lay His head. And as loving hands, tired from the extra toil which the Christmas season always brings to Army Homes, load the tables in the dining-room with the many good things always on hand on Christmas Day, He will surely accept the labour of love performed for His sake, as gratefully as His mother accepted on His behalf the gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

It is the boys belonging to this portion of the Home who provide the music which enlivens the place so frequently. During the past two years a fine little Band has grown up, and very creditable indeed is the music produced. The presence of this Band is always an enjoyable feature at any public function held in the district. It has cost Ensign Hayes many nights of arduous effort to bring it up to the present standard, but he is now reaping the reward of work well done.

A little nearer the hills are the Reformatory buildings. A large stretch of imagination is essential to connect these bright premises with what one usually conjures up at the mention of the word "Reformatory." Young men from fourteen to eighteen years of age are housed here. Their two dormitories are just as tastefully got up as those of other parts, and in addition there is a cosy little reading room where

The Institution is indebted to the Education Department for the splendid staff of teachers provided. Mr. Hill, the headmaster, brings into his work not only the highest qualifications for this special teaching, but also an interest and enthusiasm which render him an invaluable co-worker. In his psychological clinic on the school premises he makes a diagnosis of each boy individually, and expert training and experience enable him to prescribe the correct treatment for every case.

There are many other features in connection with this great Institution which have not been detailed, but which nevertheless are important. There is the kitchen, ever the most enticing spot in the opinion of the inmates, and here days are spent in ceaseless activity by faithful women Officers. There are the sewing rooms, where day after day patient fingers must toil at the making and mending of boys' garments. There is the laundry, which is seldom out of use, and where no end of work is needed to keep everybody on the premises clean; there is the fine central bathing system, which has now displaced the older system of bathing at each Home; there is the spacious playroom, which throughout the week rings with exuberant merriment, but which on the Sabbath is set aside for worship and praise. There are the fine new stables and sheds which have replaced those burnt down at the beginning of the year; and there is the motor 'bus which does such useful transport service, and which also carries the Boys' Company when they go on tour. Nor must we forget the fine stream which runs through the estate and provides the water for the household and the garden, and also for the summer-time bathing which is such a Seaforth feature.

We are sure that every reader will wish to him, to every faithful Officer and helper who aids him in his great work, and to every boy for whom he cares, the very happiest of happy Christmases.



For the Seaforth Estate is a growing concern. Of the 200 acres comprising its area about 100 are already under cultivation. There are three acres of citrus fruits and four acres of stone fruits and vines. One of the beauties of the place is the yearly crop of wheat. Whether it be in springtime, when its fresh greenness stands out in contrast with the rich chocolate loam of the orchard near by; in summer, when it is a mass of golden, wind-blown wavelets; or in autumn, when the paddocks are studded with the stooks of newly-mown hay, it presents a picturesque addition to the surrounding landscape. Each year there is also a large yield of vegetables, some of which help to supply the needs of the large family whose appetites are ever whetted by the fresh mountain air, and some of which goes into market to help provide funds for the upkeep of the Institution.

Three classes of boys are being cared for—orphans or semi-orphans; reformatory boys; and boys who because of the deficiency of their minds are kindly spoken of as "backward." The effects of Salvation Army influence and training upon these backward boys are such as to create wonder and admiration.

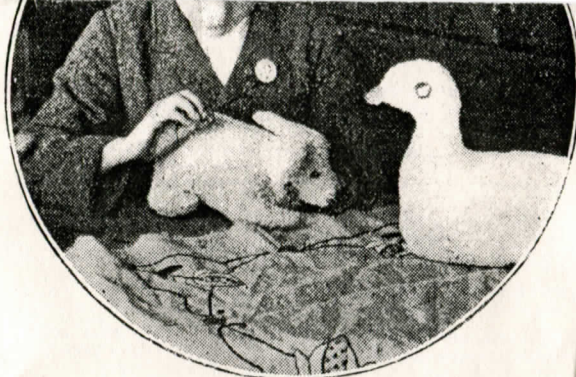
Fifty children, the majority of whom are mentally retarded to the extent of at least four years, do not when gathered together present a very inspiring spectacle. Faces bearing evidence of a great lack of mentality, together with a general deportment and air of simplicity, are not calculated to create anything but a depressing sensation. Go, however, to the Seaforth Special School, and the feeling of depression changes to one of amazement.

That the work to be seen there could possibly have been done by these children would seem incredible, were it not that they are to be seen at work actually making the articles. Raffia and basket work are here brought to perfection; designs both intricate and beautiful are worked out in colour upon fans, work-baskets, trays, and numerous other articles. In another cupboard is a display of embroidered cushions and dainty needlework done by these defective boys, and in another a variety of splendid mats and hearth-rugs without the least appearance of being "home-made." Toys of all kinds, from stuffed rabbits to model aeroplanes, are on view, and jams and preserves of the best fill another section. In the carpentry room are fresh evidences of faithful toil. Many excellent specimens of cabinet manufacture are produced, among which may be mentioned a perfectly-made writing desk, a fine book-case with leaded windows, and a pedestal with a carved top.

Of course the usual school subjects are included in the curriculum, and it is noteworthy that many boys are gradually making progress in these things, which require some intellectual effort.

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Mrs. McCall presides over the manual room, and her toil there is much valued by those who realise how trying



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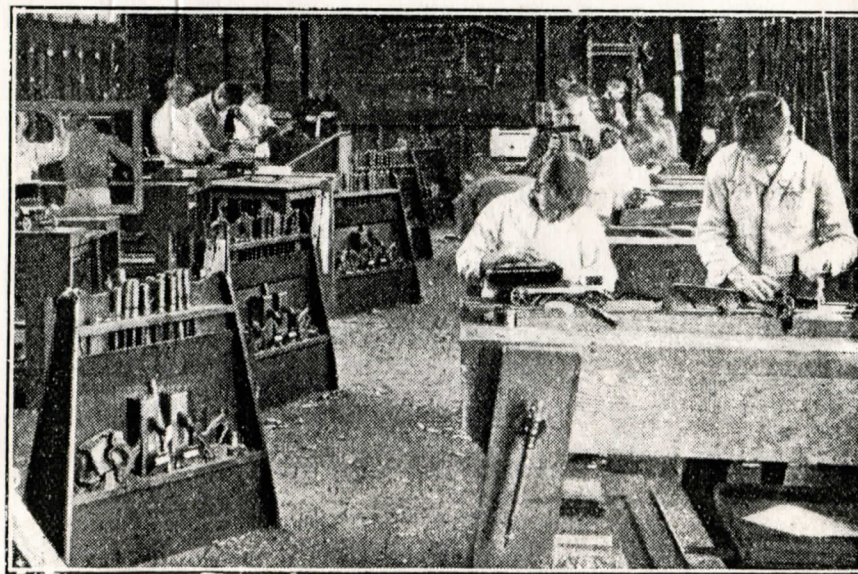
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Over all this splendid concern presides Staff-Captain Kemshall, the man who sees visions, and never rests till they materialise. Under his hand the Home has virtually grown up, and there is no part of it which does not share his interest and enthusiasm. The material responsibilities are very heavy, but to him the spiritual responsibilities are greater still, and this zeal for the advancement of the estate is exceeded by his desire to make of the young lives put into his charge the best of men for the State and for God.

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THE CARPENTER'S SHOP AT SEAFORTH BOYS' HOME.

19 Dec 1925  
WARCA

see my photo