

FOR CHILDREN OF SOLDIERS.

NEW SCHOOL AT POMPOOTA,
OPENED BY THE PREMIER.

The training farm for returned soldiers, started less than 12 months ago, now presents an animated appearance. Rows of wood and iron cottages, some having canvas additions, house the families of many men who have come back after taking part in the great war to devote their energies to the arts of peace. As a township has sprung up a school was needed, and yesterday the Premier and Minister of Education (Hon. C. Vaughan) opened a new building on the high land at Pompoota to serve the double purpose of schoolhouse and social hall. A party comprising the Premier, members of the Returned Soldiers' Settlement Advisory Committee, and others journeyed from Adelaide to Pompoota for the ceremony. The Hon. C. Goode (Commissioner of Crown Lands), Mr. E. A. Anstey, M.P., the Director of Agriculture (Professor Perkins), and the Director of Irrigation and Reclamation Works (Mr. S. McIntosh) were the members of the Advisory Committee present, other visitors being the Director of Education (Mr. M. M. Maughan), the members for Murray in the House of Assembly, the contractor for the stone buildings at Pompoota (Mr. R. H. Elvage), and the secretary of the Returned Soldiers' Association (Mr. A. E. Tait). The journey occupied longer than was expected owing to the launch being delayed by the strong current of the river, and in consequence the ceremony had to be greatly curtailed, the visitors having only half an hour at the settlement. The building, which measures about 80 ft. by 30 ft., is a commanding structure of dressed freestone with brick quoins, and is fitted with a well-ventilated roof. It is ceiled with asbestos, has fire-escape doors, and is made attractive inside by means of a cement dado and other inexpensive but effective embellishments. There are two ante-rooms at the rear, and the necessary school conveniences are provided. There is a stage, and already a piano has been installed. Pompoota itself looks a bit desolate since the water broke into the swamp, and between the township and the river embankment is a wide lake. This flooding is but a passing phase, however, as a coffer dam is to be built to repair the broken embankment, and soon the land will be pumped dry. Wall Swamp is nearly ready to receive the men who have completed their training, and the allotment of sections will begin in the first week of February. Each settler on Wall Swamp will have 15 to 20 acres of irrigable and swamp land. In Pompoota there are 563 acres of swamp land, 198 acres of irrigable land, and 3,470 acres of

there are 563 acres of swamp land, 198 acres of irrigable land, and 3,470 acres of dry land or commonage, a total of 4,231 acres. The aggregate cost of the permanent buildings, exclusive of the hall, will be £3,525.

The Premier was received by a guard of honor composed of 25 school children in the charge of the schoolmistress (Miss Bradley). A large number of the settlers gathered to witness the ceremony. After inspecting the children the party gathered outside the porchway of the hall. The Director of Irrigation and Reclamation Works, after introducing the Premier, remarked that when the scheme was mooted for the training of returned soldiers at Pompoota it was realised that one of the most essential requirements would be a hall for social and educational purposes. Altogether seven buildings had been provided for, including administrative offices and officers' residences, and the hall was pushed on with as being the most urgently needed. He asked the Premier to declare the hall and schoolroom open.

Mr. Vaughan apologised for being late. He feared it was setting a bad example to be late on the first day the school was opened. (Laughter.) This building no doubt would be the forerunner of many schools that would be built along the majestic river—schools that would serve the needs of the children of more men who would safely return to civil life from the front. (Cheers.) It was a unique experience to open a school that was destined to meet the requirements of boys and girls of returned soldiers. He was glad that in this happy, peaceful land the men were able to turn their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. The Government were proud that the men were able to settle down under conditions not excelled in Australia and not equalled in any other part of the world. There was no climate anywhere else so healthy and propitious as that which favored these settlers. Variety was the spice of life, and certainly they had had variety enough in the past few days. (Laughter.) Here was soil fertile enough to produce anything as long as there was plenty of water. They were rather embarrassed by a surplus of water at the moment, but that disability would be quickly overcome. The Government would be able within the next week or two to let land to returned men who had been in training at Pompoota. They had by their work on this farm shown their capacity for the task of reclamation and irrigation. He hoped when some of the blocks had been allotted it would be an inspiration to others to follow in the footsteps of the successful men. It was gratifying to know that through the instrumentality of the Premier's Conference the Government would be able, with the assistance of the Commonwealth Government, to finance the men who were going on the land by advancing, under certain conditions, sums up to £500 to each settler. That would not be in the form of a cheque, but in the shape of advances from time to time on

be in the form of a cheque, but in the shape of advances from time to time on the improvements the settler made on his block. The amount of £500 might not seem a considerable sum, but when it was multiplied by 20,000—the number of soldiers it was hoped would be settled on the land in South Australia—it ran up to something like ten millions sterling. The people of Australia could not do too much for men who had done so much for them. He was proud to know that discharged men had re-enlisted from Pompoota and were now in France, fighting again. (Cheers.) All honor to those men for what they had done. He had pleasure in declaring the school open. He was glad to see so many children there to attend the school. It was clear that the school was starting well, when he learned that a soldier-settler had arrived that day with a family of ten. (Cheers.) The Education Department expected the place to go ahead, but it could not stand very much of that. (Laughter.) The building had cost £801. It was one of the least expensive works he had seen in the Government service. It was a sufficiently substantial building to speak for itself. He thought they should express appreciation, not only of the Irrigation Department and the Director, but also to the contractor (Mr. Eivage), and the clerk of works (Mr. Lane). The area of Pompoota was 563 acres of swamp land—very much swamp at the present time; but Mr. McIntosh hoped during the next week or two to be able to repair the damage done by the high river, and get the water pumped out, so as to have the lot ready for irrigation by the end of March. The farm was started for training purposes on March 27, 1915. The number of trainees up to the present was 72, and there were still on the farm 41. He congratulated the people of Pompoota upon the school being established there, and wished them every success. He trusted many more

schools of a similar nature would be established along the river in the time to come. (Cheers.)

Mr. Vaughan did not belong to the same party, there was a national unity, which overshadowed party politics. He was proud of the stand the Premier had taken in the national service campaign. It was a pleasure to him to be present at the opening of the first school in South Australia for the children of returned soldiers. If the men who came to Pompoota had perseverance, energy, resourcefulness, and a wish to succeed, their efforts to establish themselves as producers would be crowned with success. (Cheers.)

Mr. M. W. Parish, M.P., seconded the motion, and Mr. G. A. Dunn, in supporting, said he believed the Murray Valley would be one of the best dairying areas in the State. He advocated the adoption of the co-operative principle. (Cheers.)

The Premier, in response to an ovation, referred to the presence of three directors of important departments in the Government service—the Directors of Agriculture, Education, and Irrigation. The services of practically the whole of the leading experts in the Government service would be available for settlers along this river, and particularly soldier settlers. The Government hoped to bring them more closely in touch with the latest developments in intense culture, so that they would be able to utilise the land to the fullest extent. At Mount Remarkable the returned soldiers were making steady progress, and were most cheerful. A big future awaited them in that part, just as it awaited those who were settling in the valley of the Murray. (Cheers.)

The Premier then opened the school, and handed the key to the Director of Education. Mr. Vaughan passed on the key to Miss Bradley, with the remark:—“I commit to your charge this key, and at the same time the charge of the children. I know we shall not be disappointed.”

At a gathering in the hall subsequently the proceedings had to be shortened, in consequence of the little time at the disposal of the visitors. Mr. McIntosh presided, and remarked that Mr. Vaughan had taken a greater interest in river problems and progress than any other man who had occupied the Premier's chair. He knew that from 25 years' experience.

Mr. H. D. Young, M.P., moved a vote of thanks to the Premier. Although he and Mr. Vaughan did not belong to the same