

lads to make them drill. Something—but what? We turn to the experimental farm.

Everybody who was living in New Zealand at the time must remember the surprise and indignation which were expressed in all parts of the Dominion when the first few boys who refused to register or take the military oath were put in gaol. They were decent, well-behaved lads. Nobody knew anything against them. Yet because they refused to be trained as soldiers they were sent to prison, and some of them were herded with common criminals, forced to have their finger-prints taken and set to pick oakum. Even the people who held that every boy ought to be a soldier were not prepared for that. They thought they believed in universal training, but they did not like the name—and still less the reality—of compulsory training. They wanted their omelet, but the idea that eggs must be broken had never occurred to them. A general election was drawing near, so the Government stopped the prosecutions, let some of the boys out of gaol, and promised to try a new method of punishment instead of imprisonment.

The promise was kept by the succeeding Government, but the new punishments, instead of being milder, were more severe than the old. As the law now stands, the so-called "shirker," the passive resister, or conscientious objector, is fined. If he does not pay (and he very often does not), the money may be docked from his wages and collected from his employer. If that is impossible (and he is apt to make it so by stopping work), he is handed over to the military authorities and confined in a fortress for any period up to twenty-eight days. There the officers are supposed to make him drill, and if he refuses, he may be sentenced to a further term of twenty-eight

days, and after that to another, and so on, until either he gives in, or the officers let him go. Legally they may, instead of letting him go, ask a magistrate to send him to gaol.

In addition to imposing a fine at the beginning of this process, the magistrate may, and frequently does, declare the offender, for any period up to ten years, ineligible to be employed in the public service, or to vote at a Parliamentary election. The Education Department also takes a hand, and deprives the boy who has not done his drills of any scholarship which he may have won.

THE DILEMMA OF THE COERCIONISTS.

The authorities doubtless thought that with this elaborate armoury of coercion—fine, attachment of wages, military detention, imprisonment, deprivation of civil rights, loss of educational advantages—they would be able to subdue even the most obstinate stripling. But, as one of their victims has said, they did not know that lads under twenty-one have consciences. Now, it has happened in all ages that people have faced death itself rather than be false to a principle. The early Christians faced it, and some of them suffered it, rather than serve in the Roman legions. There are in New Zealand to-day hundreds—perhaps thousands—of lads who would make the same choice. It follows that those who would thoroughly enforce conscription must devise, if they can, some penalty more terrible than death. But a difficulty arises. Even if the military were prepared to go so far as that, public opinion would not let them. Indeed, as we have seen, the public of New Zealand could not even endure to see the passive resister subjected to ordinary imprisonment.