

any objection to the children being so licensed to the father. The Magistrate replied, *vide* letters attached (marked F and G), and dated 17th and 23rd July, 1878, respectively, stating that, seeing the mother had died, who was the main cause of the children having been committed, and the father had given up the avocation of a carrier, and consequently was better able to supervise the children, he offered no objection to their being licensed out to the father.

*Matter No. 4.*—On inquiry, we find that the case referred to in matter No. 3 is the only one having any connection with the circumstances detailed in the question.

*Matter No. 5.*—We find that the system here referred to does prevail in Dunedin, inasmuch as the Neglected and Criminal Children Act makes no restriction as to the age when children are to be committed; and it is to be feared that Magistrates, upon very slender grounds, are induced to commit infant children to the institution, whom, we have not the slightest hesitation in saying, ought not to be so committed. We find also that careless parents, particularly those whose offspring are illegitimate, resort to all sorts of means to take advantage of the institution, and get rid of the trouble of raising their infant children. We admit that parents so indifferent to their parental duty are unfit to have charge of children; but nevertheless we are of opinion that, with a view to prevent the abuse of the institution, the Act might with advantage be altered so as to prevent the admission of children to the institution under the age of twelve months, unless in extreme cases, as where the mothers have to be sent to gaol. Children under the age of twelve months cannot, we think, be contaminated to any extent by evil example, and, as a rule, are not subjected to cruel treatment. Both the surgeon and master have repeatedly brought this subject of the committal of infant children under the notice of the Magistrates and the Government, pointing specially to the mortality resulting from the system. The master states that four infants died in the institution during the year 1878, and not six, as stated in this question. With regard to the question of infants being “farmed-out,” we presume that it has been intended to say “placed out,” as farming-out of infants is a system of the most objectionable character, and we should imagine, therefore, would never have been sanctioned by any Government, far less suggested. At the suggestion of the surgeon and master several children have been “placed out” with separate wet-nurses, with the view of lessening the mortality by providing the children with the nearest approach to their natural aliment. Within the last twelve months four children have been so placed out, two of whom have died. This is a high percentage of death; but, from the surgeon’s evidence, we are of opinion that it is more than probable the whole of the infants would have died had they been kept in the institution. It was for the reason that these four were weakly children they were so placed out. On this question we are of opinion that the system of placing out infants with wet-nurses should prevail as extensively as possible, for, as the surgeon remarked, the herding together of a number of infants in the institution is a near approach to the much condemned system of baby-farming. The children which have already been placed out are regularly visited by the master; and the surgeon, when he is required, attends them.

*Matter No. 6.*—We considered it our duty to examine minutely the sleeping accommodation of the institution, as also the master’s quarters. It is quite true that, for want of sufficient sleeping accommodation, a number of the younger children have to sleep three in a bed in upper rooms. With regard to one in particular of these rooms, we are of opinion that it is unsuitable for the purpose, not so much from the fact of the children having to sleep three in a bed, as that the roof is most objectionably low, nor is the means of ingress and egress sufficient. This, we think, however, could, with a very small expenditure, say, £54, be remedied and the room made suitable for the purpose. As to the danger from fire, we found that it was at a minimum, not at all greater, if so great, as the risk attending an ordinary wooden private dwelling-house, the precautionary measures adopted by the master against fire are so ample and satisfactory. In answer to the question as to whether space could be found “on the ground-floor from the ample accommodation at present occupied by the master and his family” for some of the younger children, we certainly feel bound to say, after examination, that the quarters assigned to the master and his family are not at all in excess of their absolute requirements, and should not on any account be curtailed.

In reference to the subject of the Hon. Captain Fraser’s letter of 6th July—namely, his desire to have all the children licensed-out put under the protection of the police, to be reported on by them periodically, we think that such a course is open to objection. We agree with the master in thinking that it is most desirable to bring up the children in the institution as free as possible from the feeling that they are in any way different from other children, and to carry out the idea that the master and matron are to be looked upon in the character of parents, and the institution a home. We think it would be antagonistic to this idea if they were to be placed directly under police surveillance. The present practice of the master is to encourage a correspondence between the children licensed-out and himself, and when this correspondence is not regularly kept up he asks the assistance of the police to make inquiry as to the satisfactory condition of the children or otherwise. This assistance has always been freely given. We find that this system has hitherto worked very satisfactorily, and should not at present be disturbed, particularly as we think it would tend to diminish the interest it is evident the master takes in the children licensed-out as well as those in the institution. The fact that there have been several instances of children licensed-out coming to the master and asking to be taken back to the school is the strongest evidence of the feeling existing between master and children. It would be advisable, with the view of facilitating the correspondence with the children and police, which, considering the number of children, is no easy task, that lithographed forms be supplied to the master; this would also enable the register of the correspondence which is kept to be more easily so kept.

*Re Religious Instruction.*—We have the honor to state that, in compliance with your request contained in your telegram of 26th July last, we have perused the correspondence on the subject, and have made full inquiry into the whole matter at issue.

We find that up to 1877 very few ministers of any denomination, with the exception of the Roman Catholic priests, ever visited the institution for the purpose of imparting religious instruction to the children. From the attendance book we find that, for the seven years previous to 1877, the Roman