

1881.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION:

THE BOARDING-OUT OF INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL CHILDREN.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by command of His Excellency

1.—EXTRACTS from a REPORT made by the INSPECTOR-GENERAL of SCHOOLS to the Hon. the MINISTER of EDUCATION, June 3, 1880.

I FOUND that the Inspector of Charities in Sydney was strongly impressed with the superiority of the "boarding-out system," as compared with all other methods of dealing with the class of children for whom industrial schools and orphanages now make provision. The New South Wales Government so far has favoured large schools; but, by private benevolence, successful experiments are now being made, both on the "cottage-home" system, and by way of boarding-out.

Mr. Neal, the Acting-Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, took me to see the Royal Park Industrial School (Boys'), the Abbotsford (Roman Catholic) Industrial and Reformatory Schools, and the Geelong Industrial School for Girls. He also invited me to accompany him in his visits of inspection to seven homes, the homes of working-people, who, as foster-parents, have undertaken the charge of children from the industrial schools. The boarding-out system is now carried on in Melbourne upon such a large scale that the number of children in the industrial schools is small compared with the extent of the building accommodation and the staff which it is still necessary to maintain. Four or five years ago there were considerably more than 2,000 in the schools, and it was expected that by this time there would be 3,000. At present there are only about 800. At the end of 1878 there were 870 in industrial schools (besides 176 in reformatories), while 1,250 were boarded out. Committees of ladies are formed in many districts, who interest themselves in finding homes for the children, and who visit the homes to see that the children are well cared for. Ministers of religion in the districts assist in the supervision. The children attend the public schools, and the teachers report on their attendance and progress. The Inspector has the right to visit the houses of the foster-parents. The small payment of 5s. per week for each child is made by the Government, and at this rate of payment respectable people of the working-class are so willing to receive children that at the present time the office has on hand 300 applications, and has no suitable children to send out. One result of this is that a very large proportion of the children remaining in the schools is made up of the lame, the diseased, and the imbecile, and that the proportion of inmates from ten to twelve years old is high, because they are too young for service, and too old to be welcomed by foster-parents. This statement as to proportions does not apply, however, to the Roman Catholic children. The authorities of their church do not favour boarding-out, and the Roman Catholic school at Abbotsford has among its 206 children an average representation of all ages, from one year to sixteen or eighteen. Further, I am informed that very few Roman Catholics offer to undertake the responsibilities of foster-parents, so that in the schools which belong to the State the proportion of Catholics is high. Out of 870 children in all the industrial schools at the end of 1878, 503 were Roman Catholic (57·8 per cent.) The number admitted during the year was 523, of whom 208 (only about 40 per cent.) were Catholics.

The number of children boarded out at the end of 1878 was 1,250. I enclose a copy of the Inspector's report for 1878. I also enclose copies of Acts relating to neglected and criminal children, passed in 1864, 1874, and 1878, and copies of all the circulars and forms now in use, as illustrative of the boarding-out system, together with forms connected with the licensing and apprenticeship of children from the industrial and reformatory schools (16 forms). These forms show the care that is taken as to religious and medical supervision, sleeping accommodation, the relations of the sexes, education, suitable clothing, &c.

Children who are boarded out associate naturally with other children in the homes and at school. They acquire habits of self-reliance that cannot be formed in the seclusion of an institution which is a kind of prison. They come to look upon their foster-parents as their natural guardians, protectors, and counsellors, and the home becomes a starting point and a rallying point for them as they enter naturally into the ordinary relations of common every-day life. It is found that the homes in which they are placed are improved in their general tone by the influence of the lady-visitors, and that parents who were content to let the State maintain their children in schools become jealous of the influence of foster-parents, and strive to become worthy to claim the right to care for their own offspring.

2.—EXTRACTS from REGULATIONS of the VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT for the APPRENTICING, LICENSING-OUT, and BOARDING-OUT of CHILDREN.

4. No child shall, unless under special circumstances and with the authority of the Chief Secretary, be apprenticed, licensed out, boarded out, or placed out for adoption to or with any person not residing within a district under the supervision of a committee hereinafter called a "Visiting Committee;" provided that this regulation shall not interfere with the licensing or apprenticing of boys to service at sea.

5. For the purpose of giving effect to these regulations, Visiting Committees may be formed in any district not already under the supervision of such a committee, by not less than three ladies agreeing to form such committee and to exercise supervision over such children as may be placed out in their district under these regulations.

6. Every committee so formed shall represent as far as practicable all the denominations established in the district over which they propose to exercise supervision.

7. Before any district is registered in the office of the Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools as one to which children may be sent under these regulations, the boundaries of such district and the name of the person elected to act as correspondent to the committee shall be furnished in writing to the Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools; but such boundaries may be changed (provided that no other district is thereby encroached upon), and such other person may be elected to act as correspondent, as may from time to time be desirable.

8. It shall be optional with Visiting Committees to undertake the supervision of children boarded out and adopted only, or licensed and apprenticed only, or both, at the discretion of the members thereof, provided that every committee shall intimate to the Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools in writing in which respect they intend to act.

9. No person deriving directly or indirectly any pecuniary or other personal profit from the boarding-out of any child shall be a member of a Visiting Committee.

10. Every committee already constituted or hereafter to be constituted under these regulations shall be held to undertake to see these regulations faithfully administered in their respective districts, and to see that the conditions in the Schedules hereto are complied with by the persons to whom they relate.

11. Every boarded-out child shall be visited at least once in every six weeks at the home of the foster-parent by a member of the committee; and the visitor shall thereupon make a report in writing to the committee, stating the apparent bodily condition and the behaviour of such child, and all reasonable complaints made by or concerning the child against or by the foster-parents. These reports shall be forwarded by the committee quarterly, in forms to be provided for that purpose, to the Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools.

12. If in the case of any boarded-out child no such report as that specified in the last preceding clause shall be received by the Inspector for the space of four consecutive months, he (the Inspector) may, after giving fourteen days' notice in writing to the committee and the foster-parent with whom such child is placed, remove the child.

13. The committee will exercise general supervision over the children boarded out and the persons they are placed with, advising them as may seem necessary; and, in cases requiring prompt action—such as the removal of a child from one home to another—they will be authorized to effect such removal, but will require to report the same at once to the Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools for such further action to be taken as may be necessary.

19. All applications for children under these regulations shall be made on the forms provided for that purpose, and shall be accompanied by the certificate of a clergyman resident or having a charge in the district where the applicant resides. Every person taking a child under these regulations shall be bound thereby and by the conditions set forth in such one of the Schedules attached hereto as shall be applicable to the terms—whether boarding-out or license—under which such child is placed under his care.

20. Protestant children shall only be placed under the care of Protestant persons, and Catholic children under that of Catholics. Children of other creeds to be dealt with in a similar manner.

21. The Government reserves the right of removing children whenever it may be deemed necessary to do so.

SCHEDULE NO. 1.

Conditions relating to the Boarding-out of Children.

1. Applicants (hereinafter called the foster-parents) for children under these conditions must be females of good moral character, good health, and not over fifty-five years of age, and, if married, their husbands must be of the same religious persuasion as themselves. They must not be in receipt of assistance from any benevolent asylum or charitable institution or society, hospital excepted.

2. Applications for children must be sent in to the Ladies' Committee, and must be accompanied by the certificate of a clergyman as to the moral fitness of herself, and, if married, her husband, to be intrusted with the training of children. Applications will only be dealt with when recommended by the Ladies' Committee for the district within which the applicant resides.

3. Every applicant having children within the school-ages specified in the Education Act must show that they are attending school in accordance with the requirements of that Act, or give a satisfactory reason for their being detained therefrom.

4. The family of a foster-parent may not at any time consist of more than six, including the children boarded from the Government, but exclusive of herself, and, if married, her husband. No more than three children—except in the case of families of more than three—may be placed with one foster-parent.

5. No males above the age of twelve years may at any time form portion of a family in which female children over eight years of age are boarded, except in the cases of brothers and sisters; nor may female children under ten years of age be placed in a family in which there are males over seven years of age.

6. The residence of a foster-parent must not be more than two miles from a State school, five miles from the residence of some member of committee, nor ordinarily more than five miles from the residence of a medical practitioner. In cases that the committee consider it very desirable an exception should be made, the foster-parent's residence may be seven miles from that of the medical officer, provided that the latter expresses in writing his willingness to attend in such case on the terms

hereinafter specified. The accommodation provided must be sufficient, and suitable and separate sleeping-rooms must be provided for male and female children when above the age of seven years. Children above seven years may not sleep in the same room with married people.

7. No boarders or lodgers (children or adults) other than the children boarded for the Government may be received by foster-parents, nor may a foster-parent or her husband be the holder of any license for the sale of fermented or spirituous liquors, or any member of her family hold such license for premises situated within three miles of her residence.

8. The family, including the children boarded, must all attend the same place of worship.

9. The children must be properly fed, and kept decently clothed by the foster-parents with sufficient and seasonable clothing; the supply at all times to be complete to the extent shown in Schedule two. Clothing to remain the property of the children, and to be at all times clean and in good repair. On the return or transfer of a child the foster-parent giving up such child shall be required to place his clothing-kit in as good condition, both as regards quantity and quality, as it was when received by her.

10. The children will be visited from time to time by some member of committee, who, as well as the Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, or any one appointed on his behalf, shall have free access to them within reasonable hours. The certificate of the committee approving of the treatment of the children must be forwarded to the Inspector with the account for payment.

11. Should a child meet with an accident, or become ill, he must be taken without delay to the medical officer hereinafter mentioned, or, if it be not practicable to take the child, the medical officer must be called in to attend to him, under such regulations as regards charges as may from time to time be made.

12. No child boarded out may be placed at service, or hired out to any kind of employment, except by the written direction of the Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools.

13. The children must be sent to and attend school regularly, unless the Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, on the written recommendation of the committee or the medical officer, authorizes in writing their non-attendance.

14. The foster-parents will be expected to attend to the moral and religious training of the children, who must, when of a suitable age, be sent regularly to a place of worship and to Sunday school, and clergymen of the denomination to which they belong must also be allowed every facility for imparting to them religious instruction.

15. Should a child meet with an accident, become seriously ill, die, or run away, information must be at once given to the committee for report to the Inspector.

16. Children received under these conditions may not be transferred, or placed permanently under the care of any person other than the approved foster-parent, without the consent in writing of the Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools. But the committee shall have power in any case which they consider urgent to remove children from a foster-parent and place them temporarily with some other person willing to receive them under these regulations, in anticipation of the directions of the Inspector, and such person shall be bound by the conditions regulating the boarding-out of children during the time she has such children in her charge. Foster-parents may not change their residence within the district without giving one week's notice of the proposed change to the committee for report to the Inspector, nor may they remove from the district unless the sanction of the Inspector to such removal has been notified to the committee in writing.

17. Payment will be made for children placed out to be wet-nursed in accordance with the rate fixed by the "Wet-nurse Regulations," until such time as the children reach the age of twelve months. Children between the ages of one year and fourteen years will be paid for at the rate of five shillings per week per child while it is requisite for them to attend school under clause 13 of this Schedule. In the event of a child being permitted by the Inspector to cease attending school, either partially or altogether, such deduction from the pay may be made as shall, in the opinion of the Inspector, be equitable, or the foster-parent may be required to comply with the conditions in Schedule 3 of these regulations, and foster-parents retaining children after they have reached the age of fourteen years must comply with the conditions of that schedule.

18. Deductions may be made from the monthly accounts, at the discretion of the Inspector, for any neglect or improper treatment of the children. Acquittances must be signed by foster-mothers themselves. If unable to write, their mark must be affixed in the presence of and be witnessed by a member of committee. Only in very special cases may payment be made to an agent, and then only when the foster-mother has given an order on the Government (H) form. All accounts must be certified by the correspondent.

19. A medical officer will be appointed for every district in which children are boarded out. His duty will be to visit the children not less than once in every three months, and to attend to them in illness or in case of accident, either at the residence of the foster-parents or his own residence or surgery, as may be necessary, and to supply all requisite medicines and medical appliances. He will be required to report any deficiency of accommodation, any defects in the sanitary condition of the residence, insufficient supply of food or clothing, or absence of cleanliness, and generally any ill-treatment of the children or cause for complaint that may come under his notice.

20. An allowance for such attendance and supervision as above mentioned will be paid by the Government at the rate of one pound per child per annum.

21. The Inspector may remove or direct the removal of children at any time he considers it necessary or expedient. Persons taking children under these conditions will be at liberty to return them to the school from which they received them, upon giving two weeks' notice of their intention to do so.

22. The Government will make such further rules and conditions as may from time to time be necessary, and foster-parents will require to comply with the directions they may receive from the Inspector, whether provided for in these conditions or not, and to give effect to the requirements of the committee hereinbefore referred to.

SCHEDULE No. 2.—*Kit for a Boarded-out Child.*

BOYS :—			Quantity.	GIRLS :—			Quantity.
Articles.				Articles.			
Boots (pair) ...	...	...	1	Boots (pair) ...	...	...	1
Caps or hats ...	...	...	2	Hats ...	...	...	2
Jackets ...	...	...	2	Jackets ...	...	...	2
Socks (pairs) ...	...	...	3	Dresses ...	...	...	2
Vests ...	...	...	2	Chemises ...	...	...	2
Trousers (pairs) ...	...	...	2	Stockings or socks (pairs) ...	...	...	3
Shirts ...	...	...	2	Drawers (girls over eight years) ...	...	...	2
Belt ...	...	...	1	Petticoats ...	...	...	2
Flannels* ...	...	...	2	Pinafores or aprons ...	...	...	2
Handkerchiefs ...	...	...	2	Flannels* ...	...	...	2
				Handkerchiefs ...	...	...	2
				Collars, Linen (girls over twelve) ...	...	...	2
				Nightgowns ...	...	...	2

* For those children only who wear them by doctor's instructions.

3.—EXTRACT FROM REPORT OF INSPECTOR OF INDUSTRIAL AND REFORMATORY SCHOOLS, Victoria, for 1879.

THE number of children boarded out during the year was 460, and there are now 230 applications for 380 children in my office. The total number out on 31st December was 1,458.

I did not anticipate finding it necessary to invoke again public sympathy with, and approval of, the work which the ladies in all parts of the colony are doing for the State. But the manner in which that work has been spoken of has been felt to be unjust, and makes it a duty for me to endeavour to make clear the extent to which the ladies' committees are really serving the country. There are 477 ladies engaged in the work in the 77 boarding-out districts. They have 1,458 children under their supervision (in addition to those at service). They visit and report upon the homes and the appearance and treatment of the children once in every six weeks; they inquire into complaints, smooth difficulties, see to the attendance of the children at school, obtain reports from the teachers and medical officers, seek situations for the children when they are of an age to go to service, and in many ways look after their welfare with untiring energy and patience. Each committee has a lady correspondent, and these ladies do an amount of necessary clerical work in connection with the disposal and care of the children, and payment of the foster-parents, that but few voluntary workers would undertake. And the work of the ladies is on the whole admirably done. The fact that cases arise now and again in which the unsuitability of foster-parents is made apparent does not of necessity impugn the vigilance of the ladies. Such things would occur under any system of supervision, and when the number of children who are boarded out is taken into account, the rarity of such cases is a testimony to the care the ladies exercise. It is certain that no staff of travelling agents would discharge the duties in a manner so satisfactory to the community as the ladies have done, while if the system were in the hands of men alone it would be a failure. It is, therefore, a matter for thankfulness that the threatened retirement of some of the ladies on account of suggested interference has been averted.

There is one feature in connection with the boarding-out which is, I think, deserving of passing notice, viz., the decided improvement in the appearance of many of the homes, due largely, no doubt, to the visits and suggestions of the ladies. I have noticed this improvement in the course of my periodical inspection of the homes, and in conversation with several of the ladies find they have observed it likewise.

It will be observed from the special reports attached hereto that several ladies are still of opinion that the rate of pay should be increased. The views of the ladies on this matter are undoubtedly entitled to respectful consideration, and if they were at all unanimous in believing an increase to be necessary to the well-being of the children, I should feel compelled to advise that an increase be made. But, failing that, I do not feel justified in recommending an increase in view of the fact that there are still so many more persons willing to take children under nine years of age than can be supplied. Some of the best foster-parents have candidly admitted to the ladies that they can make it pay with three children. The decision to allow the committees to grant permission to foster-parents to send children above twelve years of age only half a day to school instead of full time will no doubt assist in creating a larger demand for the elder children.

The vote for boarding out, £19,000, has proved inadequate to the requirements by about £1,500, partly owing to the large number who have been sent out during the year and partly to the requirement that children shall not leave school till they are fifteen years of age, or till they are certificated, which increases the number on pay. It is desirable I should add that, although there are still so many applicants waiting for children, they all require young children, and there are at the date of this report only 71 children under ten years of age in the State Industrial Schools, inclusive of new admissions, the sick, &c.

4.—EXTRACT FROM REPORT OF CHAIRMAN OF DESTITUTE POOR DEPARTMENT, Adelaide, 19th Aug, 1880.

The boarding-out system still assures us most convincingly of the wisdom of thus dealing with the children of the State, and it is the Board's aim so fully to push this branch of its operations as to lessen considerably the number of children at Magill, and make that establishment more of a receiving home, from which to draft off the children as speedily as may be to the more desirable private homes throughout the colony.

It is certainly a matter for great satisfaction that, out of more than 500 visits made to the homes of the children, only twenty-four reports are adverse.

It is in no stereotyped form that I desire again in the warmest terms to express the Board's appreciation of the valued services of the Boarding-out Committee. The ladies and their friends throughout the colony do the work of kindly visitation far better than it could be done by any amount of perfunctory officialism. This aid, in addition to the official visits made from the department, secures to the utmost the beneficent results of the scheme; and it is no small gratification to find that the arrangements initiated and matured some years back under the late Chairman (Mr. T. S. Reed) are stimulating the authorities in the neighbouring colonies to plans of like beneficence.