

As a rule I found, notwithstanding the very serious evils which have accompanied the introduction of a poor-law for New Zealand, that there was almost everywhere appearing this saving effect: The Boards finding themselves face to face with the tax-gatherer were beginning at last to realise the situation, and with the best results. I have said that, as a rule, this was the tendency; but in the two districts of Napier and Wairarapa North, owing to causes which are peculiar, I found a most anomalous state of affairs. Mr. Mahon, the Secretary, informs me regarding the state of things at Napier as follows: "So far as I can ascertain, from the very imperfect books of the office, I find that the expenditure for the year 1884-85 was all absorbed in the Borough of Napier. For the year 1886, of the sum £3,321 7s. 11d., as much as £300 was expended in the Waipawa County, £75 in the Patangata County, and a similar sum in the Wairoa County. For 1887, out of the total expenditure of £4,217 2s. 9d., £470 was expended in Waipawa County, £75 in the Patangata County, and £100 in Wairoa County." Briefly it comes to this: For 1883 no records, for 1884 the amount expended was £591 5s. 3d., for 1885 £361 8s. 7d., for 1886 £3,321 7s. 11d., and for 1887 £4,217 2s. 9d. I think it will be admitted that the extraordinary increase in 1886 demands some kind of explanation. It is some comfort, however, to get such an assurance as Mr. Mahon gives: "I think I can promise that the current year's expenditure will be considerably less than half of that for last year"—*i.e.*, a saving of £2,108 for the year.

The *modus operandi* of the North Wairarapa Benevolent Society was so extraordinary that I hesitate to describe it, and therefore confine myself as much as possible to a simple statement of the facts so far as I could ascertain them. For the year ending the 31st August, 1883, the Government paid pound for pound on £25 10s. 6d.; for 1884 the subsidy was £16 9s. In 1885 a special effort was made to get the society made a separate institution under the Act, and subscriptions amounting to £222 18s. 9d. were received. The society was incorporated on the 26th April, 1886. For 1886-87 the voluntary subscriptions were £92 18s. 6d., and for 1887-88 they fell to £9 13s., contributed by eleven persons; although it was a condition of incorporation that they should contribute £100 a year. Some idea of the significance of the facts may be gained by showing that no increase of population took place to justify the difference of expenditure on outdoor relief between the trifling amount required in 1884 and the £500 spent last year and the year before.

The County of Wairarapa North contained in 1886 4,184 persons, which, together with the Borough of Masterton, containing 3,160, made the total for the district 7,344. That there was no sudden increase of population to account for the enormous increase of charitable aid is apparent from the fact that in 1883 the borough contained 2,241 persons, which by 1885 had increased to 3,000, and at the census of 1886 to 3,160. The contrast between North and South Wairarapa is made still more effective when it is observed that the neighbouring County of Wairarapa South, with its population of 5,404 persons, exclusive of Greytown, containing 1,105 persons, spent last year in charitable aid £2 10s. !!!

When I visited Masterton on the 2nd February, 1888, I found the Secretary so indisposed that he would not meet me, and he had been in the same condition for months before. To get at the books I had to get a friend to hunt him up and persuade him to give up the keys of the office. Except in the minute-book, which had not been kept by him for many months, there were no entries in any other book since the 9th June. I made a copy of all the entries in the minute-book, from which I make the following extracts: At the meeting of the 3rd August, 1887, there is a standing list of ten females, mostly widows and deserted wives (some of whom were supposed to be in collusion with their husbands). Five of these deserted wives, with about twenty-five children among them, are in receipt of sums of from 12s. 6d. to £1 5s. per week outdoor relief, and three of them, as the police informed me, are well known to be leading immoral lives. One of these who had seven children when deserted by her husband, and was openly leading an immoral life, came to the Board when with child by another man, declaring that if her relief was not increased from £1 to £1 5s. a week she would forsake her family, and the Board would be compelled to send them to the Industrial School. Her demand was agreed to. There was another still more glaring case, which I refrain from detailing, although it illustrates nearly all the evils of the outdoor-relief system in this country. I am at a loss to account for the gathering of such cases in Masterton as a sort of harbour of refuge, and can only surmise that the softness of the trustees attracted from other places persons to prey on their good-nature, or that they actually pauperised their own people by guaranteeing deserted wives and families against suffering. The crowning fact of this strange history is that the Chairman gave notice at the meeting of the 14th December last as follows: "That now, as the society has ceased to be supported by voluntary contributions, and has become a Government institution, it was not his intention to continue his connection with it after the present year." As illustrating the methods of easy-going charity, I extract the following from the minutes of the 14th December: "A letter was read from Mrs. —, asking that she should be allowed something beyond the 14s. a week paid for Louis P's board (P. was a helpless, weak-minded creature), as she had much extra trouble in attendance upon him. *Resolved*, That no recompense of the kind be allowed if it was found P. had still a separate attendant, it being understood that a man engaged by the society was with him at any rate at first, and might still be there. The Secretary to inquire." (The italics are mine.)

In Nelson, New Plymouth, Wanganui, and Dunedin I found the Boards took an immense deal of trouble in endeavouring to make the best of what I have been driven to conclude is a very vicious system. In Wellington, where I made a house-to-house visitation, I found the Board's Relieving Officer was thoroughly acquainted with the circumstances and character of all the recipients of aid.

To show, however, the inherent vice of this outdoor-relief system, even where it is best administered, I found in different places such cases as the following: Mrs. A., a widow having a Government pension of 10s. a week, for many years lived an immoral life; is now confined to bed with the consequences, and cannot recover. The Benevolent Society of the district took over her pension, claimed and received the Government subsidy on it as a voluntary contribution, and gave the old woman 15s. a week, thus clearing £18 4s. by the transaction. An old man who had married a