

1895.

## NEW ZEALAND.

NAUTICAL SCHOOL-SHIP OR TRAINING-SHIP FOR  
BOYS IN NEW ZEALAND

(SUGGESTIONS FOR A).

*Laid on the Table by leave of the House, by the Hon. Mr. Reeves.*

Mr. J. E. MARCH to the Hon. the MINISTER of LANDS.

SIR,—

Wellington, 1st July, 1895.

When, acting under your instructions to inspect the village settlements in New South Wales, I had the opportunity through the kindness of the Hon. J. Gerrard, Minister of Public Instruction at Sydney, of inspecting the nautical school-ship "Sobraon," and was courteously furnished with full information by the Commander and Superintendent, F. W. Neitenstein, Esq., of the useful and practical work done on board.

The "Sobraon" is a roomy vessel, and admirably fitted up for the purpose; the arrangements for insuring the training, supervision, and comfort of the boys are perfect, and there is ample accommodation on board for 500 lads.

From information obtained on inspection, and from the report and rules, I find that the staff consists of the Commander, who has entire charge of the institution, and is held responsible for the proper discharge of the duties to be performed by all the officers and petty officers; he has also to see that the boys are properly instructed by the schoolmasters, and that they are taught habits of cleanliness, industry, and diligence; that they are properly and systematically drilled, and to do all in his power to encourage moral and honourable conduct amongst them.

The duties of the Lieutenant are to see the orders of the Superintendent faithfully and promptly carried out, to visit and inspect every part of the ship at least twice daily, to be present at all musters, and inspect the various messes at meal times, taking care that the provisions are fairly apportioned and properly cooked.

The second officer is responsible for the cleanliness and good order of everything below the upper deck; he has to supervise the fitting-out of new boys with clothing and bedding, award them sleeping-billets, and place them in messes.

The school hours on board the "Sobraon" are from 9 to 11.40 a.m., and from 1 to 3.45 p.m. The schoolmaster receives the boys from the Commanding Officer at school hours, and at the close of daily lessons the boys are formed up and marched to the upper deck, and there handed over to the Commanding Officer.

The carpenter is employed at his own trade, and instructs the boys told off to him for that purpose. The boatswain instructs the boys in drill, is responsible for the cleanliness and good order of the arms of the ship, including the guns and all appurtenances, and is also responsible for the firing of the guns without injury to life or property.

The seamen are responsible for the good order of the gear of their respective tops, boats, &c., and must see that boys intrusted to them work quietly and orderly.

The bandmaster instructs such boys as are told off for band purposes; is responsible that their clothing, band-instruments, music, &c., are kept safely and in good order. He provides musical recreation for the boys generally in the evenings, and gives instruction to specially-selected lads in part- and solo-singing, the playing of wind-, reed-, and stringed-instruments, and generally to supervise the boys at playtime.

On Sundays the boys land and march to their respective places of worship under the supervision of the officers, excepting in inclement weather, when Divine service is held on board.

I was informed by the Commander that the general behaviour of the boys was very good, and of late years a large number of lads had been received on board who had turned out failures under various charitable organizations. Firm discipline, plenty of work and drill, with wholesome recreation accomplish wonders with this class of lads, and they do not look upon the ship as a prison. The admirable manner in which the Commander treats the boys and the deep interest

he takes in their welfare is apparent; boys first coming on board are taken into his confidence, and told what is going to be done for them. After the first natural restlessness is got over they generally settle down quietly and contentedly, and the healthy public opinion existing amongst them, together with the frequent visits to the ship by old boys, do much to check any misconduct.

The nautical school-ship at Sydney now commences its twenty-ninth year, and is the oldest establishment of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. During the past twenty-eight years over 3,000 boys have been received on board, and about 2,700 have left, principally as apprentices. As might naturally be expected, a few of the lads have turned out badly, and their cases come much under public attention. These, however, form but a comparatively small proportion of the large number who have received their education on board, and passed under the ship's discipline. I was assured by the Commander that it was well within the mark to say that fully 92 per cent. of the lads have turned out to be as respectable and industrious men as any members of the general community.

Of the good work being done on board the "Sobraon" there cannot be a doubt. I was fortunate to meet in Sydney the Rev. H. Van Staveren, of Wellington, who accompanied me on board, and that gentleman will fully confirm all I say of the satisfactory results of a system which brings under discipline a large number of lads, and fits them by the education they receive to occupy a position in society beneficial to themselves and those they serve.

The question, I think, arises, cannot something be done in New Zealand in this direction. Magistrates frequently express the difficulty they labour under in dealing satisfactorily with a class of boys brought before them as being uncontrollable. The late C. Whitefoord, Esq., Resident Magistrate, Kaiapoi, who took a deep interest in a training-ship for boys, was convinced that the establishment of a nautical school-ship was the best way of meeting the difficulty.

The necessity of having a training-ship for boys was frequently brought under my notice when I held the appointment of administrator of charitable-aid in Canterbury—before Charitable-aid Boards were established—and correspondence on this subject took place with the Government, both before and after the appointment of Charitable-aid Boards, but without any definite result.

The proposals which I have the honour to submit to the Government are the following:—

In the first place, I think that if representations were made to the Imperial authorities there would be no difficulty in obtaining for the colony one of Her Majesty's men-of-war now obsolete. The larger the ship the better, as I wish to point out that in the middle and higher walks of life are a number of lads who are unfitted for an office, unfitted for the land, and who want a profession. The profession they are best qualified for is Her Majesty's Navy or the mercantile marine. I feel sure that the parents of these lads would cheerfully pay for their education, clothing, and maintenance.

The mere fact of New Zealand being desirous of educating a portion of her youths for service in the Royal Navy is probably the best indication we can at present give as a colony of our sympathy with the federation of the Empire.

I would, however, respectfully point out that the education to be imparted on this proposed nautical school-ship must be the best; we should aim, I think, to obtain the best ship suitable for the purpose, and the best nautical and other instructors. By that means a New Zealand boy might rise to an important position in the service, and be a credit to his country and to the ship in which he receives his education.

By obtaining a training-ship of a suitable size, the boys could be classified into upper and lower schools, and be kept quite distinct from each other, so far as it was necessary.

The establishment of a training-ship on proper lines would, I feel assured, be a lasting and incalculable benefit to hundreds of lads, and tend greatly to the welfare of the colony.

I beg most respectfully, therefore, to commend the proposal of a training-ship for boys in New Zealand to the favourable consideration of the Government.

I have, &c.,  
J. E. MARCH,  
Superintendent of Settlements.

The Hon. J. McKenzie, Minister of Lands.

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