

To those acquainted with the class of girls who come to this school it will be at once apparent that the difficulties of management under the present system are almost overpowering, and must often strain the patience and temper of the attendants to breaking-point. Every endeavour is made to keep the two classes separate, but it is practically impossible. Te Oranga is the only female reformatory in the Dominion. Girls who are considered by the Magistrates to require reformatory treatment are committed direct to this school from all parts of New Zealand. Girls also between sixteen and eighteen years of age, who cannot be committed direct to the school, and who, on account of the seriousness of their offences, have to be committed to prison, are removed from the gaol to the school under special warrant. It follows, of course, that the inmates consist of girls of all ages, many of them having been hardened and corrupted by indulgence in all forms of vice, and who may be termed "moral imbeciles," and others who are scarcely normal in intelligence.

It will be seen at once that there must be varying degrees of treatment to satisfactorily deal with all these girls if there is to be a genuine effort to reform them. It is quite hopeless to expect much to be done if there are only facilities for dealing with them in two classes. The marvel is that the results are as good as they are. I understand that plans have been approved for the erection of considerable additions to the existing buildings, and that the work will shortly be put in hand. This will immensely improve the whole system, and will enable the Manager to so deal, by way of classification, with certain girls as to do away entirely with a great deal of punishment that she feels called upon at present to inflict so as to secure proper discipline in the school.

A great deal of very valuable and instructive evidence has been given by several persons on the subject of classification. This evidence will well repay perusal, given as it is by persons who have come into personal contact with the work, and who know what they are talking about. For myself, I incline to the opinion that one could not improve upon the suggestions as to classification which were made by Mr. Smail, and which will be found on page 291 and following pages of the evidence. I know of no one who is better qualified than Mr. Smail to express an opinion on such a question, or whose views would be entitled to greater respect. He has made a special study of such matters, and has an intimate, first-hand knowledge of the material to be dealt with. The main point in connection with Mr. Smail's scheme is the setting-up of a reception class, with most efficient and sympathetic supervision. The creation of other classes would follow on this as a natural and necessary consequence. Until something is done in this direction, it cannot be said that the State is doing its fullest duty to the unfortunate young people who are committed to its care. Every waif reclaimed and reformed is a distinct gain to the State; every failure is an equally distinct loss and source of expense in the future, as well as an element of danger. Apart from the self-imposed obligation on the State to attempt to reform, it may be said that a good life gained is of far higher value to humanity than merely a bad life the less. It is impossible to assess the value of a single young life saved from unspeakable ruin. There will always be hopeless cases, but we need not look for them. All must have an equal chance, and especially must the weaker have every possible opportunity afforded them to grow strong.

(b.) GENERAL TREATMENT OF THE INMATES, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO PUNISHMENT.

The duties, powers, and responsibilities of the Manager in respect to punishments are clearly laid down in the regulations, under Industrial Schools Acts, which were approved by Order in Council dated the 16th June, 1902. Regulation 124 provides as follows: "A register of punishments shall be kept at each school. In such book a record of all corporal punishments, all confinement in cells, of all continuous restriction of diet, and of any other punishment named in the regulations shall be made on the day on which the punishment is inflicted; and at the end of every month a copy of the entries made during the month shall be sent by the Manager to the Secretary for Education."

The Manager of Te Oranga admits that she has neglected to comply strictly with this regulation. She has kept a register, which has been produced in evidence, but the entries therein have been made in lots, at long intervals, from scribbled data or from memory, and then apparently only when it became necessary to send the usual copy to the Secretary for Education. I regard this as a somewhat serious breach of duty on the part of the Manager, and the more so as, for the purpose of this inquiry, the register must be held not to be an absolutely reliable record of punishments inflicted. The result is to practically nullify the very object that was evidently in view when the regulations on the subject of punishments were apparently so carefully framed. The object clearly was to obtain the strictest possible control over all the punishments inflicted in the schools. It is surprising to me, after inspecting the register, and closely examining it, to find that the officers whose duty it was to periodically inspect this particular school, and presumably also to examine the register, never appeared to notice the fact, that must have been apparent to the most casual observer, that the register was not being kept in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 124. There is no medium through which abuses can more readily creep into a school of this sort than through the infliction of uncontrolled punishments,