

I have this day received from the master of the school a report showing the results of a correspondence between him and Inspector Fox, of Invercargill. In 1876 E. W. was placed in charge of a married couple in Invercargill. A few weeks ago Inspector Fox informed the master of the school that these persons had been misconducting themselves since last January, and that "the child was lightly clad, and looking otherwise neglected." The master requested Inspector Fox to take the necessary steps for sending the girl back to the school; but the man refused to give the girl up, and employed a lawyer to defend his case before the Resident Magistrate, to whom application had been made for an order of removal. The Magistrate decided that he could not grant an order without the production of a warrant under the hand of His Excellency the Governor, requiring the girl to return to the school. A warrant was obtained and forwarded with the least possible delay, and the master has now reported the girl's return to the school. This is only one out of a number of cases of a similar nature. Among the records of the institution are numerous reports by the officers of the police respecting the conduct and treatment of the children, all of which it is the duty of the Honorary Inspector to read. Some of the constables' reports of former years are printed in my report for 1874, above referred to.

Mistakes sometimes made.

Notwithstanding the care taken in the placing-out of the children, and the assistance rendered by the police in watching over them, it must be confessed that mistakes have sometimes been made; that parties have been intrusted with children who proved unworthy of the trust, and that in a few instances children may have been permitted to remain too long with such persons. In common with the master of the school, I have sometimes had to regret that we had yielded to the importunate pleadings of parents for the restoration of their little ones. But those were exceptional cases, and I respectfully submit that it would prove exceedingly discouraging, if not most unfair, to the master, the Honorary Inspector, and the department, if such occasional occurrences should be regarded as fair specimens of the ordinary management of the institution. The course I have recommended in a former part of this report with regard to the placing-out of children will probably diminish the number of such cases; but I am unable, after so many years' experience, to guarantee that they will altogether cease under the very best possible management.

The Management of the Institution and its Inmates.

The first master of the school died at his post in December, 1875; and after very careful inquiry the Superintendent conferred the appointment of master on Sergeant Titchener, who had been for many years a very efficient officer of the Otago Constabulary. His wife was at the same time appointed matron. As Honorary Inspector I have had abundant opportunity of becoming intimately acquainted with the character and qualifications of Mr. and Mrs. Titchener. I know the recorded opinions formed of them by intelligent visitors of the school, and there can be no doubt of their eminent fitness for their difficult and responsible positions. Their work speaks for itself. The spirit of genuine kindness which unmistakably pervades the whole of the establishment is producing most gratifying results, as manifested by the happiness and contentment of the children, and by their appearance and bearing. Under date 9th June, 1879, Mr. Macandrew wrote in the visitors' book as follows: "Visited school, which I am glad to find maintains the high character which I have had occasion so frequently to record with regard to it." About the same time a lady from Victoria made the following entry: "I have spent a most interesting hour in this excellent institution. I can find no words in which to express the gratification I have derived from the sight of the happy faces, admirable provision, and discipline of true kindness and parental interest I have witnessed in this institution."

School Instruction.

The classes in charge of the schoolmaster and schoolmistress were examined last December by Mr. Taylor, one of the Otago Education Board's Inspectors. His report is appended. I spent the greater part of a day at the school last March, and devoted some time to an examination of the classes. I am able to bear out all that Mr. Taylor states with regard to the proficiency and good conduct of the children, and the ability and diligence of the teachers. The school-building has been enlarged, and it now affords ample accommodation for the children. Mr. Taylor visited the school on the 28th April, 1879, and made the following entry: "Visited the institution to-day, and was greatly pleased with its excellent management. Inspected the [day] schools, and found the children remarkably well-behaved. They read with fluency and good expression; they spell with accuracy and ease. They are well acquainted with the tables and the elementary rules of arithmetic; and the writing is characterized by neatness and good form. The singing is superior, and is delightful to listen to."

Statistics.

Attached are tables showing the number of children, the income and expenditure, &c. The number of children in the institution on 31st December, 1878, was 226, and there were 139 committals to the school in the course of the year 1879. During the same period 125 left the institution, thus leaving 240 on 31st December, 1879, or an increase of 14 for the year. The two boys mentioned as having run away returned to the school in January, and they are now in good employment.

The average daily number of inmates for the year (including the staff) was 240, and the actual cost to the colony for salaries, wages, maintenance, &c., for the same period, was at the rate of 4s. 7½d. per head per week. The sum of £352 16s. 6d. was recovered from parents and guardians. Other receipts amounted to £3 9s.

In addition to the children in the institution on 31st December, 1879, and those who had been placed out during the year, there were at the same date 167 children who had previously been placed out, and whose term had not expired, thus making altogether 507 in connection with the school at the close of last year.