

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 houses, 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.