

Before passing on to the next section of my report, I should like to emphasize remarks that I have made on a previous occasion in regard to training-ships as reformatories or as industrial schools. Boys from reformatory ships are not admitted to the Royal Navy, and it is found in Great Britain that comparatively few of them enter, and still fewer remain in, the commercial marine. The same is true to a large extent of industrial-school ships; and here the further objection can be made that the training-ship is merely one form of the barrack system of treatment, and except in the case of a very large ship (which would be out of the question in New Zealand) is without proper means for that classification which is one of the essential elements of permanent success. The cottage home for industrial-school boys, and the farm and the workshop for reformatory boys, are, in my opinion, far more likely to be successful than any training-ship. Training-ships, in fact, are at present on their trial in the Old Country; and it appears that at least their number is not likely to be increased. It is, no doubt, more attractive to see boys in sailor costume drill with precision at the word of command than to see boys coming in with their rough clothes from the farm; but no training-ship in the world can show results comparable to those that New Zealand industrial schools, with all their drawbacks, can show for their past work. Training-ships are likewise far more expensive than ordinary industrial schools. The cost per head in the English industrial-school training-ships is £32; with much smaller numbers the cost per head in New Zealand would be very much greater. I therefore consider it would be a grave mistake to establish any such reformatory or industrial-school training-ship in New Zealand. These remarks have no reference to the desirability or otherwise of such training for other boys.

The appointment of two Assistant Inspectors of Industrial Schools and an additional officer to visit boarded-out and service inmates has been of great advantage for the efficient working of the system. More frequent visits to the schools, to foster-homes, and to homes where inmates are licensed to service have been made, and it is now accordingly easier to discover irregularities and to guard against their recurrence. It would be a good thing if there could be one more visiting officer, who should be a woman, more especially to look after the interests of girls licensed to service in places that the managers or official correspondents find it difficult to visit with sufficient frequency. In this connection it would be but just to express the warmest thanks of the Department to the ladies who, without fee or reward, act as Local Visitors to foster-homes, taking a lively interest in the boarded-out children, and thus rendering valuable service to the Department and to the State. Their monthly reports are sent through the official correspondents to the managers of the schools, and the officers of the Department are thereby kept aware of matters relating to the welfare of the children in a way that would not be possible without such local help. Thanks are also due to the Official Visitors, who in the case of Burnham and Caversham are formed into Boards of Advice, but elsewhere, as at Auckland and Nelson, act as private individuals. It would probably be as well if a uniform system were followed in every case. As the schools are colonial and not local in character and function, there does not seem to be any special reason why local boards should be appointed. At the same time the appointment of responsible persons as Official Visitors is evidently a safeguard in the public interest.

Under "The Private Industrial Schools Act, 1900," the Department has now much greater powers in regard to private schools than it had before, and regulations will, it is hoped, be approved shortly by the Governor in Council, dealing comprehensively with matters relating to the treatment of inmates, both resident and non-resident. A regular and thorough audit of the accounts of the earnings of inmates licensed out to service from the schools has now been instituted, the chief object being to introduce a uniform method in dealing with such earnings, and to safeguard the interests of the inmates.

Our industrial-school system has been the subject of high praise recently from Miss Rosa M. Barrett, honorary secretary of the Kingstown Cottage Home for Little Children, and author of the Howard Medal Prize Essay on "The Treatment of Juvenile Offenders," which was read before the Royal Statistical Society of Great Britain, 20th March, 1900. I will content myself with quoting two or three paragraphs from that paper, which contains the most comprehensive statement of industrial-school and kindred work in all countries that I have yet seen. The paragraphs in question are from the concluding portion of Miss Barrett's essay, called "Summary and Suggestions":—

"Certain conclusions force themselves upon the mind on reviewing the statistics here collected. One is that the methods hitherto employed for the repression and the punishment of crime have largely failed, as far as the reduction of crime or the reform of the criminal is concerned. The countries where crime is decreasing are those which have adopted widely both preventive work and such modern ways of dealing with criminals (first offenders in particular) as—(1) the indeterminate sentence; (2) release on probation, with certain safeguards; (3) reformatories for 'adult-juvenile' offenders; (4) the most stringent regulations against drunkenness."

"The best examples, however, of preventive work are afforded in the countries of New Zealand, Ontario (Canada), and in the States of Massachusetts, Michigan, and Minnesota. In these States children morally neglected, as well as those physically neglected, become wards of the State: parental control is forfeited, and yet the numbers of children dependent on the State show a marked and constant decrease. In Massachusetts there has been a reduction of 50 per cent. in twenty years, and in Michigan and Minnesota even more—70 per cent. This splendid result is in part due to the States beginning their preventive work at a much earlier age than we do, and also to their doing it much more thoroughly and giving longer supervision. It has been noted that the inmates of our industrial schools are physically below the standard of ordinary school-children; in Elmira, New York (for male first offenders), the same has been observed: no less than 66 per cent. of the inmates are physically degenerate. Strength of will depends upon strength of body as well as of mind, and to obtain this, especially in those inheriting evil tendencies, proper care and treatment cannot begin too young."