

girls which culminated in her dismissal. After fully weighing everything that could be said for and against this attendant, and thoroughly considering her attitude throughout, I am bound to say that her conduct at one stage of the trouble showed great lack of discretion, and proved her unfitness for the position of great responsibility which she engaged to fill.

One lesson to be learned from the somewhat unfortunate episode is that every attendant at the time of engagement should be supplied with a letter of appointment, setting out clearly and explicitly the terms of her engagement, including the duties to be performed.

I am directed to report my opinion as to the extent to which the school has been successful in improving the moral and social conditions of the inmates, and is general fulfilling the purpose of a reformatory.

Te Oranga was opened as a female reformatory in 1900. Since then sixty-two girls have passed out of control. At the termination of the period of detention thirty-two of these were of good character, thirteen might be described as fair, eight were bad, three were missing, three were mental defectives, and three had died. I agree with the opinion of the Department that a complete success should not be claimed until the inmate has been beyond the control of the school for at least three years. Applying this test, there are only thirty-nine girls who have been beyond control for three years, and of these nineteen are known to be of good character, two are unknown, two are weak-minded, two are in a private institution, and one has died.

In considering these figures it must not be forgotten that several of these girls were only a very short time in Te Oranga, having been culled as incorrigibles from other schools, and sent here after the school opened. Many were approaching twenty-one when they entered. This being so, I consider the results distinctly good.

Very few of the general public can really be aware of the terrible material upon which the management has to work. Many of the girls are brought direct from the brothels, from Chinese dens, from the open streets, from the company of dissolute parents. Many of them come in with irreparable marks of disease, of sin, and of degradation. None of them have ever had a chance to live straightly and decently. I could give instances of youthful depravity that would be thought impossible. These girls, who have never been under control or discipline, who are of an age to find a fatal attraction in various forms of sin, and who absolutely resent any attempt to interfere with their freedom, have to be sorted out, broken in, and gradually humanised. Can we wonder at the failures in the face of such enormous difficulties? But I do not require statistics to convince me that the Home is doing good work. Many of these girls have passed through my hands when at their very worst. I have spoken with them, I have studied them, I have tried to reason with them. I see them again after some months of treatment at Te Oranga, and I can scarcely believe them to be the same girls. They are gentle in their manners, they have a good address, they show undoubted evidence of refinement; in short, they have become humanised. In addition to my own powers of observation, I have had the opportunity of reading a very large number of letters written to the Manager at different times by service girls and by ex-inmates. These letters have a genuine ring of spontaneity about them. They are remarkable for their expressions of gratitude to the institution, and of deep attachment to the Manager. Invariably they show a fixed desire to lead a good and pure life, and to avoid the paths of temptation which are always open to them in the world, and which seem so alluring. Yes, in spite of many shortcomings, many drawbacks, many weaknesses, one cannot but feel grateful to the management for much excellent work that is being done.

As I have already stated, there must be failures, and in most instances these failures mean a serious loss to the community at large. At present a girl on arriving at the age of twenty-one has a legal right to be discharged. It may be that she is hopelessly bad. She is a sexual degenerate, and will be a source of contamination wherever she goes. And yet we have to turn her at large to prey on the community. Surely the State has a right to step in and prevent such a state of affairs. It can only be done by necessary legislation, and any legislation should apply, of course, to all young people committed under the Industrial Schools Acts. Public attention is gradually being directed to this matter, and the present position is generally regarded as anomalous and illogical. One of the leading daily papers of the Dominion has lately had an article, under the heading of "Indeterminate Detention," which deals very much better than I could possibly hope to do with the subject, from the standpoint of the thoughtful public. I regard the question of such enormous importance that I make no apology for quoting here the article at length :—

Indeterminate Detention.

Undoubtedly there is a good deal to be said in favour of an amendment of the present law that opens the gates of the industrial homes to the inmates as they reach the age of twenty-one, and gives them free passage out into the world. In the eyes of the law they are no longer youths or girls, but men and women, who have arrived at years of discretion, and are entitled, therefore, to their liberty.