

*Epidemic Orphans.*

In accordance with the policy approved by the Government, the Education Department has taken charge of all children who lost both parents as a result of the influenza epidemic. In the absence of legislation for this purpose, the machinery of the Industrials Schools Act has had to be utilized for the purpose of vesting the legal guardianship of these children in the Department, and for the purpose of enabling the Department to maintain the children out of moneys appropriated under the provisions of that Act. In actual practice, however, the majority of the Court orders were issued without requiring the actual attendance of the children concerned at the Court, and in no case were such children sent to an institution other than a receiving-home for destitute and neglected children. Admissions of such children even to receiving-homes were regarded as temporary expedients only for the purpose of giving necessary medical or dental treatment and to enable them to be supplied with outfits of clothing.

All these children have now been placed either with relatives or in suitable foster-homes. In the interests of each child, however, the Department's system of supervision will obtain. Experienced lady officers visit the children at regular intervals and ensure that they are being kindly treated and that their education is not being neglected. In connection with the placing of epidemic orphans, it is gratifying to note that through the numerous applications received from generous-hearted people all over New Zealand it has been possible to place all the children in good homes—many of them superior in standard to the homes provided by the parents when alive.

*Boys' Schools.*

With the extension of the probation and boarding-out system it has been possible to close the institution known as the Boys' Training Farm, Nelson, for the maintenance and education of boys of school age who for various reasons were committed to the care of the State. The Training-farm was actually closed on the 31st March, and immediately converted into a special school for mentally backward boys.

The boys' Training-farm at Weraroa now caters for boys of all ages who through the commission of offences against the law are not considered fit to associate with the children attending an ordinary public school, at least not until they have undergone a course of training and discipline at Weraroa. The Training-farm provides for three distinct classes of boys: (1) the schoolboy varying in age from ten years to fifteen years; (2) the boys from fifteen to seventeen years who on account of the laxity of parental control have been given too much liberty and have either become uncontrollable or have committed petty offences against the law; and (3) the elder boys who have been convicted of offences or have failed to make good after one or more trials in situations. The schoolboys are maintained in a cottage entirely apart from the others, and are not allowed to associate with the older boys. This cottage is managed by a suitable married couple, and, on account of the small number dealt with (from ten to sixteen boys), the system provides all the elements of an ordinary home. The intermediate group are housed in the main building, and are managed mainly by the Matron and her assistant. The third group, consisting of the elder boys, are maintained in a separate cottage apart from all the other inmates, under the control of a married couple.

The training of the boys in farm-work in all its branches is carried on under the personal direction of the Manager and Farm Overseer. In addition, boys are taught buttermaking and cheesemaking, gardening and orchard-work, and are thus equipped with such experience and knowledge as enables the Manager to place them in suitable employment as soon as it is found that their conduct warrants such a course. The fact that very few boys indeed are returned to the farm after being placed out is ample evidence of the good work that is being carried out by the Manager and his staff. For boys who have no taste for work on the land, provision is made for placing them at trades. The rudiments of bootmaking, carpentry, engine-driving, and motor-car driving and car-repairing are all taught at the farm under competent instructors.

The whole of the land attached to the Training-farm, nearly 500 acres, has now been brought under cultivation; the dairy herd has been extended on right lines, and the rearing of sheep and pigs has now been placed on a satisfactory basis,