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I.—*Boarding-out of Pauper Children.* By Miss Isabella S. M. Tod,
of Belfast.

THE mode of dealing with those children who are cast entirely upon the care of the state, which is known as boarding-out, is not a new one, either in principle or practice, although it has attracted more attention during the last few years, and been considerably extended. Indeed it would have been surprising had it been left to us now to discover such a plan; for it is surely the one which would most naturally suggest itself to any thinking mind and feeling heart. If a child is placed in a position so unchildlike as to have neither parents nor any relative to take the parent's place, is it not the first thought of any onlooker to put it into the hands of those who will try to be father and mother to it? It could never occur spontaneously to any one, that if you got for this poor little shivering body and frightened soul the one hundredth part of a matron's care, and the one hundredth part of a schoolmaster's, and the one thousandth part of a relieving officer's, that you had done all that was necessary to bring up this creature to the stature of a healthy, intelligent, useful man or woman. Human beings do treat each other humanly, until they are withdrawn from sight, and arranged for in such huge masses as to smother individual feeling.

No doubt, the fashion of guardians dealing with the children thrown on their hands, as well as with the adult poor, in a wholesale manner, is comparatively modern. It was probably a consequence of the immense increase of population in England, during the years of peace and prosperity enjoyed for a great part of the present century. There were larger numbers of people to be relieved, and the ratepayers could afford to pay larger sums. Large buildings and a large staff had to be provided, and once they were there it was least trouble to hand over their crowd of clients to them indiscriminately;

and so the children were swept blindly in with the rest. Yet this state of things was never accepted without a protest. From about the year 1841 we hear strong expressions of disapprobation of the attempt to bring up children in a workhouse. One observer speaks of "the gross evils and cruelties which often attend the plan of training children in the same buildings with adult paupers, many of whom are of the most depraved character." The most conspicuous opponent of the boarding-out system repeatedly and earnestly deplores the mischiefs of all kinds to which children are exposed in workhouses. Twenty years ago an Irish periodical wrote of the workhouse, that "it is the gathering-place, at one time or another, of all the unconvicted crime of the country. Pauper-reared children . . . are ill prepared indeed to resist the torrent of evil example and insidious temptation which here besets them."

The discontent and even alarm which such a conviction created led to the establishment of the English District Schools. When once the public mind had been familiarised with the idea that it was possible to nurse and train children by the hundreds if machinery enough were set in motion, it seemed quite an admirable thing to transfer all the children from one or more workhouses to a school of their own, and supply them with all the necessary teachers, chaplains, superintendents, etc. And undeniably the scheme had certain advantages—as in securing officers of a grade above those who would seek appointment in a workhouse, and in removing the children for the time from *adult* evil communication. But after many years' experience, the opinion of most of those who have watched it minutely is that this plan also has failed; and has failed precisely because, with all possible external advantages, it has inherited the wholesale workhouse mode of treatment, and therefore has reproduced its effects upon the children.

A sharp controversy has sprung up regarding this matter, arising out of the report presented by Mrs. Senior to the Right Hon. James Stansfeld when President of the Local Government Board, on the condition and working of the District Schools containing girls from the London workhouses. It needs no spirit of partisanship to see in the facts adduced by Mrs. Senior and her coadjutors, ample confirmation of the suspicion, that the industrial, mental, and moral results of shutting up five hundred children together, good and bad, in a huge building, and with even greater monotony and restraint than the workhouse itself, differ from those of the workhouse only in degree, and not greatly even in that. Fortunately, it is not needful for us to enter particularly into this, as the plan of District Schools, though once attempted in Ireland, never was really adopted. The same may be said of Scotland.

As the poor-law systems of the three countries differ very widely in administration, if not in principle, it is instructive to find that in each of the three the plan of boarding out such helpless children has existed for a lengthened period, although unlike in each country in origin and detail. Various charitable associations in England had already being in the habit of finding rural homes for some of their children; but the existence of the District Schools (although even

they are only available for a minority of the pauper children), probably prevented philanthropists from quickly perceiving *their* need of similar care. The present movement in that direction may be said to have begun with the exertions of Mrs. Archer, Miss Boucherett, the Misses Hill, and other ladies, about fifteen years ago. They endeavoured to persuade Boards of Guardians to use the power they had of boarding out pauper children *within* the limits of the union to which they belonged. But it was not until 1870, when, in answer to a memorial signed by thousands of ladies, the President of the Poor-law Board issued an order permitting guardians, under certain conditions, to board out children *beyond* the limits of their own union, that the system was really extensively adopted. There are now about thirty ladies' committees, having charge of 325 children, boarded out under the order of 1870, besides those boarded out within their own union, which amount to several thousands.

In Scotland boarding-out has, in form or another, been practised for a century or more, as a mode of relief. In 1845, the Scotch Poor-law Amendment Act was passed; and as, a short time before, the attention of the public had been forcibly drawn by the then governor of Edinburgh jail to the criminal after-career of children brought up in the two work-houses there, much consideration was given to this branch of the subject. Since that date, all the large towns of Scotland at least have boarded out every orphan and deserted child in their charge, in the rural districts which offered the greatest facilities for their good training. There are now between 4,000 and 5,000 so boarded-out.

In Ireland, as the Poor-law itself is a very modern affair, it is not in the early stages to anything done by the authorities, but to the action of voluntary charities, that we have to look for experience. Warned by the errors of the old Charter Schools, which had just been closed, the Protestant Orphan Society from the first eschewed large buildings and mechanical arrangements, and placed the children in families in the country. The success of this institution is beyond dispute, and as it deals with hundreds at a time, the scale is sufficiently large to be an excellent test of efficiency. In a similar manner, many Roman Catholic orphanages and institutes—such as those of St. Joseph and St. Bridget—have constantly boarded out the children in their care among farmers and others in the country, with the best results. The Presbyterian Orphan Society, with the working of which I am best acquainted, has been about ten years in operation, and it, also, makes the placing of the children in suitable families its central object. There are peculiarities in its mode of action, however, arising from the fact that the parents of the children belonged to a church which has a high standard of internal discipline. If only the father is dead, the children remain with the mother; if both parents are dead, relatives are sought for, or, failing them, friends of the deceased parents. As far as possible, they remain in the congregation in which they have been brought up, and under the eye of the minister who knows them; and every pains is taken *not* to break the ties of kindred, neighbourhood, and acquaintanceship. Moreover, special arrangements are made by which working men who

subscribe to the funds of the Society leave a preferable claim upon it as a legacy to their children. A friendly critic has seen danger in some of these rules; and undoubtedly they are not suited for use by boards which have to deal with the children not only of misfortune but depravity. But that does not lessen the value of the testimony of the Society to the wisdom of training their 2,000 children in the warmth and simplicity of family life, instead of in great and artificial institutions.

But although the Irish Poor-law scheme included children among the workhouse inmates, as a matter of course, yet, ever since such functionaries were called into being, Irish guardians have constantly shown an earnest desire to find a more natural mode of training the children. In 1856, one of the guardians of the North Dublin Union took steps to get leave for them to board out some of their children, but was stopped by the assurance of the Poor-law Commissioners that they had no power to take such a course. These Commissioners in the following year laid before the Chief Secretary a letter, in which they pointed out the difficulty of even keeping alive very young children within the walls of a workhouse. This feeling—that it was a matter of simple life and death, rather than of training—is apparent in the three Bills affecting the Irish Poor-law—of 1858, 1859, and 1860—each of which contained clauses giving power to guardians to put young children out to nurse, but which all were lost. Not till 1862 were Irish guardians empowered to board young children out, and that only up to the age of five years, except in special cases. But there were many among the general public, as well as among the guardians and Members of Parliament, who felt the moral side of the question to be much the most pressing, and who did not rest until power was obtained to board out the children until ten years of age. At this point it remained until 1876, when a Bill was introduced and carried by Mr. O'Shaughnessy, M.P. for Limerick, to extend the age to thirteen; and those unions—decidedly the majority, and also the most important—which had already adopted the system, gladly availed themselves of the permission.

The ease with which this extension of age was carried, when compared with the opposition which made smaller legislative efforts ineffectual less than twenty years ago, is an indication of the great change which has come over public opinion, and consequently over Parliament. There is a vast increase of interest in social reforms; which shows itself both in the enlargement of older forms of religious and charitable work, and in the invention of new, to meet the wants of our more complicated state of society. In necessary sequence, Parliament occupies itself much more than formerly with subjects of domestic importance, and is not content with the old rough-and-ready settlement of matters which affect the moral well-being of the people. It is equally inevitable, under such circumstances, that women should take a larger share than before in both the public and private discharge of these social duties. The same causes which have quickened the public conscience, have also made the *individual* stand out more prominently before the public eye than the mass to which he belongs. The attractive orderliness of a large establish-

ment could therefore be no longer accepted as proof that each of the children within it was receiving all needful care and training. And so soon as many solicitous eyes were turned upon workhouse schools, instead of one here and there, their defects were acknowledged on all hands. Employers complained so uniformly of the same sort of faults in the children brought up there, that it was evident these must be laid to the charge of the training; and they were just what observation of the schools, and an elementary knowledge of human nature, would lead one to expect. The massing together of good and bad, and the continual coming and going of little casuals, who bring from outside the report of every foul thing they see and hear, familiarises the children with evil in every shape. The absence—the impossibility—of all particular and personal affection, starves the heart and the brain, and leaves an empty blank, instead of the firm foundation of the natural affections, upon which to build real spiritual instruction. The magnitude of all the arrangements of such schools—their monotony, their rigidity, their seclusion—the completely mechanical aspect of everybody and everything—simply crushes the weak, while it maddens the bold. Think of a child—an orphan, sorrowful, yet full of eager young life, dropped down suddenly into such a school—a poor little unit, swept hither and thither by great waves of regular routine, which carry it to and from school, to and from meals, to and from dormitory and yard, without the smallest volition of his, and, so far as he can comprehend, without the smallest reference to his life or death, his happiness or misery! It is an outrage on nature; and the outcome is seen in stunted frames, and weakened minds, and tempers which alternate between apathy and violence, and utter helplessness after years of so-called industrial training.

Bad as such a system is for boys, it is worse still for girls. The rules of the schools are usually more monotonous and more rigid for them; they have fewer breaks in their dreary lives—less variety in their occupations. And when we remember that girls are more sensitive than boys to all influences about them, and that with them health, and intelligence, and temper, and character generally, are peculiarly dependent upon loving motherly care, it is not to be wondered at that this denial of their deepest needs bears terrible fruit in after years.

Fortunately, the remedy is not one which has to be sought with anxious research. It is at hand; and in each country has been seen at work so long as to be instantly recognised as the right one. To introduce the children into real homes, where they will at once feel kindness and sympathy, and presently affection, as the atmosphere they breathe, and where, being restored to right relations with their fellow-creatures, they can begin to learn what are their true relations to God, is not only the way to save newly orphaned children, but has often undone the cruel work of years, for some who had suffered from wrong training already.

It was evident, however, that if boarding-out was to be substituted on a large scale for the false system which had grown up, care would have to be taken that the supervision by educated people, which was connected with it when set in operation by charitable associations,

should be continued in a satisfactory and permanent manner when set in operation by the guardians. Even if it had not been the moral injury to girls which was chiefly the means of arousing the public mind, the fact that the most important official step in the matter was taken in answer to the memorial and the work of ladies, would have led the way to the formation of those ladies' supervising committees, which have worked so well in England. Although such committees are only compulsory in connection with boarding-out beyond the limits of the union, there is no doubt that they ought to be obligatory everywhere. Only in exceptional cases can guardians, unless assisted by lady-relatives, find suitable homes for the children, and supervise them efficiently. Not that it is difficult to induce decent and kindly people to take in these waifs and strays, and to give them a share in their family life. They are everywhere ready—sometimes from a sense of duty, but oftener from sheer natural kindness. Our Creator has so made His children that there is a strong sense of attraction to our fellow-creatures latent in every heart, which, unless hindered by extraneous circumstances, requires nothing but a little intercourse to develop into sincere affection. More than one lady who is now an active supporter of this plan, doubted it at first, from the idea that the motives of the foster-parents in undertaking the charge of the children could not usually be pure. But they have learned from plain facts that there are many motives of helpfulness, pity, and companionship, and the prospect of future affection, which induce respectable poor people to take them. As one lady wrote,—“It may be impossible to *buy* parental love, but nothing is more certain than that, by some means or other, we have *procured* it.” Such harmony of aims and means does not come by chance, however. It needs sound good sense and experience, as well as good-will, to select the right foster-parents in each case, and to meet with advice, encouragement, or warning, the emergencies which arise from time to time. This is the proper work of the ladies who undertake to assist in boarding-out. The state is composed of men and women, and has both masculine and feminine duties. The forgetting of this truth led to hideous results for thousands of unhappy children; and now that attention is directed to it, it is not a matter of choice whether ladies will offer to help, or guardians accept their offer, but a matter of plain duty. The masculine guardians represent the state in the function of providing the money—the raw material, as it were, of shelter, food, clothing, and teaching. The ladies, now occupying a recognized place as feminine guardians, must represent the state in the function of seeing that money properly used, and in so doing seeing also that the wants of the heart and the soul are supplied likewise. Both are needed. The testimony of all who have watched these committees is that they are an indispensable condition of any large and successful use of the boarding-out scheme. Boarding-out, with only official supervision, is, no doubt, liable to abuse; but that is not the system deserving of the name.

There are, of course, exceptions to all rules; but they generally throw light upon the reasons for the rules. I find, for instance, that the Belfast Union, where boarding-out has long been practised,

but without a ladies' committee, has escaped various evils which have followed such an arrangement elsewhere. But the Board of Guardians is a large one, admitting of the appropriation of special duties by gentlemen in a position to attend to them, and several of them take a lively and personal interest in the boarded-out children. The foster-parents are chosen from persons known to some one of the guardians, who to some extent holds himself responsible for seeing that things go right. Moreover, the children live near a large manufacturing town, in which remunerative employment is at once within the reach of all who are willing to work. And one result of its being as easy to find situations for girls as boys is that a distinctly smaller proportion of girls than boys ever re-appear at the workhouse in after-life. This is not the only particular in which manufacturing towns have been proved, in spite of special risks of their own, to be less dangerous to morality than those in which the poverty of women is great, in consequence of the absence of large industries in which they can be employed. But even in such circumstances, there is room for the kindly and judicious intervention of ladies; and many guardians in unions where it has not yet been tried, are anxious that it should be.

It is a cause of congratulation that such a committee has just been formed in Dublin, to look after children boarded out from the metropolitan unions. The double responsibility—to the state on the one hand, and to the children on the other—is somewhat novel for many ladies; but it is precisely typical of much other work which ought eventually to reach their hands. They will have to face discouragements arising not only from the ordinary difficulties of life, but from the tendencies to disease, drink, vice, and insanity, which many of these children inherit. But marvellous results have followed careful nurture even in such cases—to say nothing of the happier ones mixed with them. The boarding-out system rescues children from artificial conditions under which nothing living could thrive, and secures for its clients a home—friends, parents, brothers and sisters—school teaching, which becomes a pride and a pleasure, instead of a meaningless drudgery—and religious instruction which is blended with tenderness, instead of a dry form which *might* inspire awe, but *could* not inspire love. This surely is work in which the place of women is evident and essential.

II.—*The condition of Small Farmers in Ireland, and their position with reference to the Land Question.* By Murrrough O'Brien, Esq.

THE average size of farms in Ireland is so small that it may well be matter for wonder how the tenants upon them are able to pay any rent after supporting themselves and their families. In 1866 the number of farms of the value of £10 and under was estimated to be 365,866, and the average size throughout Ireland is placed at less