

should speak up and our Members stir themselves. We have the people, the places—the money is available—while we eat, drink, and make merry, and take no trouble about it. Who troubles his head about those wretched little beings—ugly, stunted, squalid, for the most part? They are powerless. We—the rich, educated, leisurely people—have but to exert ourselves to secure for these helpless ones the good things lying ready, only awaiting one organizing touch to combine into industrial hospital homes.

V.—*Comparison between Boarding-out and Pauper Schools.* By the late Miss Menella Smedley. Presented by the President.

[Read, 9th December, 1879.]

Note by the President.

AFTER I had considered in an address to the Statistical Society the question of the proper mode of dealing with the children whom destitution has brought into the care of the state, this paper was sent to me by the late Miss Menella Smedley. She had occupied herself much with the question, how girls in particular should be dealt with, and had assisted Mrs. Senior in her official inquiry as to the working of the District Pauper Schools. I think it would have been Miss Smedley's wish that her paper should be brought before those who are interested in the subject of it, and I have therefore thought it right to place it in the hands of the Council of the Statistical Society.

JOHN K. INGRAM.

I.—*Comparison between boarding-out and pauper schools.*

I think this comparison has never been fairly made. Three elementary points seem to me to have been confused or neglected.

(1) It is a truism that every system must have weak points. But the advocates of boarding-out have been addressed as if they claimed perfection, and as if the acknowledgment of a weak point was equivalent to a defeat.

(2) Systems should be considered as wholes, having strong and weak points, and not till all these have been examined and compared can a balance be struck. But the weak points of boarding-out have been compared with the strong points of the school system, and all the rest has been let alone.

(3) Boarding-out is tested, during its time and operation, by many independent visitors and inspectors whose business it is to discover defects and abuses by every possible means. The schools are absolutely closed against all inspection except by their own officials. When the children go out into the world, and the time for testing results arrives, it is possible to ascertain the actual position of every boarded-out child, so that the public can really know the histories of

those who have turned out ill. But a very large per-centage of pauper school children disappear—according to Mr. Tufnell, into “high positions”—according to probability and observation, for the most part into grievous degradation. And of the rest we have generally only their own testimony to their own success, after the age at which official inspection ceases.

A few words on each of these heads.

The weak point of boarding-out.

We who advocate the system desire nothing so much as that its weak point should be brought into the strongest light, and kept there, because we think this is the only method of guarding it effectually, We don't believe in the perfection of any machinery for moulding and finishing human beings. We fully admit that the tendency to relax vigilance is universal. The two weak points of boarding-out are: (1) its inferior power as regards intellectual teaching, and (2) the danger of neglect or ill-usage in individual cases. The first may, I think, be wholly disregarded. The education which is sufficient for a working man's child is sufficient for a pauper's child. Improve this as much as you can by all means. It is constantly open to and constantly receiving improvement. Against the second evil, Mr. Tufnell says it is impossible to guard. Here we differ. We say that the boarded-out child must be exposed to the same danger as the ordinary working man's child, and need be exposed to no more. We wish to have always the double inspection by a committee of visitors, and a paid government official. I think some orphans boarded out by charities are very insufficiently inspected. We will thankfully accept every device by which such inspections can be made more thorough and searching. We desire the utmost publicity for every real case of neglect or abuse, and the most stringent care in the selection of homes. Of course a child born and brought up in its own home is guarded from much danger by the natural instincts of affection and duty in the parents. These cannot be supplied to the boarded-out orphan. He is always at a disadvantage do what we will for him. But they are supplied, so far as is possible—firstly, by the sense of responsibility which every conscientious person feels who receives payment for work: this is unfortunately often very feeble and defective in the working classes: it is the duty of the committee to select persons in whom it exists, and to foster and develop it by every means in their power; secondly, by the affection which may grow up, and which generally does grow up, between foster child and foster parent; and thirdly, by the constant action, judicious inspection, and firm immediate action where evil is detected. The real cause of the danger lies in the fact that the homes and habits of the working classes are often very far from what they ought to be. This is a wide field on which we cannot enter now. But so long as this cause exists, so long will the weak point of boarding-out lie on this side, and require the most sedulous and unintermitting caution and care. It must not, however, be forgotten that abuses and neglects, differing rather in degree than in kind, do from time to time occur in the homes and schools of the happier classes who are not subjected to any supervision save their own, and who have

wealth and education on their side. When a case of bullying or cruelty, or precocious vice, is discovered in a great public school, what do we say to it? "Find out, if possible, how this evil arose, and do all that is necessary to prevent its recurrence." But we do not say: "Give up the freedom, and substitute the severe restraint of a French college," or the espionage of some seminaries, because we believe that on the whole free development tends to produce the best kind of character, these possible, and, as we think, preventable accidents notwithstanding. The answer is the same as in the case of boarding-out. The good which we obtain in this system, and which we cannot obtain in the other, does much more than counterbalance the dangers which we acknowledge, and against which we hope to guard. We don't worry and starve the soil of a garden incessantly for fear of weeds. If we did, we should have no flowers. We cultivate the flowers assiduously, and pluck up the weeds as fast as they show their heads, and are grateful to any one who will show us the best means of eradicating them. And this we believe is all that can be said for any human system whatsoever. *The condition of life is imperfection*; in getting rid of the possibility of evil you so far destroy the capability of growth, and as a consequence you dwarf and cramp, if you do not destroy the life itself. The neatest constitution that ever was framed upon paper falls to pieces, while that which was born of the needs of a nation will grow with its growth, revealing, as it grows, a thousand inconsistencies and anomalies which can be gradually harmonized and removed as it receives and returns the action of the national life.

II.—*Comparison between the strong and the weak points respectively of the two systems.*

Having acknowledged the weak points of boarding-out, we ask what are the weak points of the monster school system. Four may be named. (1) Contamination of permanent inmates by casuals perpetually coming and going. (2) Want of individual care, tenderness, and cultivation, leading to apathy, hardness, hopelessness, and temporary suppression of faults which work out with double force as soon as the pressure is withdrawn. (3) Mechanical completeness of system, and immensity of scale, leading to helplessness—"an existence without opportunities."* (4) Seclusion from the world, with all its consequences of cloisteral ignorance and incapacity, which are peculiarly injurious to those who are not to continue living in a cloister, but to live and work in the world of which they know nothing, and in which they are not suffered to form a tie or perceive a hope before they actually enter it.

It is only necessary to state these points in order to make manifest the inequality of the comparison. These evils are not accidents and abuses of the system, as the weak points of boarding-out are; they are principles inherent in the system, and inseparable from it. No provision is made against them, for they are not even acknowledged as dangers. And above all, no adequate enquiry is or can be

* See *Macmillan's Magazine*, November, 1874.

made into them. When a plan of inspecting the schools by persons not connected with their staff, nor interested in their success, but occupied solely with the endeavour to find out whether and how far the children are being injured in any of these several ways, shall be carried out, then, and then only, will it be possible to set the evils of the large schools beside those of boarding-out, and say which is the worst. But from the nature of the case such a plan is impracticable. No system on the scale of the large schools could endure it. And the gradual and indirect characteristics of some of the evils which we seek to expose would render it exceedingly difficult to detect them by any organised plan of observation. This is perhaps a strong argument against the system as it exists. But I am not now putting it forward as such. I only want those who are comparing the two systems to bear constantly in mind that they are not and cannot be making a fair and full comparison, and that all the disadvantages of the only method which they can, under present circumstances adopt, lie necessarily on the side of boarding-out, till we come to testing results. This brings us to the third head.

III.—*Comparison between the operations and results of the two systems.*

We have seen that comparison between their operations is for the present impossible. Of course it is conceivable that the monster school plan might be partially modified. Casuals might be separated. But all the advocates of the schools without exception pronounce this impossible. Breaking up into blocks of more manageable size might be tried, as at Norwich. This, which is a virtual abandonment of the principle, would be welcomed joyfully. It remains to be seen how far it is practicable. The admission of visitors under proper regulations to the infirmary and the play-ground, with the object of making friends with the children (each visitor with a certain small number, as in a district), and giving them occasional treats outside the school, might be allowed. This, the most humanising and helpful project for the benefit of the children which can (as I think) be devised so long as they continue in the schools, has hitherto been rigorously refused. It would not only tend to promote the improvement and happiness of the children during school-life, but it would secure intercourse of the best kind with the outer world, and, above all, it would provide something for affections to grow towards in that world. It is, I think, the only method by which a pauper servant girl could be led to look from the first to a good friend for help, and a respectable home for refuge, when she has become her own mistress.

All these hopes and helps being at present utterly forbidden, and comparison between the two systems during the time of training being at present impossible in any true sense, we come lastly to the comparison of results. This also has as yet never been fairly made. We have pointed out one serious inequality; we may indicate a few others. Till Mrs. Senior's enquiry, no attempt was ever made to ascertain the condition of persons trained in pauper schools, after the cessation of school supervision, by a body of independent observers. The only information accessible came from the school inspectors and

chaplains. Mrs. Senior points out that there are no statistics in existence by which her own can be checked. It is only necessary to refer to the chaplain's statistics,* endorsed and triumphantly adduced by Mr. Tufnell, to show their worthlessness. We also note the following points as to comparison of results.

(1) That Mr. Tufnell states that a large majority of those who disappear are among the best, while Mrs. Senior, following out the career of girls, finds that the last facts known about those who have disappeared are of the unsatisfactory kind.

(2) That so soon as the Rescue Society began to enquire into the previous lives of the girls who came under its notice, it has discovered that a considerable per-centage came from pauper schools.†

(3) That in a single year Mrs. Senior found that in a single workhouse, out of the five unions which supply Anerley School, five fallen girls, who had been trained at that school, while the chaplain stated that he had been unable to discover a single such case.

These facts show that the method of collecting evidence on behalf of the schools cannot be relied upon. From the nature of the case, it must always be an extremely difficult and delicate work to collect such evidence.‡ Mrs. Senior's attempt—the only attempt which has as yet been made—to test results fairly and thoroughly, is of course open to check and correction by any other method of enquiry that can be devised equally fair and thorough; but to check or correct it by such statistics as are at present accepted at the schools, is (I venture to think) manifestly out of the question.

Pauper and workhouse schools, girls and boys.

In what has here been said, the District Separate Schools alone have been mentioned, because they are avowedly a great advance upon the workhouse schools; therefore whatever can be proved against the one must apply with double force to the other. But it must be remembered the workhouse school proper exists in most country districts in England and (I believe) in all Irish districts whether town or country. The practical question is, therefore, perhaps, whether there shall be an attempt to amalgamate and centralize country workhouse schools, by substituting district schools, or whether, on the contrary, they shall be broken up into small orphanages and schemes for boarding-out. If casuals only could be left in the pauper schools, these might assume a reformatory character, and possibly some plan of compulsory schooling for a fixed term, in the case of the children of all families applying for admission to workhouses, might exercise a salutary check upon that scandalous system of coming and going at will, which is the scourge of workhouses and schools, and the surest supply of incessantly renewed pauperism. Should a system of this kind succeed in country districts, such success would certainly react upon the great centres, where Mrs. Senior's modifications and improvements, or others, might then be adopted. See close of Mrs. Senior's report especially for the plan by which girls of twelve years old and upwards, and infants, are placed together.

* *Boarding-out and Pauper Schools*, p. 23. † *Id.*, p. 18.

‡ *Id.* Note to Mrs. Senior's Report, p. 39.

Girls and boys.

My enquiries have only been about girls, and I do not presume to generalize from them as to the condition of the boys, who have many advantages under the present system, denied to the girls, and who would probably under no circumstances suffer so much from being treated in large masses. But I would draw attention to the striking autobiography published by Mr. Tufnell, on two grounds. First, that the development of its hero's character seems to have mainly arisen from the fact that he was singled out for special notice and care. This can of course befall very few where the numbers are counted by hundreds. Exceptional cases, whether in talent or in character, are likely always to lay hold on the advantages of the monster schools and possibly to rise higher than they would do under the boarding-out system. But we do not frame our general rules for the sake of exceptional cases, though we should desire to provide every facility for dealing with these when they arise, in the best possible manner. Secondly, this autobiography reveals abuses and horrors actually perpetrated in the workhouse schools, which could hardly be exceeded by the worst evils, charged but not proved, against boarding-out. And these abuses and horrors were the habit of the school, not exceptional crimes. *How were they found out?* Not by any system of inspection, whether from within or without. Not by the natural publicity which attends the boarding-out system. Only by the subsequent testimony of one of the sufferers. This seems to be a lesson against too profound a confidence in the humanity and wisdom of any schools, which are regulated, criticized, and described only by their own staff. We are very far from wishing to suggest that the like cruelties are perpetrated in any district school; but we think that great harshness and much neglect and violation of rules might exist undetected. *How was the bad sanitary condition of the district schools discovered?* Not by the staff or the system, but by a scandalous outbreak of a preventable disease (ophthalmia) which it has been a very difficult, and tedious, and expensive work to eradicate. This surely should not be lost sight of.

Lastly, one must needs say a word more upon the evils in the state and habits of cottage homes which are the real drawbacks to boarding-out, which are peculiarly apparent in Ireland. In an Irish cotten's family, chosen with ordinary care, one has no fear that a boarded-out child will suffer from any sort of harshness or unkindness. The easy tempers and affectionate hearts of the Irish peasantry are securities on this head, and I believe that a foster child would never fare worse than a child of the house. But how are the ways of the house to be improved? When a man lives on a hill-side, a quarter of a mile at least from everybody, with a small farm, and only himself and family to cultivate it, a very dark house of two or perhaps three rooms, with floors of bare earth badly levelled, with small means, great ignorance, and no aspirations, how can he be induced to keep either his house or person moderately clean? He has the pleasantest possible way of answering you; he agrees to all you say, and admits with perfect content anything that is delicately suggested against his

habits. But he wants his manure close at hand ; he does not care in the least about drainage ; he can't see dirt ; he has no objection to rags ; and who is to prevent him, as soon as your back is turned, from putting a sick calf to bed by his kitchen fire, or bringing a nervous pig in to be comforted ? His poultry are, as a matter of course, always running in and out—in what other way can warmth and shelter be provided for them ? He has not, and he cannot have, other farm buildings, except perhaps his byre, which is often insufficient, and which becomes a bed-room if his family enlarges. Is a very low point of civilization in all these important respects inseparable from Irish modes of country life ? I am a believer in indirect action as the best means of affecting human beings. I would put large windows into every cottage as the first step. Light is a severe questioner. Sanitary inspection, only now beginning, will, if wisely and firmly carried out, do much. School education will do something, though it is a wonderful thing that extremely learned people very often do not mind being extremely dirty. Perhaps we can never hope to see the living room of an Irish peasant as clean as the kitchen of an English labourer, who has no farm work to do, and no animals to cherish. But there might be great improvements merely in these respects ; and there can be no possible reason why bedrooms, clothes, and persons, should not be scrupulously attended to in all, as I know they are in some cases. I hope for much from house to house visitation, which I presume to think hardly receives sufficient attention in Ireland, where, in country districts, the common practice is for the man to come to the "big house" (whether landlord's or parson's) for what he wants, except of course in case of sickness. I believe that to visit the home frequently is the best possible means of influencing the family habits. If you pay three visits in the year, and make a suggestion for improvement at every visit, you can scarcely expect it to be received as a friendly hint, arising naturally out of friendly intercourse. But if three suggestions come in the course of thirty visits, there is all the force of the twenty-seven visits of pure kindness to back them. Of course this system is somewhat laborious, and implies a good deal of apparently wasted time. But every district visitor finds that if she is really to become the friend, helper, and adviser of a family, she must waste (apparently) a good deal of time in *mere intercourse*. There is no other way. And the end, if attainable, would compensate for any amount of time spent in attaining it.

I cannot help believing that a thorough system of friendly visiting at unexpected times, such as ought to be the rule of boarding-out, whether in the case of pauper or "Protestant orphan" children, would gradually exercise a most salutary influence on the homes and habits of the people. Till these are considerably improved, both in Ireland and England, I think that the main difficulty in the way of the boarding-out system must always be that of finding a sufficient number of really satisfactory homes, and I am sure that it is scarcely possible to be too stringent on the points of selection and supervision. Small orphanages, such as are now beginning to multiply in England, are the best substitutes for family life, and perhaps may always be necessary supplements to the system.