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PRACTICAL RESULTS OF THE BOARDING-OUT SYSTEM IN ENGLAND.

[Issued by the Howard Association, London.]

THE moral and physical contamination resulting from bringing up children in workhouses amongst a promiscuous crowd of paupers, including thieves, vagrants and prostitutes, is being gradually diminished by the erection of institutions named "Union District Schools," where the juvenile paupers are separated from the adults. These schools present a favourable contrast to the old system, especially where under such excellent management and supervision as those near Reading, and those of Sutton, in Surrey, Swinton, near Manchester, Forest Gate, near London, and some others.

Nevertheless, even the best of these District Schools are open to some serious objections; for, however careful their supervision, they congregate the children and orphans of the virtuous poor with the degraded offspring of the vicious and criminal classes. Their inmates are also, even under the best of circumstances, debarred from "*God's own method of training—that of family life*," and are educated in a manner by no means the most suited for their preparation for, and gradual dispersion amongst, the ranks of honest industry, to say nothing of the stigma of "workhouse brat" which might follow them on discharge.

In a large "District School" of, say 500 children, how can the kindest of managers provide for the individual training, the home sympathies, and the care in sickness, which are to be enjoyed even in humble cottage homes under the friendly supervision of philanthropic lady visitors, clergymen and others? In one such district school lately inspected (one of the best of its class), a number of sick children, of about five years old, were found in the "infirmary," sitting in rows on unbacked forms before a fire. With no toys or amusements, the poor little things were moping drearily with drooping heads, raised shoulders, and listless, heavy eyes—a dismal sight. Even amongst the healthy portion of the school, a large number of children were afflicted with weak eyes, whilst a general aspect of spiritless and unchildlike dulness seemed to pervade their ranks. (During their singing exercise, when "The Orphan's Hymn" was given out, beginning

"Fatherless, motherless, lonely, I am,"

tears were seen trickling down the cheeks of several of the older ones.) This institution is under the care of kind-hearted and efficient caretakers and teachers. But they cannot, with such a multitude, effect the impossible.

The guardians of some Unions, availing themselves of the legal permission to pay (from the rates) for the boarding-out of pauper children in cottage homes,* have found very favourable results to ensue, in addition to a saving to the ratepayers of nearly £4 per child per annum, or £40 on every ten children so placed out. The average cost for food, clothing and education of the boarded-out children is £12 10s., that of each in the district schools is nearly £17. (Five

* N.B.—METROPOLITAN GUARDIANS.—To encourage the London Guardians to board-out their children, the "Metropolitan Poor Amendment Act" of 1869, enacted, as regards unions and single parishes in the London district: "THE COSTS OF THE MAINTENANCE AND INSTRUCTION of orphan or deserted children, placed out by the Guardians of any parish or union, with the consent of the Poor Law Board, SHALL BE REPAID to the Guardians FROM THE METROPOLITAN COMMON POOR FUND."

shillings a week for the one, and 6s. 6d. for the other. But, reckoning the cost of buildings, salaries, teaching, &c., the expense in District Schools is nearer 10s. per week.) The following are a few specimens of many recent testimonies :—

CUMBERLAND.

THE HIGH SHERIFF OF CUMBERLAND (GEORGE MOORE, Esq.) informs Mr. Francis Peek, of London (in a letter dated Feb. 15th, 1872.) “Two years ago I introduced this subject to the Boards of the several Unions in Cumberland, and went round to enquire personally, and see how far it might be possible that thoroughly trustworthy people could be found to take charge of these poor children, so that they might be removed from the contaminating influences of our workhouses. I am now happy to be in a position to state that these efforts were most successful, and that now the several Unions, more particularly those of Carlisle, Wigton and Cockermouth, have a large number of children who are boarded out under the system; *and it is working most admirably in this county.* I sincerely trust that it may be extended throughout the Kingdom.”

This letter was accompanied by a bundle of vouchers in the form of quarterly reports of schoolmasters, relieving officers, and others, who had regularly visited the children in the homes of their foster parents. (These Cumberland children are boarded out *in their own parishes*, and by their own Unions, and are not sent to a distance—being already in the country.)

SOMERSET.

THE REV. G. H. FAGAN, Rector of Rodney Stoke, writes to Mr. Peek, (January 27th, 1872). “Ten children from the Bristol Union are boarded out under the Committee of which I am Secretary. Experience has confirmed me in the conviction that no greater boon can be conferred on these poor children than the introducing them thus into family life, and bringing them up under home influences. In my own cases the children are most fortunate in their foster parents who literally treat and view them as adopted children.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND SURREY.

THE GUARDIANS of ST. GEORGE'S UNION, HANOVER SQUARE, LONDON, acting under the advice of some of their colleagues and in particular of COLONEL the HON. W. E. SACKVILLE WEST, the HON. W. W. VERNON, and COLONEL FREMANTLE, having sent a number of their children to country homes in Bucks and Surrey, subsequently sent a Deputation (in 1872) to examine into their condition and treatment. These gentlemen (Hon. W. W. Vernon and Col. Fremantle) report favourably of *every* case, both as to the condition of the homes, the kindness of the foster parents and the supervision of the regular local visitors, who include the Rev. W. Trevelyan and Lady, of Calverton, Bucks, Rev. R. H. Hooper, of Nash, Rev. D. McKenzie and Lady, of Wolverton, Mrs. Charles Buxton, of Fox Warren, Surrey, Miss Cazenove of Cobham, and Miss Onslow of Ripley.

The Deputation remark of a little Kate, aged five :—“She was, when first boarded out, very delicate, but has rapidly improved. The child showed considerable alarm lest we might take her away.” Of two others, Johnny and Rebecca, aged five and seven, they say—“Both those children, though they were suffering from skin diseases when they first arrived, are now quite well and very happy. They go regularly to school. Their foster parents say they love these children as though they were their own.” Of Eliza and another under the care of a widow, it is stated—“Mrs. O., having recentl

lost her only son, feels these children a comfort to her." Of another little girl, they mention—"She was suffering from skin disease on her arrival, but is now completely recovered, and is attending school regularly."

MISS EMMA WICKHAM and MISS JULIA WICKHAM (Holmwood-Parsonage, Dorking), write to Miss M. J. Catlin (1872):—"In each case the orphans have been received warmly by the foster parents, and treated as if they were their own children. They attend school regularly and seem perfectly happy. They are visited frequently, but not at regular intervals, by the ladies who have taken charge of them."

REV. C. J. PERCIVAL, of STONY STRATFORD, writes to Miss Catlin (1872):—"The thirteen children have in every instance greatly improved in health, and are for the most part apt scholars. The foster parents are becoming much attached to them."

In so many cases, the Boarding Out of children especially from *Town Unions*, effects a cure of the bad eyes and skin diseases which are so common amongst this class.

N.B.—The visitation of the cottages by the Clergy, Ladies, and occasionally by Guardians, &c., tends greatly to promote the *improvement of the dwellings of the poor*—another important means of social usefulness.

LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE.

THE VEN. EDWARD R. JOHNSON, ARCHDEACON OF CHESTER (of Northenden Rectory) in a letter to Miss M. J. Catlin, Jan. 15th, 1872, writes of two children boarded out in his parish from the Charlton Workhouse. "They seemed at first to be actually deficient in intellect. In one case the foster mother actually reported to me that the child appeared to be imbecile. In a short time, however, all this cleared away and both are now healthy and intelligent, as well as most useful to the parents in nursing, in household work," &c. The Archdeacon adds—"Speaking of the system generally, it cannot be doubted but that it is most desirable that it should be adopted universally."

REV. CANON WORTHY, Secretary of EUXTON (Roman Catholic) Boarding Out Committee, CHORLEY, writes to Mr. Peek, 1872:—

"The Boarding Out System is an invaluable blessing to the orphan child."

R. E. STOLTERFOHT, Esq., of Sandown Park, WAVERTREE, writes (1872):—

"The system has recommended itself more and more to our approval. The improvement both in the health and intelligence of the children being in each case very great, the foster parents evincing real interest and affection for the children. One singular circumstance was that *all* the children, on reception, suffered from weak eyes, or chronic head-colds." He adds, "the Guardians—in this case, Liverpool Select Vestry—have all along met us cheerfully and liberally, their clerk (Mr. Hagget) sparing no trouble to remove any difficulty."

It may be here noticed that some Boarding Out Committees in various counties complain grievously of the refusals and delays experienced from guardians to whom they have applied for children. Some Committees, anxious to devote themselves to the work, have given up the attempt in consequence, having waited long and in vain, without receiving a single child.

Some others complain of the needless stringency of some of the regulations. Thus a clergyman writes:—"A lodger in a cottage, as

such, need not be an objection. A lodging-house, of course, is so. Again, a man being occasionally or even every alternate week, on night work, need not *always* be an obstacle."

WESTMORLAND.

MISS FRANCES OGDEN, of SAWREY, writes (1872) to Miss M. J. Catlin, that after a number of refusals and delays their Committee obtained some children from a distant town union, and reports:—

"The plan works well. The children are happy and improved; mutual affection seems to exist between the foster parents and their children." Speaking of a visit to a cottage home, destined for a little child of two years old, expected from Liverpool Union, Miss Ogden says, "The love was already there, for a little chair and a little doll were provided for the child, and a rail had been put up for fear the little one should fall over a step." (The cost of each child at Sawrey is 3s. 6d. a week for board, 10s. per quarter for clothing, 8s. per year for schooling, 10s. per year for medical care—total, £12 per annum.)

It further appears, from the reports received, that the Boarding Out system also greatly facilitates the *religious* care and oversight of the children, whilst their attendances at church or chapel, and at school, are well looked after. The benefit of these advantages is enhanced by the valuable home sympathies, and individualising influences which are incompatible with the massing of children in large district schools, however well managed; a system also at variance with the natural and divine method, inasmuch as no official machinery of governing boards, however excellent, or of congregated bands, however well disciplined, can supply the moral agencies implied by *His* plan who "setteth the solitary in families."

* * * Pauper children may only be Boarded Out at a *distance* from their own Unions with the consent of the "Local Government Board" in London, and any Committee undertaking their oversight must obtain the sanction of that central Board. But Guardians are at liberty to board out children in their *own* parishes or Unions at once. And the Committees formed for the oversight of *these* children need not wait for any other sanction than that of the Guardians of their own Union. It is most desirable that no children should, in any case, be boarded out, unless a suitable Local Committee (chiefly of Ladies) is willing to undertake (and report) periodically the oversight of each child in its cottage home, and also to see that it is regularly sent to a day-school. The Guardians are authorised to pay for clothing, schooling, and medical attendance, in addition to the usual sum of about 3s. 6d. per week for board. Suitable homes may be found amongst small shopkeepers, married labourers of long-known good character, and married servants from respectable families.

NOTE.—In order to aid philanthropic persons, especially Ladies and Boards of Guardians, in this work, by furnishing them with the requisite information as to the best mode of procedure, and by bringing them into mutual communication for sending and receiving children to be boarded out, the Howard Association (*whose operations are chiefly directed to questions of Prison Discipline and Criminal Law*), have, at the urgent request of persons deeply interested in this subject, formed a Special Committee for the purpose (FRANCIS PEEK, Esq., CHAIRMAN), and appointed a Ladies' Corresponding Secretary, Miss Mary J. Catlin, 17, Woodville Road, Stoke-Newington Green, London, N., to whom communications and inquiries may be addressed.