

VI.—*Statistics on Points raised by Mrs. O'Connell's and Miss Smedley's Papers.* By W. Neilson Hancock, LL.D.

[Read, 9th December, 1879.]

As I withdrew a Poor-law paper on the list to make way for Miss Smedley's paper, I wish to give only so much of the statistics as bears on the points raised by Mrs. O'Connell's and Miss Smedley's papers.

With reference to Mrs. O'Connell's suggestion of combining boarding-out with institutional training after twelve year's of age, it is right to mention that her plan has been successfully tried in Ireland by the Protestant Orphan Society. So far back as 1857, an Assistant-Commissioner of Endowed Schools reported :

“The orphans adopted by the Society are placed in farmers' houses throughout the County Wicklow, and educated in the scriptural schools of the locality. As soon as they attain the age of twelve or thirteen they are removed from the country to the Society's House, Percy-place, Dublin, where they receive a more extended education, and are also employed in taking a share in the labour connected with the domestic concerns of the establishment. After a short sojourn in the house they are apprenticed, as opportunity offers. Some of them, about one-fourth of the total number, are returned to their friends.”

So Mrs. O'Connell's proposition has in favour of it the experience of half a century of the largest Protestant Orphan Society.

For dealing with the case of cripples, like those relieved at the Cripple's Home at Bray, the Irish law is still behind the English law, as the clause of “Poor Afflicted Persons, Ireland, Bill, 1878,” that would have secured equality in this respect was struck out in the passage of the Bill through Parliament; so that while guardians can send children to Cripples' Homes in England, in the same way as they send deaf, dumb, and blind, they cannot send cripples to homes in Ireland.

With respect to the extent to which children are relieved in work-houses in England, Scotland, and Ireland, the following are the latest figures :—

ENGLAND AND WALES (1st July, 1879).			
	Indoor.	Outdoor.	Total.
Men,	55,778	111,995	167,773
Women,	52,154	280,539	332,693
Children,	52,113	212,127	264,240
Vagrants unclassified, ...	7,665	—	7,665
Total, England, ...	167,710	604,661	772,371
For population equal to Ireland,	} 37,269	134,369	171,638

SCOTLAND (14th May 1879).			
Total Scotland, ...	9,140	93,759	102,899
For population equal to Ireland, ...	13,710	140,638	154,348
IRELAND (10th May, 1879).			
Number Relieved, ..	50,614	39,768	90,382
<i>Less Relieved</i> than Scotland, ..	—	100,870	63,966
than England, ...	—	96,601	81,256
<i>More Indoor Relief</i> than England, ...	12,345	—	—
than Scotland, ...	36,904	—	—

Of this excess of indoor relief in Ireland, the children form a large proportion. If we take a year when the number receiving indoor relief was the same as at the commencement of last summer (10th May), the number of able-bodied children out of 50,000 inmates in 1869 was 14,637 children under fifteen. If we add to these, 700 for those between fifteen and sixteen, we get 15,337 *healthy* children. The English figures included both healthy and unhealthy.

If we deduct 1,200 for unhealthy children from the English number (11,580) last summer for Irish population, we get 10,380 healthy children under sixteen receiving indoor relief, or about 5,000 less than the number being trained in workhouses in Ireland of the same age and in an equal population.

The boarding-out system for children is much more systematically pursued in Scotland, and there are consequently a much smaller number of children reared in workhouses in Scotland. The entire inmates of workhouses, adult and children, which are not distinguished in the Scotch statistics, being for the Irish amount of population only 13,710, or less than the healthy children in Irish workhouses, 14,637.

Mr. Skelton, the Secretary of the Poor-law Board of Scotland, states in his work on boarding-out published in 1876:—

“The system of boarding-out pauper children, which has been extensively in operation in Scotland for more than a quarter of a century, has been attended, so far as the children are concerned, with most beneficial results.”

The Irish system, while differing from the English and Scotch, is not in accordance with the latest results of charity organization in America, for the State Charities' Aid Association of New York has induced the legislature there, so far back as 1875, to remove all children from poor-houses.

In England the latest information is that of a committee of the Leeds Board of Guardians, last spring, which visited the very large schools of Manchester and of one of the London unions of the class Miss Smedley refers so much to. They visited cottage homes in the north of England and in London, and they visited children boarded-out at Edinburgh and Glasgow. Whilst approving of both the boarding-out system and the cottage homes, they recommended the boarding-out system, not only on account of its merits, but also because it involved no expense of buildings for starting the system.

To these dry details I will only add one quotation from the last report of Miss Preusser, of Windermere, the most successful organiser of boarding-out in England :—

“ In conclusion, Miss Preusser can only repeat again and again what she has said in all reports on boarding-out: try the work at once. Take a poor, lonely child; place it in a good, respectable family in the country; befriend the child; love the child; and surely the trouble and care will be amply rewarded. Much has been *written* in the daily papers about the poor children, but not enough has been *done*. Oh! if only the coldness and indifference would melt, and many hearts feel more love for those thousands of lonely, miserable children, who might so easily, and with so little trouble, be made truly happy. Boarding-out would soon spread and be everywhere introduced. During the last two years, it has made much progress: still, the ladies of England should be more active to serve their country by taking orphans under their special, loving care, and so diminish the growing evils of pauperism, and increase the number of really good servants.”

The Hon. Mrs. Lowther, Amptill Park, Bedfordshire, writes to Miss Preusser :—

“ I began the boarding-out system three years ago, and have now established four committees in our neighbourhood, which are all working with great success, and we have between 30 and 40 children in five different villages. The children are all perfectly happy and the foster-parents much attached to them. Although the children seemed very delicate when they first came, they have none of them been ill. In every case, the foster-parents have done their duty faithfully, and in several cases have displayed unlooked for kindness, even generosity: indeed, much good feeling has been called forth on the part of the foster-parents by the fact of friendless children being trusted to their care. . . . Our children come from Whitechapel, Hampstead, and Clapham. . . . I can certify that the whole system of boarding-out has here proved most satisfactory. Besides the committees started by me, there are now others in Bedfordshire, which are equally successful.”

It appears from what Mrs. Lowther states, and from Miss Preusser's case, as the orphans under her care are generally brought from London to Windermere, that the English guardians often adopt Mrs. O'Connell's views, and send the children to other distant unions where suitable families and suitable charitable supervision of ladies can be found, just as the Protestant orphans are sent out of the Dublin unions to the County of Wicklow, and especially to parishes where the clergyman's wife or daughters take an interest in the children.

Now why should Irish guardians be restrained by general order of the Irish Local Government Board, or by Imperial statutes, establishing a different limit of age from what exists in England, from

adopting Mrs. O'Connell's advice in following such good English and Irish precedents ?

I think therefore an irresistible case is made out for having extended to Ireland the English law and practice as to the boarding-out pauper children and care of helpless cripples in Cripples' Homes, like the one at Bray, which we owe to the active philanthropy of Mrs. Sullivan, an example so thoroughly appreciated by Mrs. O'Connell. I think that Irish guardians should have all the powers of discharging their duty as administrators of state charity to these helpless classes that English guardians now have, and that the principles of the state charity should not, so far as they are concerned, be different in one part of the United Kingdom from what it is in another.

VII.—*Bright Clauses of the Irish Land Act.* By J. H. Edge, Esq.

[Read, 27th January, 1880.]

I MAY at the outset plainly state that I do not intend to travel over the whole ground occupied by the subject which I have chosen for my text. I take it that all reasonable people and a large number of the unreasonable people in Ireland agree in wishing success to the "Bright Clauses," however much they may differ in their views as to the best mode of bringing them into successful working operation. The discussions with respect to them seem to separate into two branches—the first and most popular, the financial; the second, the legal. The first, embracing amongst others, the vexed questions of the extent to which advances ought to be made by government, and of the constitution of a board to buy up estates, has given rise to most controversy, and is, I freely admit, the most important branch. The second comprises the restrictions on alienation imposed by the Irish Land Act of 1870, the simplification of tenure, and in general all the legal difficulties surrounding the project. This second branch of the discussions on the Bright Clauses has been mostly regarded as one involving tiresome technical details; and though it has evoked many valuable opinions and suggestions has certainly not been brought so prominently before the public or dealt with so exhaustively as the financial question. I shall confine my remarks this evening exclusively to the legal aspect of the Bright Clauses, trusting, however, that I may elicit criticisms from the non-legal as well as the legal members of our Society.

The 44th and 46th sections of the Land Act of 1870 prohibit alienation, assignment, sub-division, and sub-letting, without the consent of the Commissioners of the Board of Works, during the continuance of the charge created for the purpose of discharging the government loan, under the penalty of forfeiture.

First as to alienation. The law officers of the Crown have advised that alienation includes testamentary dispositions, so the legislature,