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THE

ABERDEEN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS

CONTRASTED WITH

IRISH WORKHOUSES:

FAMILY TIES BEING CHERISHED IN THE SCHOOLS,
AND VIOLATED IN THE WORKHOUSES.

A Paper

READ BEFORE THE DUBLIN STATISTICAL SOCIETY, MONDAY, 19TH NOV. 1860.

BY W. NEILSON HANCOCK, LL.D.

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THE
ABERDEEN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS,
&c.

GENTLEMEN,

About two years since I had the honour to read before this Society, a paper on the importance of substituting the family system of rearing orphan children for the system now pursued in our work-houses.

In consequence of reading that paper, some kind friends placed in my hands some information as to the Aberdeen Industrial Feeding Schools, as affording strong evidence of Scotch experience in corroboration of the views I had put forward. I proceeded to collect all the information I could as to these schools, and, as the treatment of pauper children under our Poor Law is still an unsettled question, I thought that the Society would take an interest in hearing the results of a very important social experiment, carried out for some years on a large scale, especially when the information admits of such immediate and practical application amongst ourselves.

The views on the treatment of orphans and children generally which I brought before the Society in 1855, and again in 1859, and which, on both occasions, were received with great favour, have since then made great progress.

In the last session of Parliament the Poor Law question came under the consideration of the legislature. The bill of the Chief Secretary and Attorney-General for Ireland contained a clause giving guardians a power to put orphans and deserted children out to nurse or otherwise until the age of five years. This was a large concession. It was, however, followed by a still more important one. In the House of Commons, Mr. Pope Hennessy (27th July, 1860), proposed that the age up to which children should be put out should be twelve years. This was supported by Mr. Cogan, Mr. Brady, Mr. Magan, Colonel Dickson, Mr. Maguire, and Colonel Dunne, and was carried by a majority of 71 to 10; on a subsequent day when the question was re-considered, by a majority of 100 to 8. In the House of Lords the clause was thrown out, on the grounds that it was unsuitable as a mere continuance bill; but this was only done in a narrow majority of 34 to 30—the latter number being in favour of the clause, even in a continuance bill. However, a large part of the principle which I had been contending for has received the sanction of the House of Commons; and, as the public mind each year becomes better informed on the subject, we may anticipate that some clause in favour of the pauper children will pass in the ensuing Session.

The really important point is, that the change about to take place may be as perfect as possible ; and that the plan allowed to be adopted may be in accordance with precedents that have succeeded, and may not be cut down or curtailed with restrictions, founded, not on observed facts, but merely conceded to satisfy parties opposed to any change on the subject.

The chief point of contrast between the Aberdeen Industrial Feeding Schools and the workhouses is the importance which the promoters of the schools attach to the maintenance of the family ties as an essential and fundamental element in rearing poor children ; whilst the workhouse, as you are all aware, is founded on an almost total disruption of all family ties ; and where the workhouse system is rigidly enforced, it makes this rearing of children without family ties the condition of nearly all the pauper children in the land. It becomes, therefore, a very grave question, to consider which of these systems,—so diametrically opposed,—is the correct one. Whatever compromises may happen from the exigencies of legislation, in social science, as in other sciences, principles are true and exact, and our duty is to learn them and conform to them ; neither individuals nor nations can disregard them with impunity.

The real question as to pauper children comes down to this.—Shall the maintenance of family ties be recognised as a fundamental principle of relief to children,—or shall we persevere in separating every child that requires our aid from every family tie as far as we have power to separate them ?

Now, I want to bring before you what the promoters of the Aberdeen Industrial Feeding Schools and those who followed them, think on this subject. Before doing so, it is necessary to trace the progress of these schools, to see what weight the experience of the promoters ought to have with us.

The information about the Aberdeen Industrial Schools to which I am about to direct your attention is all derived from the publications of a distinguished Scotch philanthropist, Mr. Thomson, of Banchory, near Aberdeen. As to the position he occupies in his own country, I may mention that when the British Association met at Aberdeen, in 1859, with H. R. H. Prince Albert as president, Mr. Thomson was selected to dispense the hospitalities of the city to the president, and it was at his residence Prince Albert stayed when attending the Association.

The Industrial Feeding Schools are a modern institution, more recent than the workhouse system. The first was founded in Aberdeen in October, 1841, less than twenty years ago. The founder was Sheriff Watson who holds the judicial position of Sheriff of Aberdeen,—of the same rank in that country as Recorder or Assistant-Barrister in Ireland, or County Judge in England. “His attention,” we are told, “was early and painfully drawn to the multitudes of children brought before him guilty of petty offences, and for whom he could do nothing but pronounce over and over again the customary sentence of short imprisonment. Sick at heart of this miserable and profitless work, he gradually worked out his idea of preventing instead of punishing their crimes. When he had well matured his plans, and fixed his principles of action, he

obtained the pecuniary and personal aid of a very few zealous friends, who entered cordially into his proposals."

"It was ascertained that in June, 1841, there were in Aberdeen 280 children under fourteen, who maintained themselves professedly by begging, but chiefly by petty thefts, of whom 77 had been committed to prison during the previous twelve months for various offences. Most of these children went out to beg, on the ostensible ground, whether true or false, that they had no other means of procuring their daily food. It was very plain that while they continued to pursue this mode of life there was no prospect of their becoming useful members of society. To reclaim them,—to put their feet, as it were, on the first step to the path of usefulness,—it was obvious that any institution which was really to benefit them must provide them with food, with training in some industrious employment, and instruction, especially religious; for these three things were all required to be furnished to them in order to have a hope of reclaiming them.

"The institution did not profess to clothe the children, but by the kindness of benevolent persons, who take an interest in them, there is generally a small store of old clothes at hand, from which the most destitute are supplied.

"The attendance at the schools for the first fourteen years was wholly and entirely voluntary; subsequently they grew so much in public estimation that Acts of Parliament were passed in successive sessions, called Dunlop's and Palmerston's Acts (17 & 18 Vic., c. 74; 19 & 20 Vic., c. 28, and 21 & 22 Vic., c. 48) by which magistrates in Scotland are empowered to send vagrant children to reformatory or industrial schools, unless security be given for good behaviour. The parents may be compelled to contribute to the support of the children.

"The success which had attended the boys' school of industry soon led to the establishment of a school for girls of the same class of society. It was opened on the 5th June, 1843. The immediate superintendence of it was at first undertaken by six ladies, and the committee of management was afterwards extended to twenty-four, who, guided by high Christian principle, gave much time and labour to this important work, and under their care it prospered even beyond their expectations."

This feature of having the girls entirely under ladies presents a marked feature of difference between the industrial schools and workhouses.

"After the boys' and girls' school had been for some time established, it became evident that they were not adequate to accomplish all that was requisite for the outcast population of Aberdeen. Much as they had done, there was still a portion of the population which they had not reached, or which was not disposed to avail itself of the advantages they provided. Another institution, in some respects of a lower grade, was required; and the same untiring activity which had devised and carried out the original industrial schools had now the honour of establishing the necessary addition to them.

"The class for whom the new institution was designed was

children, who either lived by petty depredations on the public, or who, though not committing any positive crime, supported themselves as beggars, and thus prepared themselves for a life of misery and crime."

"The children brought to this school were far below those who attended the other two institutions, low as they appeared to be when the schools were first opened; and the scene of filth, disease and misery, exhibited even in the school itself, was such as would speedily have driven from the work all merely sentimental philanthropists. Those who undertake this work must have strong sound principle to influence them, else they will soon turn away from it in disgust.

"The school went on prosperously; it soon excited public interest; funds flowed in, and, what was most gratifying, the working classes took a lively interest in it; and while the wealthier inhabitants of Aberdeen contributed, during the year, about £150 for its support, the working men collected, and handed over to the committee no less than £250."

The character and amount of this subscription shows how completely the industrial schools have succeeded in doing that in which the workhouses entirely failed—securing the cordial sympathy and cooperation of the working classes. The experience of these schools led to the establishment of a fourth institution, a child's asylum. The formation of these successive institutions, in one city, not larger than Belfast, is strong evidence of the public confidence in the principles involved in their management. Their spread, however, was not confined to Aberdeen, for Mr. Thomson tells us "they rapidly spread over the country, and have now for some years been among its recognised, and most valued institutions. Dundee opened its school in 1846, Edinburgh and Glasgow in 1847; and there is now at least one in almost every town of importance in Scotland. The example now rapidly spread into England. Manchester had schools in 1845 or 1846; Birmingham, 1846; Newcastle and Bristol, 1847; Liverpool and York, 1848; and now they are spread over the whole country." I may add, too, that they have received Parliamentary sanction; by the Scotch statutes to which I have referred guardians of the poor are there enabled to contract with the managers of the schools for the support of children chargeable to the poor-rates.

In speaking of these schools, which have acquired such favour in Scotland, I should observe that they seem to have been managed with the characteristic prudence of Scotchmen as to money matters. Thus, in the boys' school of industry, when first started in 1841-'2, the nett cost of each boy was £7 12s. 2d. a-year; in 1845-'6, £4 9s. 11d.; in 1850-'1, £3 4s. 1d.; in 1855-6, £3 1s. 7d. In Sheriff Watson's girls' school the cost was, in 1856, £3 13s. The girls' labour produced little, as they were employed in making and mending their own clothes. In the female industrial school the cost in 1851 was £3 8s. In the juvenile school of industry, where a more troublesome class and a younger class were kept, the cost was, on an average of ten years, £4.

Now, according to the estimate I gave in my former paper, the cost of supporting orphans by the Protestant Orphan Society was

about £6, and the cost of children in the workhouse was upwards of £7 each; or, according to last report of the Poor Law Commissioners, 1860, £9 18s. 6d. If we take the four industrial schools of Aberdeen, at £3 1s. 7½d., £3 13s., £3 8s. and £4, this gives an average of about £3 10s. 6d., or about half the cost of children in Irish workhouses in 1856, and only one-third of the cost last year.

It is easy to account for this difference, for it is cheaper to leave poor children with their mothers than to pay other mothers to take charge of them, on the Protestant Orphan Society plan. Again, it is cheaper to let children lodge with their mothers, or with some other poor woman, than to build workhouses and district schools, with a staff of officers,—master, matron, porter, &c., &c.,—for their accommodation.

From what I have already said, I think it must be admitted that what the Scotch philanthropists (who have worked out such a great system as the industrial schools) have to say as to the maintenance or breaking of family ties in rearing children, is worthy of our most attentive consideration.

I will proceed to lay before you some extracts from Mr. Thomson's work, in which he conveys these opinions. "Industrial schools," he observes, "differ altogether from hospitals or charity boarding schools, in the circumstance of not furnishing lodging, except in special cases."

"The evil of hospitals lies not in the management of them, which is often as good as it can be, but in the system itself, which the best management can hardly cure. What can be more preposterous than to find the finest edifices in our towns erected, and maintained at vast cost, for the education of the poorest children of the community, or at least of those whose parents are supposed to be so poor as to be unable to educate them? Taken from want and penury, they are placed at once in the midst of abundance; food, clothing, and lodging, of the best description, are supplied to them, without an effort on their part. Here they are kept for years, carefully taught the common branches of education, and then turned out into the world to make their way in it, without the possibility of having learned a single practical lesson fitted to enable them to struggle successfully against the competition, hardship, and privation, which they must encounter. Such a system is precisely analagous to that of a farmer who would raise his crops in the artificial heat and warmth of a hotbed, and then transplant them to the open field to encounter the winds and frosts of winter. Doubtless his plants would flourish wonderfully in the hotbed, just as children do in the hospital; but both, being devoid of the strength and firmness required for their permanent place of growth, this mode of rearing either children or vegetables must turn out altogether unprofitable to the community.

"Family ties are the foundation laid by the Creator for the good order of society; whatever tends to break them up, to separate children from parents, brothers from brothers, and sisters from sisters, must be evil."

Having thus spoken of charity boarding schools,—or hospitals, as they are generally called in Scotland,—Mr. Thomson then proceeds to apply the same remarks to workhouses:—

"Everything that has now been expressed on hospital training applies, and perhaps with greater force, against the plan of training pauper children in poorhouses and unions. They may be taught any amount of knowledge, but they can never be educated."

In the paper which I read before this Society in 1859, I quoted the opinions of the promoters of the Protestant Orphan Society, as showing the almost unanimous opinions of the clergy of the Established Church in Ireland in favour of the family system. I quoted, too, the report of St. Bridget's Orphanage, showing that the Roman Catholic Bishops had expressed their approval of the same principle. From Scotland we have now the evidence of the most earnest members of both the Presbyterian churches on the same point. For one of the girls' schools in Aberdeen is managed by ladies connected with the Church of Scotland, and the other by those connected with the Free Church. The views of these ladies as to the effects of the industrial schools on the homes and families of the pupils, of which they have been eye-witnesses, are no less striking than what I have already quoted :—

"For, *without breaking the family tie*, the child is permitted during the day to receive a sound, practical, religious education ; allowing the parents to pursue, without interruption and without anxiety, their respective avocations ; and to carry home at night, for the solace and improvement of the family circle, the influence of the school training ; and thus strengthening and confirming the natural affections, without exciting any feelings of dependence or degradation ; because, although the child is fed and educated at the expense of the school, she gives, in return for these benefits, all the labour of which she is capable."

"In the working of the girls' school, much positive good has resulted from the children returning to their homes at night ; and still more from the visits of the managers and teachers to the homes of the pupils. The benefits which result from a little kindness are almost incredible. A kind word, a kind look, to the miserable outcast labouring under want and privation, and especially if accompanied by deeds of substantial kindness to her offspring, not only excites gratitude in her bosom, but instantly conveys to her a feeling of self-respect—a desire not to be unworthy of kindness ; and this may prove the first step in the progress of moral reform, to be, however, in time superseded by the implantation of higher and holier principles in the heart."

What a contrast is here to our Poor-law system, which applies to nearly every child and every widow the separation of family ties, and the workhouse test, specially devised as a check upon the indolence and demoralization of men.

In their enlightened benevolence, the Scotch philanthropists attach so much importance to the family tie that they not only do not break up the natural ties where they exist, but where by calamity children have been left deserted or orphans, or where the parents are utterly depraved, they endeavour to place young persons so afflicted where new family affections may grow up.

Mr. Thomson says,—

"Cases do occur, though rarely, where the parents are so utterly

depraved that they value their offspring only for the sake of the wages of sin which they may daily bring them, and then it is needful to separate them ; but it is not needful to shut them up in an hospital or a poorhouse on this account. Let them still enjoy the advantages of family intercourse by boarding them with respectable persons, and not more than two or three in one house ; and the same plan ought to be followed with orphan and deserted children, in place of gathering them in crowds into poorhouses. Every town and village will furnish abundance of suitable parties willing to receive such inmates, and thankful for moderate remuneration."

These are precisely the views which I brought before this Society two years since, in advocating the importance of substituting the family system of rearing orphan children for the system pursued in our workhouses. The Scotch philanthropists have also carried into practice another of the views suggested here. I proposed for all orphan children a system of guardianship by having some person responsible to protect the child. This, which was the most novel part of the plan, has been commenced in Aberdeen.

"Very lately, a small commencement has been made of a sort of patronage of the most destitute children ; a few individuals have each selected a boy, and allow the master to expend a few shillings from time to time in procuring necessary clothes, or in paying for lodgings, when it is expedient to remove him from his parents, on account of their character; suitable lodgings in Aberdeen cost about ninepence a-week. This is, at present, a new experiment, but it seems likely to do good, both to the boy and to his patron ; and it will probably result in an interest being felt in the child, and a kindly charge taken of him until he be fairly set afloat in the world."

This growth of opinion in Scotland, coterminous to a similar growth of opinion in Ireland, without previous communication, is rendered still more remarkable by a precisely similar growth of opinion in France. I find that the members of the charitable society of St. Vincent de Paul, at Chateaubriand, were the first to adopt for the children of the poor peasantry in France the system of placing them with farmers, which St. Vincent de Paul had adopted for foundlings. The plan was commenced about 1840, simultaneously with the industrial schools, and, after 10 years' experience, very favourable results were obtained. In 1855, this species of charity was strongly recommended by the General Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. It has been tried at Nantes and Laumur, with as great success as at Chateaubriand, and is now highly approved of by the branch of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Ireland. In one respect it seems to be in advance of the Scotch system, in having from the first established the system of patronage or guardianship, which the Scotch philanthropists are only commencing to try. In the importance which the French catholics attach to this patronage, they corroborate the results of the experience of the Protestant Orphan Society in Ireland, where the care of the clergyman of the parish in which the child is placed and the regular inspection of the visiting secretary are considered indispensable to the careful rearing of the children.

In striking contrast with all this enthusiasm about industrial

schools and the family system on which they are founded, is the state of feeling with regard to workhouses. On this point I will quote the opinion of my friend, the Rev. Mr. Twigg, Vicar of Swords, who was for eight years chaplain to a workhouse :—

“I read your paper about pauper orphans with great interest. I quite concur with everything you have said; and I am quite sure that if your suggestions are attended to, a great benefit will be conferred on a class who, as being friendless and unprotected, have special claims on our sympathies. I was for more than eight years chaplain to a workhouse, as well managed, I believe, as most, and spent a good deal of time and attention on the children, who were mostly orphans; and, though they had many advantages, such as regular weekly visits and instruction from ladies of the town, and a very respectable and well-principled schoolmistress, I felt that the moral condition of the children was not healthy, and I was often sorry to receive unfavourable accounts of them after they had left the workhouse and gone to service. The workhouse system seemed to produce, especially, great indolence of character. After school hours, children had little or nothing to do; and thus, besides learning habits of laziness, which they could not afterwards shake off, they had leisure to watch, and make acquaintance with, the worst characters of the neighbourhood. I have no doubt that the want of family ties and associations was a still greater cause of evil; but what always struck me most was, the atmosphere of indolence that seemed to pervade the whole place.”

I will next quote the opinion of the Recorder of the City of Dublin, who, like the worthy judge who founded the Aberdeen schools, draws the soundest conclusions in social science from the painful facts which his judicial duties bring constantly under his notice.

In February, 1859, three young girls, inmates of the South Dublin Union, were indicted for arson, in attempting to set fire to the workhouse. Two of the girls had been born in the workhouse; one of them had, except occasional absences, been there since 1846. The prisoners, in a very confident and ready manner, pleaded guilty. The Recorder said,—“These workhouses seem to change the nature of people. How is it that these unfortunate girls do not seem to be at all sorry for the offence which they tried to commit?” Amongst the remarks made by the girls, one of them said,—“We were reared in the workhouse, and if we left it no one would take us into service off the streets, without a recommendation from somebody.” The passion these girls showed was the natural rage at being brought up by society in such a manner that no honourable, no friendly, no really human future appeared to await them in this world; all was blank, and cold, and heartless. Their natural craving for sympathy, for affection, for love, found no response; and these, which are the germs of the finest feelings of our nature, being left to run wild, drove them to the distraction and partial insanity which their conduct indicated. The Recorder, in his sentence, indicates his opinion of the effects of workhouse training in producing criminals:—

“You have all pleaded guilty deliberately, and without appearing to have the least shame for it, of the very atrocious crime of setting

fire, or attempting to set fire, to the public establishment in which you were supported and brought up. I have said before that I have seen very little good from those who are supported and brought up there. They have all the disgrace of idleness upon them, and it seems as if they could not be taught anything useful under the system adopted in the union. This is not the first case of the kind, for there have been numerous cases of the same kind before this court, and before the other tribunals of this city. In the present case there are three of you, and it is difficult to count the number of crimes of which you have been guilty, or to say which of you is the worst. One of you appears to have refused to go with her mother, preferring to remain under the system which she pleads as an excuse for the crime which she committed. I really feel difficulty in dealing with those cases, for here are three decent looking girls, who, with no excuse except the most frivolous pretences, such as not being put in a particular part of the establishment, and they plead guilty to such a serious crime as arson—of attempting to set fire to an establishment in which they might have destroyed the lives of all the inmates in it along with their own. Such conduct is unaccountable. There is nothing I find so difficult as to account in any way for the extraordinary crimes that are committed in the South Dublin Union. In that union there are benevolent persons trying to do some good to these inmates; but there still appears to adhere to the establishment the curse of idleness, and the absence of any feeling of independence. You appear here, not appearing at all ashamed of the crime you committed, but actually appearing to boast of it and take credit for it. Under these circumstances, the sentence of the court is, that each of you be kept in penal servitude for a period of three years."

"The prisoner Kane—You can't do any more."

But the strongest facts, to my mind, against the workhouse, as a place for rearing children, are the admissions of the Poor Law Commissioners themselves. The promoters of the industrial schools tell us, that a cardinal point of their management is the selection of the teachers. Now the Poor Law Commissioners, in a letter defending workhouse schools, say,—

"As to the question of the sufficiency of salary, in each case the Commissioners admit that there has been, and still continues to be, much difficulty in contending with the desire of Boards of Guardians to keep down establishment charges."

Then, after noticing the amount of salary complained of, they add :—

"The Commissioners do not wish to be understood as expressing themselves satisfied with these arrangements. The cost of teaching, taken in the aggregate, is as high as it ought to be, *whilst its character for efficiency is much below average*,—evils remediable only by the consolidation of unions for educational purposes, whereby one set of literary and industrial teachers may be made available for the children of two, three, or more unions."

The Commissioners then add :—

"The recent decline of numbers has created an urgent demand for this experiment, and four groups of unions have lately been

formed, in order to give the guardians an opportunity of combining their funds for the purposes of education. These groups include several of the unions in which the salaries are at present (1855) on a very low scale."

The plan of district schools is, as you will at once perceive, a still greater departure from the family system than the workhouse. The children are separated from the rest of the family, not by the different wards of the same building, but by at least a distance of one workhouse from another. After two years' trial, the Commissioners admit that the district schools plan had not answered their expectations. In their annual report for 1857, they say,—

"The objects sought in forming these districts was economy of funds, and improvement in the character of the school arrangements. These advantages have been realised to some extent, in the cases in which the experiment has been tried; but, we regret to add, not without some detriment to the due administration of relief. We considered that, in issuing the orders forming school districts, it is not in our power, under the general words of the section authorizing the formation of such districts, to limit the discretion of the guardians as to the class of children to be sent from the workhouse of the contributing union to the workhouse of the receiving union; and consequently, not only orphans and deserted children have been sent, but likewise children of sufficient age to be educated, whose parents were with them in the workhouse,—the guardians of the contributing unions being desirous to adopt this means of saving the expense of teachers altogether. The consequence has been, that many poor women with families have left the workhouse or refused to enter it, although in great need of relief, because they found their children, or some of them, would be sent to a workhouse many miles distant, and preferred begging through the country to relief on these terms."—"It appeared to us on receiving these reports, that the only remedy of the evil pointed out was to recommend the guardians to send to the district schools only orphans and deserted children, and the children of parents who did not object to the separation; and to provide for the excepted cases by the employment of a teacher, if the services of the master or matron were not available for the purpose. This, however, is often the case where the number of inmates is very small indeed; and we have found the guardians by no means reluctant to adopt the suggestions."

The reports of some of the inspectors, on the school districts order, put the point with respect to the effect of the order very clearly.

Mr. Robinson says :—

"I have no hesitation in stating it to be my present opinion that the removal of all children from the workhouse of the union to which they belong deters many destitute parents from seeking the relief they know will be accompanied by total separation from their offspring, and induces them to resort to begging as a means of subsistence; mendicancy is thus increased, and the workhouse is made a much more severe test of destitution than is either desirable or humane."

In another page he says :—

"I am so convinced that the advantages to be derived from the

operation of such a system are fully counterbalanced by its evil effects, that I should regret to see it extended to other unions."

Mr. Otway's report discloses a still more serious result of the district schools order :—

"I find," he says, "that none of the children stated by the clerk to have absconded from Roscrea workhouse ever return there, and that it was not known what had become of any of them.

"I also find from inquiries at Donoughmore, that none of the children who absconded from Roscrea workhouse had returned to Donoughmore, and that it was not known there what had become of them. The clerk and master of the Donoughmore Union both informed me that the parents of children sent to Roscrea made great objection to their children being so sent. From the circumstance that the children who absconded from Roscrea workhouse have not returned to either Roscrea or Donoughmore,—from the circumstance that of fifty-three admissions under the school order (made in December, 1855) now only fifteen remain in Roscrea workhouse—these fifteen being all orphans—I am led to believe that the working of the district schools order has operated as a new and *most stringent* test."

I have dwelt so much on this point of the district schools, because it lies at the root of the education of children in the workhouse. When the number of children diminish, the guardians naturally feel reluctant to pay high salaries for schoolmasters and school-mistresses.

If you seek to improve the education by removing the orphans and deserted children only, you in fact create foundling hospitals,—institutions that have been tried and condemned, as I showed in my former paper.

"If you separate children from their parents, the children abscond and become vagrants, and the parents remain out and beg, and the stringency of the law defeats itself.

If you send the orphans and deserted children to district schools, and keep children who have parents in the workhouse, the master and mistress have to be employed as teachers, a duty they will not like to combine with their other duties, and for which they are not necessarily qualified. Now, the Scotch philanthropists tell us that almost the whole success of a school turns on the special character of the teacher. It must be admitted, therefore, that in this cardinal point such schools have a great advantage over the workhouses, where education is beset with the difficulties which the history of the school district order discloses.

If I have established the superiority of the family system and the industrial schools to your satisfaction, the next question is, what can we do in the matter to promote the requisite change in the law and in the administration of our poor laws? Now, the question of poor laws is likely to be made the subject of Parliamentary enquiry during the next session; it will therefore be a most favourable time for having changes in the law considered. The clause which passed the House of Commons by the majority of 100 to 8 will, no doubt, be again passed, and assented to by the House of Lords. It would, however, be desirable to extend the limit of age for children reared outside the workhouse to fourteen years instead of

twelve, as fourteen is the true and natural period for apprenticeship commencing, and is as fixed a period in human life as twenty-one for full age. It would also be desirable that provision should be made for the watchful care and guardianship of orphans and deserted children, and that this should not be entirely left to relieving officers or mere paid overseers. The jurisdiction of appointing and controlling guardians, similar to that which the Court of Chancery possesses for the rich, should be established for the poor at a moderate cost; we would then have the legal custody of each child, and the right as to its religious education at once determined when the child became an orphan or deserted; instead of, as now, to arise afterwards in a struggle for the possession of the child and a writ of habeas corpus.

In the next place, we may naturally expect that the principles of Dunlop's Act and Lord Palmerston's Acts, as to industrial schools in Scotland, shall be extended to Ireland, and Boards of Guardians be enabled to contract with the managers of industrial schools for the support of children chargeable to poor-rates. We may also ask that all those relaxations of the workhouse test which have been made in England, in favour of the family principle, shall be extended to Ireland,—such as the provisions of 7 & 8 Vic., c. 101, which allows out-door relief to the wives of men beyond the seas or in confinement, as in a lunatic asylum, and to widows with one child; so also the orders of the English Commissioners allowing relief to poor persons requiring aid by reason of bodily or mental infirmity afflicting any member of his or her family; or when relief is required for the expense of burying a member of a family; so also relief to widows during the first six months of widowhood, and to the wives of soldiers, sailors, or marines, and the child or children within the age of nurture resident within the union with the mother, whose husband shall not be within the union.

All these changes (since 1838), in the English Poor Law in favour of a more humane and kind mode of relieving women and children—in favour of not unnecessarily destroying the family ties—we may naturally ask to have extended to Ireland. The workhouse test was applied to widows and children in Ireland in 1838, because it was believed by statesmen and public writers to be the best system of poor laws then known. A fear, too, was justly entertained that, when it was believed that there were 2,000,000 of people in want, or verging on pauperism, any but the most stringent test of destitution would be dangerous. The number relieved during the famine shows that these fears were not unfounded. But since that sad calamity,—with the deaths, the emigration, the changes of proprietors,—a new era has arisen, and the Ireland of 1860 is not the Ireland of 1838. That famine, too, disclosed a circumstance at once creditable to Irish character, and profoundly instructive to those who choose to learn from it. Writers on Ireland, for years before the famine, had predicted that a large emigration would be necessary. Many were the plans proposed to facilitate it, but all failed from the difficulty of providing the means. The means by which it was ultimately effected seem never to have entered into the imagination of those who judged so harshly of the Irish people, or of those who

relied on selfish motives alone as influencing human actions. It was the strength of family affection of the Irish people that led to those wonderful remittances from America by which the emigration was really carried out, which, commencing at £200,000 in 1846, reached half a million in 1849, a million in 1851, and a million and a-half in 1853,—“Remittances sent,” as Mr. Murray the banker stated, “from husband to wife, father to child, from child to father, mother, and grand parent, from sister to brother, and the reverse, from and to those united by all the ties of blood and friendship that bind us together upon earth.” The history of these remittances, the amount of good feeling, of self-denial, of practical wisdom connected with them, has, I must admit, produced the strongest impression on my mind, and has led me to take a more favourable view of the character of the poorer classes of my fellow-countrymen than any other circumstance that ever came under my notice. It has, too, led me to attach—what to those who have not adopted the same train of reasoning may appear exaggerated—importance to the cherishing and preserving in the young all the natural family ties and affections; and to the resisting, in every possible form, the separation or destruction of families,—whether it appears in Sunday work or night work,—in bothies or in the workhouse system as applied to widows and to children.

* Dr. Duncan having referred at the meeting of the Society to some opinions of Dr. Carlile of Dublin, on the importance of cherishing family ties, I subsequently inquired from him as to where I could find Dr. Carlile's views published. Dr. Duncan kindly favoured me with the following note in reply :—

“I am not aware that Dr. Carlile published anything on the subject. All that I meant to convey was, that for some years after his settlement in Dublin, in 1815, there were two boarding schools in connexion with Mary's Abbey, containing twenty boys and twenty girls, and that entirely through his instrumentality, in or about the years 1826–28, these schools were broken up, and a system was introduced entirely similar to that mentioned in your paper as subsisting in Aberdeen. The advantages were these; that the poor had not to wait for *vacancies*, as was the case when the accommodation was limited as to room; second, the relief granted varied with the necessities of each case, and hence the expense for the whole was less, while the amount of good done was greater; third, the natural ties of relationship were not severed, unless the relatives were ill conducted; fourth, the children did not wear a livery; fifth, the health of the children was better; sixth, they were trained up in a practical knowledge of those things which were necessary to fit them for working their way in life. I have repeatedly heard Dr. Carlile explain these views when advocating the cause of those schools in the Annual Charity Sermon, and you will see by the date I give, it was antecedent to the establishment of the Protestant Orphan Society, while the plan was essentially different from theirs.”

Houses of the Oireachtas