

A new large brick building is nearly ready for occupation, and this will enable the Home to accommodate about forty-five girls. More buildings will, however, be required to enable proper classification to be carried out.

The health of the girls has been generally good during the past year. They derived great benefit from a fortnight's residence on Quail Island last December, and it is to be hoped that they may often be enabled to repeat that trip, which is a most welcome relief from their confined life at Te Oranga.

It must be remembered that the girls who are brought into the life of seclusion and routine at this institution have been accustomed before their committal to a life of freedom and license. They can be detained in the institution only till they are twenty-one years old, and it is obvious that in the institution very little time is thus afforded wherein to achieve their complete reformation. Our efforts should therefore be directed to make these few years as pleasant as possible, consistently with strict discipline, in order that the idea of a virtuous life may be rendered more attractive. I have constantly endeavoured to find ladies willing to visit the Home, and teach the girls useful things—read to them or sing or play the piano to them. I think the matron should be allowed a liberal expenditure in the means of instruction and of recreation, and I consider that a gymnasium and a tennis-court should be provided. Such expenses are trivial in comparison with the great cost of the Home and the moral effect of these accessories. Our chief means of influencing these girls for good is by cultivating their sympathy with a higher and purer life; and if we fail to enlist their sympathy with our work all our labour and expenditure will be wasted.

I wish to bear emphatic testimony to the great improvement in the behaviour of these girls since they were first taken in hand by the matron, Mrs. Branting. Some most unruly and even violent girls have become comparatively docile, and the detention-cell is now much less often used than formerly was necessary. There are, however, some great difficulties to contend with, especially in eradicating bad habits, and I think the matron and myself might be allowed a little more liberty in dealing with special cases.

The work done by the girls is principally out of doors. There are 14 acres of land, two cows, four pigs, forty fowls, and twenty bee-hives. The cultivation of the land and the care of the livestock are entirely managed by the girls. No washing or other work is done for any purpose outside the Home, with the exception of mending the stockings for the boys at Burnham. Six of the girls receive ordinary school-teaching from an attendant. All the girls are taught cooking, laundry-work, and dressmaking. The general appearance of the Home is bright and cheerful; the girls seem contented and very rarely abscond. I consider the Home is doing most useful work, but I think the permanent success of the work would be more assured if some supervision were exercised over girls for five years after they leave the Home.

The Secretary for Education, Wellington.

W. H. SYMES, M.D.,

Medical Officer.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 29th June, 1903.

I have the honour to report that the number of children on the books of the Christchurch Receiving Home was 234 in May, 1903, as compared with 228 in May, 1902, and 220 in May, 1901, so that the yearly increase is small but steady.

The health of these children has been generally fairly good, though we have had two outbreaks of measles in the Receiving Home during the past year, and a serious one of diphtheria previously, showing the necessity of a separate ward to enable us to isolate all cases of illness in their earliest stages. Unless such isolation is resorted to at the very commencement, it is very little use doing so after the complaint is developed sufficiently to be diagnosed.

The system of boarding-out appears to answer very well in most cases, with the exception of the infants under one year. These are rarely, if ever, fed according to proper methods; and, although this may not produce much mortality in cool weather, the whole future health and strength of a child depends more on its rearing during the first year than during any subsequent period of its life. Thus, I generally find these infants fed on a mixture of farinaceous food and milk in a bottle with an indiarubber tube, resulting in diarrhoea and rickets, whereas pasteurised milk and cream should alone be used and no rubber tube allowed. The most important element in the food of an infant is cream, which is expensive, and foster-mothers will not buy it on the payment they now receive. The cream should be supplied by the Department, to insure the infant getting it. The milk should be pasteurised, and the feeding carried out according to definite rules. If there is not an average weekly gain of 6 oz. in weight, the most frequent cause is wrong feeding. The seeds of many constitutional diseases, like consumption, scrofula, rheumatism, &c., are more often sown in the first year than afterwards. In addition to the children boarded out by the Receiving Home, there are at present about fifty boarded out by the North Canterbury Charitable Aid Board, and a smaller number by the South Canterbury Charitable Aid Board. The illegitimate infants boarded out in houses licensed under the Infant Life Protection Act of 1896, in the Canterbury police district, were—in 1896, 69; 1897, 168; 1898, 182; 1899, 139; 1900, 112; 1901, 132; 1902, 203. The deaths have been 49, equal to a rate of 48·7 per 1,000 births, which is very moderate in comparison with some statistics. Thus, the boarded-out children are divided into three classes—First, those belonging to the Receiving Home; second, those belonging to the Charitable Aid Board; third, those under the Police Department. The first of these three classes is under medical supervision, but the other two classes are not. It appears desirable to bring all these classes of boarded-out children under one control, with direct medical supervision. In regard to all the infants it would, I think, be advantageous to have selected cottage houses for those under one year, to be reared by women specially instructed in such work. I do not suggest the building of large foundling hospitals, but the selection of suitable houses and persons in places convenient for close supervision. There should not be more than six or eight infants in one house, just enough to occupy the whole time and care of one woman, who