

by a person whose trained eye and expert knowledge enable her to detect early signs of disease or disability, and to advise the foster-parent in the various crises which arise in a child's life; the added interest which the foster-parents take in their work, owing to the encouragement they receive; and the elimination of undesirable homes by discrimination in the granting of licenses.

Much trouble has been occasioned through the difficulty foster-parents have experienced in obtaining relief when a parent deserts the child placed in their care. Theoretically such child should then be regarded as destitute, and the provisions of the Destitute Persons Act should apply, but there are many difficulties in the way, and women who might otherwise give a child a good home will not run the risk of being left with it upon their hands, with no redress.

The health of the children during the year has, on the whole, been good; though there is still much suffering caused by premature weaning. Happily, cow's milk is being very generally used as the substitute for the mother's, in place of cheap artificial foods. There has seldom been reason for dissatisfaction with the management of licensed foster-homes. The foster-parents are, with scarcely any exception, kind and attentive to their charges. Some of them show, as is to be expected, a large ignorance of physiology, of proper feeding, and of sanitation; but they accept advice readily, and, as a rule, carry out instructions. Happily, the helplessness of infancy is its defence; and many a child finds a home in the arms of the woman who admits that financial necessity alone opened her door to the stranger.

The difficulty of obtaining medical aid for children in licensed homes would be a matter for grave consideration were it not for the benevolence of medical men, who visit the homes without any expectation of a fee.

With a view to increasing the efficiency of the system, I beg to suggest that a medical officer, chosen for his special knowledge of the diseases to which infant life is prone, be appointed and paid by the State, as is done in France (in country districts special rates might be arranged with local practitioners); that every help and encouragement be given to the mothers of illegitimate children, and others, to nourish their infants for at least six months; and that the placing-out of infants under that age be discouraged, bearing in mind, however, the danger of bringing about, by too great a rigidity of rule, that which the Infants Act was designed to mitigate; and, thirdly, that the failure of the parent to comply with the terms of an agreement for maintenance be regarded as terminating the responsibility of the foster-parent.

With regard to exempted institutions, I beg to suggest that monthly returns be required from the authorities of inmates admitted, in residence, left, or dead; that the number in residence be limited by the Department, so that there shall be no overcrowding; and that the massing of large numbers, particularly of very little children, in one building be discountenanced.

I have before remarked that the notification which is required by law of the birth of a child, to be of real value, should include the legal status of the child and the place of birth. The number of illegitimate children whose names appear on the Infants Roll is a very small proportion of the illegitimate children registered, and I am told it frequently happens that the birth and death of a child are registered simultaneously.

A medical certificate ought to be required where it is proposed to place an unweaned child in a licensed home. It does not appear to be sufficiently recognized that a child has a right to its natural sustenance. France, however, has this to say in "Instructions relative to the Application of Article 8 of the Law of 23rd December, 1874": "*Cet article a été dicté par l'idée que le lait de la femme appartient non à elle, mais à son enfant.*" Anything savouring of compulsion may appear to be an infringement of parental rights; but what of the child's rights, including a firmer hold upon life and health which shall be of lifelong significance? He has more claim upon our consideration than has the parent; he had no part in the determining of his destination.

The authorities of the District Hospital have been very considerate in regard to infants suffering from diseases; but they naturally object to receive those whose only trouble is alimentary. It would be of the greatest service were there some place where a child suffering from faulty digestion, marasmus, or similar complaints could receive expert care, such as the Matron of the Door of Hope gives to those who are so fortunate as to find shelter under her hospitable roof.

In connection with the general subject of infant-life protection, there is one point which should not be overlooked: Care is being taken to save and rear the children of what is practically the least desirable class—so much so that the old law of the survival of the fittest will soon cease to operate to the advantage of the race. Keeping this fact in mind, as well as the best interest of the class concerned, it is evident that there ought to be a central institution or asylum to which young women of the temperament recognizable as "*déséquilibrée*" might be committed, where, while supporting themselves, they might cease to be a menace to the community. Persons of this class are, from time to time, committed for a period of six or twelve months to such reformatory institutions as St. Mary's, Otahuhu, and to the Door of Hope, to the great detriment of the younger women, who, after a first fall, may be expected to recover themselves, and become useful members of society.

SARAH E. JACKSON,
District Agent.

Auckland, 7th March, 1910.

WELLINGTON.

The Secretary for Education.

I BEG to forward my report upon the infant-life protection system, and a few suggestions as to measures which I think would increase its efficiency.

Speaking of my own district, I think that on the whole the system is working well: we have not much difficulty in carrying out the Department's instructions, and, as I reported before, the strong opposition to us has passed away. Our visits are welcomed; indeed, we are met with reproachful looks and words if too long a time elapses between our visits. I think that the foster-mothers now understand that we really care for the well-being of the children, and also that we are their friends if they do well by the children. In this way the value of the child is more