

Boys and Girls placed in Situations or Occupations.

Particular care is now taken in the placing of boys and girls in situations or occupations for which they have special aptitude, and every precaution is taken to ensure that they are not exploited in the matter of wages or working-conditions generally. The question of wages has received particular attention during the past year, with the result that there has been an appreciable increase all round. The wages now received by these young people correspond very nearly with the ruling rates. The girls in situations and the children boarded out are visited regularly by the lady Managers of the industrial schools and receiving-homes concerned, and also by the lady Visiting Officer, who is the revising officer for the Department and altogether independent of the Managers. All boys placed in situations, apprenticed to trades, or on probation with friends are supervised and visited frequently by the Probation Officers, and also by the male Visiting Officer, who acts as revising officer for the Department.

Admissions during the Year and the Reasons for Admission.

During the year 331 children were committed to industrial schools, and an analysis of the state of these children prior to admission shows that 82 were destitute, 9 vagrants, 17 residing in disreputable surroundings, 112 not under proper control, and 92 either accused or guilty of punishable offences. Of these 331, only 94 were actually in residence at industrial schools at the end of the year, so that 237 were placed out at board, in situations, or with friends on probation, either on admission or after a short period of residence at an industrial school.

Co-operation of Organizations dealing with Child-welfare.

Considerable advancement has been made in the linking-up of the various organizations dealing with child-welfare. The infant-life protection system, through its District Agents and visiting nurses, caters for the child under six years who is maintained apart from its parents or guardians.

The medical examination of school-children brings many cases under the notice of the Department suitable for instruction at special schools (deaf, blind, or mentally backward), while the personal visits of the school nurses to the homes of children requiring medical treatment have been the means of disclosing many cases calling for the supervision of the Department's social workers. For dealing with the truant-player and the child who, by his lack of progress at school, or by his demeanour or appearance, suggests either indifferent treatment in his home or want of proper parental control, the teacher, Attendance Officer, and Juvenile Probation Officer are all in co-operation with each other.

The Department has under consideration proposals for extending this important branch of social service.

INFANT-LIFE PROTECTION.

The purpose of this system is to provide supervision and protection for infants boarded out by their parents or guardians in circumstances that might lead to their neglect or ill treatment. Unless licensed as a foster-parent, no person in consideration of any payment or reward may receive or take charge of an infant for the purpose of nursing or maintaining it apart from its parents or guardians for longer than seven consecutive days. "Infant" means a child under six years of age. Besides the district agents, duly appointed officers who are qualified nurses have full power to inspect the licensed homes. If necessary the Education Department may take over the maintenance of a child, recovering the cost from the parents or guardians, and the foster-parent's license may be revoked, the children in the home being otherwise provided for as the Minister may direct. Payment of a premium on the adoption of a child brings the case within the provisions of the Act.

The number of homes licensed at the end of the year was 940, and the total number of children in them during the year was 1,361, an increase of 111 for the year. Of this total the number of infants under one year was 386; 12 children