

NUMBERS UNDER CONTROL.

At the end of the year there were 3,908 children under control (excluding those mentioned under separate headings below), and of these 243 were in residence at Government receiving-homes, probation homes, training-farms, and training institutions, and 56 in private schools; 1909 children were boarded out in foster-homes, 888 were in situations, and 641 residing under license with relatives and friends. The remainder were in various homes or institutions.

Of the boarded-out children 110 are over the age of fourteen years of whom 65 are still attending primary schools, 45 are receiving higher education (30 technical and 15 secondary).

The children over school age in employment number 780 males, 369 females (included in the total of 3,908). Of the males, 528 are farm-workers (142 skilled in dairy-work and cheesemaking, and 386 competent to milk and carry out general farm-work), 68 are apprentices (of which number some are receiving assistance), and 184 others are employed in various trades. Of the girls, there are 292 domestic workers, 38 factory employees, and 39 engaged in various employments such as shop-assistants, nurses, dressmakers, &c.

SYSTEM OF SUPERVISION.

The number of cases dealt with by the Courts last year was 1,625, and of these 412 were placed under the supervision of Child Welfare Officers or brought under the "Big Brother" scheme as carried out by the Y.M.C.A. The number actually admitted to institutions such as receiving-homes, special schools, training-farm, &c., was 540, but all these, with the exception of 115 who required long periods of training or were regarded as unfit for placing out, were suitably provided for in the community before the close of the year. The remainder of the children were dealt with in a summary manner not calling for supervision by a Child Welfare Officer.

INFANT LIFE PROTECTION AND ADOPTION OF CHILDREN (INFANTS ACT, 1908).

At the end of the year there were 878 children being maintained in 703 licensed foster-homes. Of these, 564 homes had one child each, 108 had two children each, 27 had three children each, 3 had four children each, and 1 home had five children. The payments by relatives for the maintenance of each child ranged from 5s. to £1 10s. a week, the average rate of payment being approximately 16s. a week.

Adoptions.—During the year 361 children were adopted, and in 26 of these cases premiums were received by the Department's agents and paid out at the rate of 15s. a week for each child concerned. Of the total number of children adopted, 58 were under the age of six months, 40 between the age of six and twelve months, and 263 between the age of one and six years.

CARE AND TRAINING OF AFFLICTED CHILDREN.

Deaf Children, Children with Defective Speech, and Mentally Backward Children.—The pupils under instruction at the School for the Deaf, Sumner, during the year numbered 116, and of these 17 were day pupils and 99 boarders.

The special day classes in Auckland, Wellington, and Dunedin for partially deaf children and for children with speech-defects were continued with highly successful results. About 160 children attended the classes last year. Provision has also been made in these centres and in Christchurch for night classes for the instruction of the adult deaf, 84 persons afflicted in this manner attending the classes for the year ended 31st March, 1927.

Special Schools for the Feeble-minded.—There are two such special schools—one at Richmond (near Nelson) for girls, and one at Otekaike (near Oamaru) for boys. The number of girls in residence at Richmond at the end of the year was 71, and the number of boys at Otekaike 190. These institutions are for children who are educable to a certain degree, similar to the type admitted to special classes attached to the public schools, but who for various reasons cannot be provided for in their own homes.