

The outstanding features of this system are that the children attend the public school and grow up as ordinary members of the community, and make contacts with their fellows that last them through life. The way they return to their old foster-homes in after years in numberless cases is a pleasing feature. Many former foster-parents also apply after the children may have left the homes for some reason or another to have them back again during their holidays. Often these are the only parents the children have known, and it speaks volumes for the goodheartedness of such people when their foster-children even after marriage, still, as many do, keep in touch with them, and to whom they proudly bring their own first offspring. The Department has ample evidence of good results, and the number of cases of reported ill-treated or mal-adjusted children is very small indeed. The Department has at present in hand the matter of reviewing the system so that even this small proportion may be eliminated and every means taken to ensure adequate supervision and proper placement of each individual child.

The following submitted by one of the district officers is typical of the reports received in this connection :—

“So far as foster-parents are concerned, a number (named) deserve special mention. Many children of both sexes have been brought up successfully in these homes, and later on, when they are in employment and all control of the Department has ceased, they still return to these homes and continue to regard the foster-parents as their own, even after marriage.”

The details of a few cases indicating successful boarding out are quoted below :—

W—, committed at age of eight years as destitute ; illegitimate ; his natural parents not paying maintenance. After committal was allowed to remain at board in his foster-home where he had been since a few months old. At the age of fifteen years, the boy, who was delicate, was still at school, and the foster-parents kept him themselves for about three years without payment, except for some small assistance from the Department for medical attention and school-books. At the age of eighteen he is employed as shop-assistant and is doing well, and it still attending evening technical classes.

P—, committed aged seven years ; both parents died during epidemic ; placed at board with elder sister ; obtained scholarship ; later matriculated, and now school-teacher.

M—, committed when aged nearly eleven years ; not under proper control ; parents separated. Did very well at board. Given secondary education, and now employed as qualified public-school teacher.

A—, committed as destitute ; aged five years ; parents separated ; girl did well at board ; given secondary education, and later attended University lectures. Became a very successful school-teacher.

E— and K—, brothers, committed at age of six and four years respectively ; father deserter ; placed together in good foster-home, where they remained during the whole of their school period ; both did well ; sent on for secondary education ; both matriculated ; former now school-teacher and latter in Civil Service.

I— and B—, committed when aged one and one year and a half respectively ; mother feeble-minded, and deserted children ; later father also deserted ; children in shocking state of neglect and malnutrition ; foster-parents grew to like children, and last year legally adopted both of them ; a good home and children progressing remarkably well.

H— and R—, committed when aged seven and boarded out ; after two years returned by foster-parents for private reasons, but missed boys so much they begged to have them back offering to keep them without payment ; they later adopted both boys ; foster-parents have no children of their own, and are in good financial circumstances.

R—, committed at age of ten months ; illegitimate, and mother weak-minded ; in foster-home for twenty years ; still there, though working in vicinity. (See also M— below.)

M—, for years in same foster-home as R— above. Although over twenty-one, still remains on in what she regards as her home. This foster-parent has expressed her intention of leaving all her property to these two girls.

T—, committed as not under proper control about seven years ago ; parents separated ; was backward at school and given extended education ; placed in good foster-home, where soon made one of the family ; and remained on after she had commenced work, and is still there ; now discharged from official control and doing well.

G—, committed as infant ; illegitimate ; given extended school for two years, after which foster-parent kept her free for over three years ; when discharged from Department's control, she was still in her foster-home, and had obtained a situation in the Civil Service.

J—, committed at age of one month as destitute ; mother in mental hospital ; father died not long afterwards ; later sent on for secondary education ; at his discharge from Department's control he was still in his old foster-home, where he has been for some eighteen years ; obtained M.A. degree, and now school-teacher.

D—, committed at age ten years ; living in disreputable surroundings ; had previously been adopted ; adoptive parents both deceased ; did well in his foster-home, and sent on for secondary education ; matriculated, and now public-school teacher.

PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN IN SITUATIONS AND THE ALLOCATION OF THEIR EARNINGS.

Generally speaking, State wards, if normal, children, are placed in employment on the same conditions as other young people so far as wages, &c., are concerned. The Hon. the Minister has special powers to facilitate the employment of those young people who are mentally, physically, or socially unable to compete on equal terms with their fellows. The placing of certain handicapped children in the right environment is regarded as of much more importance than the gaining for them of a shilling or two extra in wages. All license agreements or contracts are subject to constant review in the Head Office as well as in the District Offices.