

Number passed from control of society for following reasons: Adopted, 34; reached majority, —; moved out of State, —; returned to parents or relatives, 38.

Number who are earning wages, —; average wage, —; kind of occupation, —; number children replaced, once, —; twice, 2; three times, —; does society visit children placed outside of this State? Yes. Date, May 18, 1911. Reported by A. F. Rourke, superintendent.

The Illegitimate Child—Its Place in the Community.

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In dealing with the illegitimate child four parties are to be considered, in the order named: the child, the mother, the father and the community. In order to do right it is necessary that the rights and obligations of these different parties shall be carefully weighed.

Whatever blame may attach to the other three parties—and generally all three are more or less at fault—the child is an innocent party, condemned through no fault of its own to obloquy, neglect, often unhappiness, and sometimes to death. Being innocent, helpless and unfortunate, the child has extraordinary claims, not only upon its natural relatives and protectors, but also upon the benevolent community. This obligation rests particularly upon those who are brought into immediate contact with it upon its entrance into the world—the physician, the nurse, the hospital authorities, the managers of the foundling asylum or the managers of the child-saving society.

The child has that first right which is considered a foundation principle of our civilization—the right to live. It comes into the world often wronged before its birth. The mother has been anxious, worried, badly nourished; she has laced herself unduly to conceal her condition, or she has injured the child by efforts to produce an abortion. Sometimes she falls into the hands of some ignorant midwife, or some inexperienced nurse, or an unprincipled mother who is willing to sacrifice the child in order to save the family reputation.

After birth the child's right to life is unnecessarily hazarded by lack of proper care, proper clothing and proper food, or by the unnecessary transfer of the young babe to the care of well-meaning but inexperienced foster parents; or, far worse, the child may be placed in the care of a mercenary baby farmer who undertakes to dispose of it for \$25 or who agrees to board it for \$1.50 or \$2 per week, and the poor little one is drugged, neglected, badly fed, and, if it survives this inhumanity, is given to anyone who will take it, regardless of their fitness.

In order that the baby's life may be properly guarded, the following precautions are essential: First, the mother should receive proper medical care and nursing. If physically capable, she should invariably be allowed to nurse the child as long as it remains with her. If the mother is unable to nurse the child, then the wise plan followed by the Chicago Foundling's Home should be adopted, namely, to secure for the child one-half the milk of a nursing mother, supplementing it with cow's milk or other suitable food, and the further requirement that young mothers coming to the home must stay with their babies for at least a year.

Second, the child should be under suitable medical supervision to pro-

tect it from the dangers which beset such children. Its feeding should be properly regulated; if it is bottle-fed, the quantity and proportions of the food should be prescribed. The child should be carefully guarded from contagion and infection whereby it may acquire skin disease, cholera infantum, and other diseases. To this end little babies should not be congregated in any considerable number, and sick babies should be carefully segregated, both for their own sake and that of others.

Third, if the child is to be given to foster parents, the new home should be carefully selected with a view to securing the interests of the child. Experience proves that it is impracticable to place children judiciously on personal interviews with the foster parents or on oral or written recommendations of family friends. The only safe way is to have the home visited by an experienced, conscientious visitor. The practice followed by some institutions of giving out children on personal application with written recommendations furnished by referees of the applicant's own choosing, does not sufficiently safeguard the interests of the child.

When children are placed in families they should be placed on trial for a limited period, but with the understanding that they are to be adopted at the expiration of the trial period. The child should be visited by an experienced visitor before adoption papers are given.

The second party to be considered in dealing with the illegitimate child is the mother. The chief object to be sought is her reclamation to good character and good womanhood and to so strengthen and guard her as to prevent a recurrence of the wrongdoing. Incidentally, it is proper to take into account her feelings as a mother and to shield her, as far as may properly be done, from the shame and disgrace to which she is exposed. Those who are inexperienced in dealing with these cases are usually impressed, first of all, with the importance of protecting the reputation of the unfortunate girl and also of sparing her from suffering as far as possible. To this end she is sent to some place at a distance from her home—usually some large city—and is placed in a hospital or in the house of some physician or mid-wife to be confined. Physicians, mid-wives and hospital nurses in many cases refuse to allow the young mother to nurse the child lest she should become attached to it and suffer too much pain in parting from it. She is advised to give away the child with as little delay as possible; and in many cases efforts are made to dispose of the child without disclosing the identity of the mother. As a result, the child is often given to irresponsible or unprincipled people who undertake to dispose of it for a nominal compensation and get rid of it with the least possible trouble. The "baby farms" to which such poor children are consigned are often frightful places, where little babies lie unattended for hours at a time, filthy, chafed, covered with flies, drugged, fed on improper food, emaciated, hideous, dying. One who has experienced the sights, the sounds, the odors, the atmosphere of such a place can never shake off the dreadful impression received.

It is natural that we should desire to shelter the young, the unfortunate, and especially those who are wholly or partially innocent. But the question arises: Is it right to free the young mother lightly from the natural consequences of her error? Providence has ordained certain results which are intended to deter from immorality. When a girl, through vanity, or recklessness, or passion, through affection or deception, has been led to the commission of

such a fault, if she escapes easily from the consequences, she is apt to say, "That was not so dreadful after all"; and speedily the sin is repeated. If she heartlessly disregards her obligation to the child of which she is the rightful protector, crushing the natural affections of her heart, a hardening effect is instantly visible. We are accustomed to say to such a girl: "This is your baby; God gave it to you; it is the only pure and wholesome thing connected with this sad business. You must not desert your baby; you must stay by it—at least until suitable provision is made for it. You have the mother's milk, the very best thing possible for the health and strength of the child. It costs you nothing; but if the baby is taken off the breast the chances are even that it will die. We will care for you and the child together, for a year if necessary, in order that it may have a fair start in life."

When the mother abandons her child it leads, in many cases, to a repetition of the offense and an abandoned life; but if she is true to her obligation it contributes to her redemption and her establishment in right living.

Experience has proved that it is not difficult to obtain employment for a healthy young woman in a good home where she can maintain both herself and child. The best places are usually found with good people of moderate means, who cannot pay high wages, but are willing to receive the mother and child as members of the family and to treat them with consideration and tact. If the mother assumes the title of "Mrs." and all parties concerned keep their own counsel there is no need of exposure. Unfortunately there are so many young married women who are separated from their husbands that it does not necessarily create a presumption against a woman's character to have a young child without a visible father.

There need be no scruple about creating an affection in the mother's breast which will increase the pain of parting. It is often good for her to suffer in behalf of her child. It is always good for her to feel that she has been faithful to the obligation of motherhood. The question how long the child shall remain with the mother is one to be determined by circumstances. Such wisely ordered institutions as the Erring Woman's Refuge and the Chicago Foundlings' Home insist that the mother shall remain with the child for a year. In some cases it is practicable for the mother to retain the child permanently. Many cases are on record where such mothers have married happily and have brought up their own children, either with the father of the child or with another who was large-minded and generous enough to accept a penitent woman with her little one.

Three years ago there came to the office of the Children's Home and Aid Society a young mother, just out of the hospital, with her baby on her arm. She came to give the child to the society for adoption. With great difficulty she was persuaded to retain the child and care for it temporarily. A home was obtained for her in a family where she was treated with consideration and was paid suitable wages. Subsequently the father of the child was induced to come from his distant home and to marry the mother. Efforts to induce them to live together and make a home of their own were not successful, but the young mother cared for her child with great fidelity, developing character and self-denial, and commanding the respect of all who knew her. She is a consistent member of a church, the child is well trained and the mother is a good woman. * * *

In cases where it is necessary for the mother to be separated from the child, it is often beneficial to encourage her to provide for the expense of the handling and placing of the child rather than to throw it into the arms of the charitable public. But this is a delicate matter, for it tends to create the impression that illegitimate children can be disposed of for a financial consideration and to justify the nefarious traffic of the baby farms in human flesh. For this reason some of the best child-placing organizations refuse to receive money with such children. If they receive them at all, it is without compensation from the mother or her friends.

It is the practice of the Illinois Children's Home and Aid Society, first, to determine the question whether it ought to receive the child, independent of the question whether any money is to be paid or not; secondly, to ascertain whether the mother, father or other friends desire to or are able to provide for the expense of receiving and placing the child. Many mothers are unwilling to make their child an object of charity and are desirous to meet the expense, as a matter of self-respect. While the society encourages parents to meet the expense, if practicable, it will receive a child just as readily without money as with it, and will refuse a child which ought not to be received just as promptly when money is offered as when it is not.

It is impossible to lay down arbitrary rules to govern the treatment of these young mothers. When you deal with human souls, they must be dealt with individually according to the best light that can be obtained in each individual case.

We have no right to deal harshly with those who are already under the Divine discipline; neither have we the right to interfere with the Creator's methods of training and redeeming his erring children.

The third party to be considered is the father of the child. It is almost a universal rule that while he is the chief offender, he suffers least of all. It is surprising how readily his friends lend themselves to efforts to relieve him of his obligation and just penalty. These efforts are ably seconded by the friends of the mother with the physician, hospital authorities and nurses, who, in their anxiety to protect the good name of the mother, contribute at the same time to shield the father. These conditions are still further aided by the practice of the community, which condones the offense of the man, allowing him to maintain his place in society, notwithstanding his cruel abandonment of the child and mother, who ought to be the objects of his penitent solicitude.

Those who have to do with the illegitimate child fail lamentably of their duty unless an earnest effort is made to bring the father to account.

In many cases a marriage should take place, even though the young people should not live together. It is as little reparation as can be offered for a man to give his name to his own child and to its mother.

Not long ago an agent of the Children's Home and Aid Society was consulted by a young man, a son of a well-to-do-farmer. He said: "I want you to provide for a child three months old. I want to have it well provided for, and will cheerfully pay into the society treasury \$200 in consideration of that service." On inquiry the agent learned that the farmer was the grandfather of the child. Owing to a land dispute a feud had grown up between him and a neighbor. The son of one family loved the daughter of the other, but the angry parents would not consent to the marriage. Their opposition gave

rise to an illicit relation from which came the child. The agent was a wise and conscientious man. He labored with the grandfather nearly all one night, until he was brought to acknowledge that he had been in the wrong. Similar efforts brought a like confession from the neighbor. The two men were reconciled; the one purchased a farm for his son in a Western State; the other contributed to stocking the farm and furnishing the house. The young people were married and are living happily with their little one in a community where their history is not known.

If the father of the child is unwilling to be married, or if, as is often the case, the circumstances are such that a marriage is impracticable, he should be compelled to make such provision as his means will allow, both for the mother and the child. But in practice comparatively few fathers are brought to make such provision. The mother is deterred from taking legal steps, sometimes on account of affection for the father, more often on account of her unwillingness to subject her own name and that of her family to the ignominy which attends bastardy proceedings.

The very name of these proceedings carries a bitter stigma, both to herself and to her child. The young father often, through friends or through some lawyer, proposes a nominal settlement whereby she receives perhaps \$20 or \$50 instead of the \$550 to which the law entitles her.

In such cases the mother should be advised to secure the counsel and assistance of some good lawyer of mature years. Such a lawyer, by the use of vigorous pressure, can often secure some adequate provision for the mother and child without the necessity for public court proceedings. Under the vigorous handling of such a lawyer the young man can be made to bear some small share of the suffering which is incident to his wrongdoing.

If the father cannot be reached by this method, then, if possible, he should be made to feel the strong arm of the law. The mother and her friends often owe it as a duty to the community to prosecute the offender. This is true especially where he is known to have debauched other young girls, or in cases where he has sought to escape the consequences of his wrongdoing by marriage with another woman.

It may be laid down as a general principle not only that the man in the case deserves punishment, but that his punishment is one of the most hopeful methods of preventing the multiplication of these sad cases.

The fourth party to be considered is the community, including the parents and friends of the offenders and the multitudes of other young people who are exposed to like temptation. It is peculiarly true of this form of wrongdoing that the innocent suffer with the guilty. The parents whose good name is dragged in the dust and who suffer, not only shame, but agonies of anxiety for their children, are much to be pitied; yet it must be remembered that in many cases they have a large responsibility for the results which they discover with such astonishment. Fathers who neglect to instruct their sons as to the responsibilities and dangers of young manhood; mothers who allow their daughters to go about with young men of whom they know nothing, and who fail to maintain the confidence and sympathy of their daughters, ought not to be too much surprised at the natural result of their shortcomings.

Be this as it may, parents have no right to turn their daughters out of doors or to send them to a distant lying-in hospital, to be subjected to maltreatment of charlatans or knaves, or perhaps to sacrifice their lives in crim-

inal efforts to escape the consequences of wrongdoing. Still less is it right for parents to shield a son and dissuade or prevent him from following the right instinct which urges him to do a manly part toward the partner of his fault. * * * *

It is freely admitted that this whole subject is one beset by difficulties, and one which taxes the wisdom and conscience of the wisest social student; but it rightly demands our careful study and the faithful performance of our obligation. When one contemplates the multitude of young women, timid, inexperienced, shamefaced, driven into the maelstrom of this great city by the coldness of their friends and the hostility of their native community; when one considers the sufferings through which they pass, alone and forsaken; the perils to which they are exposed with no sufficient counselor; the perpetual stream of these poor creatures pouring into the houses of prostitution to become bondwomen, doomed to a brief life of misery and an early and forgotten grave, his heart is stirred with a desire to do some small part in redeeming them from their sad fate and restoring them to a happy and womanly life.

When one has to deal with numbers of little children who have come into life handicapped by an ill name, a weak physique, and an inherited weakness of character, he feels that it is worthy of the best effort of the best science to secure for these innocent and unfortunate children those safeguards and benefits which are enjoyed by their little neighbors who are so fortunate as to be more happily born.