

## WHAT IS MEANT BY ADEQUATE AFTER-CARE FOR ORPHAN CHILDREN

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The orphan home of today is a comparatively new institution. Of old its sole purpose was to cover a multitude of sins. It was a detention home where the physical wants of the child were more or less adequately met. A change came when it was realized that the orphan asylum existed to perform a vital function—to train and prepare future members of society. The institution must therefore so mould the child, which comes to it at a tender age, that it may be prepared to take up the battle of life; in other words, it must combine in one the functions of the home, the church, the school and the State.

The arbitrary standard of an age limit is, however, universally maintained. In earlier days of institutional life, this standard was fourteen years and lower. Most progressive institutions, such as the Hebrew Sheltering Orphan Asylum, have raised this period of infancy and child dependence to the age of sixteen years.

Granted that the institution is successful in setting up for the child during its stay there a domestic, religious and social environment fairly true to life; granted that the child is equipped with an education, is imbued with moral strength and is taught a trade—the obligation to the child is only half fulfilled. Who will see that this equipment stands the child in good stead? Who will prevent the child from getting into a blind alley occupation? Who is to protect the child from succumbing to temptation? Who will share in its joys and lend a helping hand in times of distress? The child leaves the orphan home at a most crucial stage in its life. It not only enters a new birth—its youth—it enters a new and strange world. It understands neither the world nor itself. Some of them may be fortunate in having a parent or a relative living. The lot of these fortunate ones is not always a happy one. Not infrequently they are a prey of their kin, who are ready to exploit them just as soon as these young ones have reached a stage of usefulness. Often times for fear that the child may

become a burden the parent shirks all responsibility. Not long ago I witnessed a discharge of children in the city office of the Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Society. An elderly man entered. He came in response to a letter from the office to call for his two boys. In a most pitiful manner he pleaded his inability to support the two boys. While he was relating his tale, the quick eye of the manager perceived the edge of a wage book protruding from the man's side pocket.

"What is your occupation?" the man was asked.

"Oh, I have no occupation; I do anything I can get hold of."

"Let me see your pay book," the manager demanded.

All confusion, the man handed over the book. It appeared that he was in the cloak trade, earning a very neat weekly wage. Fortunately, the two boys were exceedingly well prepared to enter upon life's duties, having received a high-school education and thorough commercial training besides, so that they really did not depend upon the whim and sense of irresponsibility on the part of the parent. I dare say, however, that in the majority of cases these people are more careful than the father in this particular instance. The great majority of the children go to boarding homes where, for a reasonable sum of money, they secure board and shelter and whatever protection that home may choose to give them.

True, the institution in nearly every case provides the child with a small sum of money, perhaps enough to bear it through the vicissitudes of job hunting. But once the longed-for job is procured, "a visit to the home on Sunday" generally constitutes the sole after-care exercised by many orphan asylums over and for its former wards. The child is frequently left to be guided by an ignorant parent or disinterested foster parent at an age most critical in everyone's life. Indeed, it is a time when the child's social instincts are under-

going a rapid development and it will depend solely upon outside direction as to whether they will lead him into a life of high ideals or make him an unsocial being for life.

It was due primarily to the sympathetic foresight of a noble woman that, while the directors and superintendent of the Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Society were carefully transplanting the children to the new cottage homes at Pleasantville, N. Y., a definite attempt on a comprehensive scale was made—perhaps the first in the history of Jewish child-caring—to provide a strong after-care organization for this transitory period in the child's life immediately upon his discharge from the parent institution. Gifted with unbounded sympathy, a genius for being able to make herself helpful, Miss Alice L. Seligsberg, for many years a friend of the children and formerly the directress of the social activities of the institution, was, by virtue of these gifts, the one person divined to originate this work. Encouraged by a few generous and broad-minded business men and by the moral and active support of a group of former club leaders and the superintendent of the Orphanage, she proceeded to organize the work. It resulted in the establishment of Fellowship House, an institution financially and administratively independent of the Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Society. Organized in January, 1913, Fellowship House has already inaugurated four kinds of activities:

1. It established a *Guild of Friends*, whose sole purpose it is to take the place of the parent, the relative and the friend of the child. Although the members of the Guild may come from all walks of life they have one trait in common, namely, a genuine interest in the well-being of their little frined. Their entire aim is to establish a friendship with the children assigned to them and, indirectly, without making the beneficiaries conscious of it, to bring a higher and more hopeful view into their lives. This phase of the work is being accomplished in a most natural way. The Guild is officially informed by the Central Office of the Orphanage of impending discharges. A group of members of this Guild, called friends, is then invited to par-

ticipate in an excursion to Pleasantville. The meeting of the "friends" and children is an informal one. This visit is repeated at intervals once or twice. During these visits an attachment springs up between the two, which is naturally maintained when the child upon its discharge returns to the city. The "friend" submits a confidential report about the child to the Guild of Friends once a month. For at least three years the member is expected to keep a live interest in the child. The sole reward for this arduous task is the pleasure and satisfaction to be derived from the work itself. That these friends, who are each in charge of an individual case, may keep in touch with each other and that they may engage in the work intelligently, the Guild holds monthly meetings. At these meetings, in addition to discussing individual cases of children, a topic that has some bearing upon their work is introduced by an expert social worker and discussed by the assembly.

2. Of equal importance is the child's *material well-being*. To that end the House conducts a *vocational guidance and employment bureau*. Happily, the children of the Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Orphan Asylum have the advantage of a system of education introduced by Dr. L. B. Bernstein, which co-ordinates within a period of nine years academic and vocational branches, equipping every graduate with a high school education and a thorough mechanical or commercial training. But here the hard task begins. The graduate must be fitted into the industrial world. A misfit may mean the child's failure in life. All the data concerning the child are gathered several months before the child's leaving. The child is personally known to the head worker. Upon his or her return to the city, the Bureau provides the graduate with employment *where there is an opportunity for development*. His work is then followed up. Sometimes a change is necessary. This may result from a consultation of employer with the Bureau. The Bureau then makes the change. The Bureau also keeps in touch with the older alumni and has already procured for a large number of them more desirable positions.

3. The spiritual life of the child is not overlooked. That the soul may be kept from starvation, that fewer may drift away from Judaism, *Friday evening services have been instituted.* These are generally attended by a spirited group of boys and girls, a large number of whom constituted themselves into a choir.

4. That the old friendships may be furthered and old ties strengthened, *the House maintains in regular settlement fashion a Social Center for the alumni.* It aims to set up a wholesome environment for recreation, exercise and social intercourse. Under this heading I may briefly mention the following activities: Four adult and three junior clubs are in full swing at the present time. A stenography class; talks on "Parenthood," on "First Aid to the Injured"; frequent entertainments, numerous outings; a baseball team, a tennis circle and a glee club are the activities instituted during the short existence of the House. A recent addition is a bank, which already holds over \$200 of the children's savings.

A feature which the Society is very much interested in developing is the democratic administration of the House. Already there is a House Committee, consisting of only a few members of the Society, the head worker and a large representation of delegates from all the clubs. Here all matters pertaining to policy are discussed and passed upon. All these various activities of the House are under the direct supervision of the head worker.

Thus Fellowship House tends to help the child in every possible way to adjust itself to the new environment and new conditions by providing it with a friend, giving it a good start with a suitable position and affording it an opportunity for wholesome recreation; at the same time they are made to feel that, when time is ripe, they will be called upon to assist in the same way their little brothers and sisters.

Fellowship House Society may rightfully claim some degree of success in its undertaking. The increasing attendance, which has already outgrown its present quarters, is a hopeful sign. A greater and more varied system of recreation will be introduced in the more spacious quarters

the Society is about to move into. If possible a basketball court will be set up. Intersettlement games of all kinds will be especially encouraged. At the same time a systematic attempt will be made to help them to better their material conditions. Advanced commercial courses, civil service, advanced mechanical drawing and kindred subjects will be gradually introduced; and an active co-operation with evening trade and high schools will be maintained, where this is deemed to be the wiser course.

Thus carefully watched and wisely directed through one of the most important periods of their lives, these children cannot fail to respond promptly and to develop into a stronger and nobler manhood and womanhood.

### EXCHANGE BUREAU

WANTED—Two trained workers for Jewish Hospital Social Service and family rehabilitation work. General Social Service Bureau, 516 North Fourth Street, Philadelphia.

Jewish Charity Organization in large city wishes mature Jewish woman for position of visiting housekeeper. Write, stating age, experience and qualifications. Jewish Aid Society of Chicago, Frances Taussig, superintendent.

The General Social Service Bureau of Philadelphia announces that it has two scholarships to offer for the Philadelphia Training School for Social Work. One of these scholarships is filled for the current year, but the other is still vacant, and is open to a Jewish young man or woman who will make an acceptable candidate. Requirements are fitness for Jewish social work, particularly in the field of hospital social service and case work. The trainee is expected to devote his or her field work to the organization supplying the scholarship, as is customary. Address applications until October 1st to the General Social Service Bureau, 516 North Fourth Street, Philadelphia, Leon Stern, Director.

## MUNICIPAL DESERTION BUREAU.

Below will be found a report recently submitted to Commissioner Drummond of the Department of Public Charities, in reference to the establishment of a Desertion Bureau by the City of New York. It is interesting to note that this is, perhaps, the first effort made to induce the establishment of such a bureau by the city authorities. The success of the National Desertion Bureau, conducted under the auspices of the National Conference of Jewish Charities, paved the way for the attempt in New York.

### Report

In accordance with the following resolution adopted at the Fourth New York City Conference of Charities and Correction, held on May 15, 1913, a committee composed of Walter H. Liebmann, chairman; Victor F. Ridder, Hon. Robert C. Cornell, Hon. Edward J. Dooley, Mrs. S. Elkeles, Ralph K. Jacobs, John A. Kingsbury, and Monroe M. Goldstein, secretary, was appointed to carry out the purpose of the said resolution:

"Resolved, That the president appoint a committee to urge upon the city authorities the establishment of a bureau in connection with the Department of Public Charities to deal with the problem of family desertion."

An investigation made by the committee shows the following:

1. That dependency due to family desertion is a heavy drain upon the public and private charities of the city of New York; that there are at the present time about 8,000 abandoned children toward whose maintenance, in child-caring institutions, the city is paying approximately \$1,000,000; that, in addition to this, the institutions are required in many instances to supplement the allowances granted by the city for the children's maintenance. Moreover, thousands of abandoned children are maintained in their own mothers' homes by private relief agencies.

2. That the Domestic Relations Bureau, connected with the Department of Public Charities, is doing excellent work and is helpful to the Court of Domestic Relations in determining the facts in such cases as are referred to it for investigation by the

magistrates, but it does not make efforts to locate husbands whose whereabouts are unknown, or prosecute those known to be residing outside the city jurisdiction. The statement of those in charge of the Bureau to the effect that they have never been able to secure the indictment of an offender, under the Child Abandoned Law, in a case where the husband has been known to be in another State, clearly indicates that the Bureau, as constituted at the present time, is unable, comprehensively and effectually, to deal with the problem. Private agencies in this city, like the United Hebrew Charities, the National Desertion Bureau and the Legal Aid Bureau of the Educational Alliance have experienced no difficulty in securing the co-operation of the District Attorney and have secured, through extradition proceedings, the rendition of deserters from nearly every State of the Union, as the records of the District Attorney will show. In most of these cases, exemplary punishments were meted out to the defendants, and the result of the energetic efforts of these agencies has been the reduction by nearly half in the number of desertion cases entertained by them, with a corresponding decrease in the amount of relief found necessary for the families.

In order that the Domestic Relations Bureau may be enabled to do this work effectively, our committee urgently recommends that a special department be established as part of the Bureau, whose function it shall be to trace missing husbands, reunite them with their families, if possible, and failing in this, arrange for the support of the family on the part of the deserter. Where this is impossible, to bring about the man's punishment. Such a department should be operated under the guidance of a trained lawyer, who shall be assisted by an assistant attorney and five competent investigators, three of whom shall be police officers, whose duty it shall be to conduct careful and diligent inquiry as to the whereabouts of the deserters. Such a department, because of its very existence, would have a reforming effect upon "intermittent" husbands and fathers, and deter them from leaving their homes. In short, it would