

## The Speedwell Plan

Orphanages out of date—The new way—How it works

By J. W. MACMILLAN.

There is an interesting story in the autobiography of Benjamin Franklin regarding the persuasive power of the eloquence of George Whitfield. Franklin has resolved to give nothing to the collection with which Whitfield's service was to conclude. He had with him copper, silver and gold. As the orator moved on from flight to flight of appealing rhetoric Franklin resolved first to give the copper, then the silver, then the gold. And, when the plate reached him at last, he emptied his pockets, gold, silver and copper, into it.

Now the reason why Franklin had determined not to give to the collection was that he believed that Whitfield was going to build his Orphan House in the wrong place. No question as to the wisdom of building an orphanage had entered his mind. The astute man on the American continent believed in orphanages. He probably thought of them in contrast with almshouses, where adults and children were herded together, and approved the reform. Well, if Franklin were alive to-day he would have sounder reasons for trying to keep his money in his pockets. The day of orphanages is past, the day of placing out in private homes has come.

I wrote an article on this last spring and hope that I need not traverse the argument again. I am now attempting to tell of the device which seems to have proven itself efficient for bridging the period between the reception of the orphan and his installation in the private home. Many intelligent children's aid societies and kindred organizations are convinced of the evils of institutionalism and maintain only temporary shelters, where the children are kept while they are rehabilitated and permanent homes are found for them. The Speedwell plan solves this difficulty, and dispenses with the institution altogether.

While it is true, as has been often said, that a poor home is better than a good institution, yet there are very serious obstacles in the way of immediately placing children who have become wards of a child-saving agency in the homes which are ordinarily ready to receive them. Everybody knows what a horror baby-farms became. In them women, who had taken children at so much a head, usually from unmarried mothers, and to whose commercial interest it was to have them out of the way as soon as possible, as the whole payment was in one lump sum, callously starved their helpless victims slowly to death. It was not very much better where the placing-out was done by the state, and a weekly payment was substituted for the money-down quit-tance, for the homes willing to accept the children were commonly so ignorant and careless that the mortality was extremely high.

A child is always a trouble. That is why mothers deserve so well of their children. The amount of trouble varies directly with the sense of duty of the parent, and the vigor of the child. It can be reduced to a minimum, and kept within bounds, where you have a low type of parent and a child whose rationing keeps it constantly feeble. That was the condition towards which the earlier placing-out systems approximated.

The virtue of the Speedwell plan is that it represents a sustained effort so to regulate and systematize boarding-out as to place its good effects at a maximum and its possible bad effects at a minimum. The chief features of the plan may be summarized thus:

- 1.—The selection of a neighborhood where conditions are healthful, and containing a number of good homes available. This selected neighborhood is known as a unit.
- 2.—Constant oversight, especially as to diet and hygiene, on the part of a salaried physician and nurse, who are thoroughly familiar with this class of cases and competent to deal with them.
- 3.—Keeping the children indefinitely in these homes until their digestion and vitality have reached a condition of vigor.
- 4.—The training in this neighborhood of a number of foster-mothers, who, by constantly taking infants and young children into their homes, become fairly expert in handling them under conditions totally unlike those offered by institutions and far superior to them.

It will be apparent that the payments to the foster-homes will require to be larger than in the days when a child was given to those who bid lowest for its possession. Such low payments were in reality bids for incompetence, as, had the child been well

looked after, the home had been exploited. It is claimed, however, that even with these higher payments for the homes the expense is much less than that of institutions handling the same number of children. The constant cost of plant and upkeep is saved. A Speedwell unit expends or contracts according to the number of children requiring aid. The overhead cost is eliminated.

The first unit of this system was started in Morristown, N.J., sixteen years ago. The unit was formed around Speedwell avenue, from which the name is derived. After finding the suitable homes, and a doctor and nurse with understanding and sympathy of child nature, the next step was the selecting of a local committee of women who should constitute the managers of the undertaking. They helped in raising money and supplies, assisted in friendly visiting in the homes, and generally exercised supervision over the work.

In these eighteen years over three thousand children have been boarded out. One of the first things learned was that acute cases of infantile diseases should not be placed in these homes. It is all very well to seek change and country air for weakling children, but not until they are fit to leave a hospital. After acute disease had subsided, however, the results in rapid convalescence have been most happy. Here is where the home is more efficient than the hospital. In these eighteen years no child over two years of age has died in the unit, and the mortality rate for those younger has been quite low.

In respect of communicable disease, these homes,

separate from each other, prevent the spread of the disease among the children. This is the ever-dreaded danger where children are collected in numbers together.

It is rather surprising that, where the results are so satisfactory, so few societies have organized on this plan. There are but three in America, though some have been started in France. The reason lies, without doubt, in the tendency of philanthropic efforts to persist in their accustomed forms. Charity is like religion in this, that is essential conservative. The astonishment of the average business man at the hesitancy of the churches in uniting with each other is due to his not having observed the different values which churches and factories attach to their assets. A factory or a store can set forth all its possessions in the form of a financial balance-sheet. Even the "goodwill" can be rated in dollars. Not so in religion and philanthropy, where sacredness attaches to everything. As a thing grows old in business it is steadily qualifying for the scrap-heap; but when a thing grows old in regions where generosity replaces acquisitiveness, and the tender emotions are in play, it becomes venerable. That is why the same man is more conservative in his home than in his business, and still more conservative in his charities or his religion than in his home.

There is a great moral here. Just as the world of business needs more of the tone and quality of humanitarianism, so does the world of humane effort need more of the practical and elastic temper which is found in business life. The industrial order suffers from being too much mechanized, the social service activities suffer from being too little intelligent. The world would be the better for thinking of wages in terms of human lives, and for thinking of charity in terms of output and product.

## Conservation of Human Efficiency

Dr. Hattie, Medical Officer of Health of Nova Scotia estimates that our economic loss from unnecessary deaths in Canada is \$150,000,000 per annum. Prof. Irving Fraser, of Yale, estimates that the saving possible from better conditions of public health in the United States is far greater than \$1,500,000,000 and may be \$3,500,000,000. It is estimated, on the highest authority, that in North America, we lose 690,000 people annually by deaths from preventable causes. These are appalling figures, even to-day, when we are accustomed to the toll of human life which is being taken in Europe. Feeble-minded children cost America \$90,000,000, and crime costs \$600,000,000 a year. A great proportion of this loss could be saved if proper hygienic measures were taken by government authorities. We cannot estimate what proportion is due to individual neglect, and in any case, it may be difficult for us to secure any improvement in that direction; but we know that much of the loss is due to lack of intelligent development and to criminal indifference, and that we only need courage to remedy these evils by means of government organization.

The very sacrifices which are being made in the war demand that we who are at home should devote our attention to laying the foundations which will insure healthy living conditions and increased efficiency in the future.

I make the following recommendations as being the first steps necessary to be taken to enable us to apply proper remedies for such social evils as we have and to promote national prosperity in the future:

1. The Federal and Provincial government machinery for dealing with the control of the planning, settlement and development of land should be extended and improved; the surveying branches of the governments should be strengthened and more elaborate surveying work assigned to them; and a complete and co-ordinated system of federal, provincial, and municipal administration of land resources should be devised, with the whole organization centralized in a department or permanent commission of the Federal Government.

2. A comprehensive survey of the social, physical and industrial conditions of all rural territory should be made, with the object of ascertaining the main facts regarding the problems of rural life and rural development, and of enabling constructive proposals to be made regarding the development of the human and natural resources of the country. This survey should comprise, inter alia, a complete inventory of all lands which have been already surveyed and homesteaded, with a view to securing their proper settlement, and devising means to lessen injurious speculation. Settlement of remote areas should be

suspended while the survey is being made, and no Crown lands should be settled until after proper planning.

3. Provincial governments should reconsider their systems of administering colonization highways and municipal affairs, with special regard to the need for securing more co-ordination, uniformity and efficiency in all matters pertaining to local government, and for increasing the responsibilities and powers of municipal authorities under the skilled advice of a central department in each province.

4. Model regulations setting a minimum standard of sanitation and housing, building construction and general development should be agreed to by Provincial governments and municipalities in joint conference and then made compulsory in each province.

5. Carefully planned model towns or "garden cities" should be established on suitable sites as object lessons in industrial development, and of increasing production by scientific means and providing more varied opportunities for labor, including returned soldiers. Areas in these towns should be reserved for both manufacture and agriculture, on lines which have already been successful.

6. Planning and development acts, corresponding to the draft act of the Commission of Conservation, should be passed in Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Prince Edward Island, and the town planning acts in the other provinces should be changed in name and widened in scope, so far as may be necessary, to make them applicable to deal adequately with both rural and urban development. All rural and urban land should be planned and regulated by proper "development schemes," prepared under such planning and development acts, with a view to securing health, convenience, efficiency and amenity in connection with its use for building or other purposes, and discouraging speculation.

7. The problem of re-instating ex-service men into industrial and social life should be dealt with by the municipalities under the guidance and control of provincial departments, and provision should be made for placing such men in suitable and congenial vocations, either in rural or in urban localities. They should be placed where their abilities can be put to the best use, where it is reasonably certain that adequate reward can be obtained for their labor, and where facilities for social intercourse and education are available.

Development schemes dealing with wide areas should be prepared in advance of any settlement on the land of returned soldiers, and such schemes should be economically sound, independently of the financial aid that may be given as a reward for military service.—T. A. in "Conservation."