

NUMBERS.

The number of infants that have been dealt with in one way or another during the year is 1,017, and at the end of the year there were 648 on the books, being 173 more than there were at the beginning of the year. This increase is partly the effect of the extension of the Act to children of six years instead of four years, and partly, no doubt, because of the publicity given to the subject during the passage of the Bill through the Legislature. The following table summarises the transactions of the year :—

Particulars of Admissions to and Removals from Licensed Foster-homes during 1908.

	Under 6 Months.	Between 6 Months and 1 Year.	Between 1 and 2 Years.	Between 2 and 3 Years.	Between 3 and 4 Years.	Between 4 and 5 Years.	Between 5 and 6 Years.	Over 6 Years, and still in Foster-homes.	Total.
<i>Entered on the Books.</i>									
On the books at the beginning of the year	46	62	124	104	68	50	20	1	475
Placed in licensed homes during the year	244	90	90	40	30	12	14	..	520
Adopted with premium (exclusive of those already on the books)	17	2	1	2	..	..	..	..	22
Total .. ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1,017
<i>Withdrawn from and remaining on the Books.</i>									
Removed from foster-homes by parents or guardians	30	47	67	40	32	11	10	2	239
Deaths	17	5	4	..	..	..	..	..	26
Adoptions from licensed homes without premiums	3	8	11	7	1	1	2	..	33
In homes to which exemption was granted ..	2	4	2	6	7	3	11	..	35
Brought under operation of the Industrial Schools Act	3	3	6	5	5	..	..	..	22
Written off the books for various causes	2	..	4	3	2	1	..	2	14
On the books at 31st December, 1908	97	103	149	103	78	66	36	16	648
Total .. ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1,017

Considering the number of children born out of wedlock, and the certainty that there must be many others of legitimate birth who by force of circumstances have to be placed in the care of strangers, it is not to be supposed that the figures here given represent all the children who are legally subject to the provisions of the Act. But people do not like supervision and subjection to rules, even those with the best possible intention towards the children, and, for this as well as for other reasons, it is to be feared that many risk the penalties imposed by the Act upon those who place children in unlicensed homes equally with the keepers of them.

FOSTER-HOMES.

The 648 infants on the books at the end of the year were in foster-homes as follows :—

In 347 homes each having one	347
In 87 homes each having two	174
In 25 homes each having three	75
In 9 homes each having four	36
In 2 homes each having five	10
In 1 home having six	6

471

648

Eighteen of the homes were those in which children under six were boarded out by Charitable Aid Boards

The total number of licensed homes was 615, so that at the end of the year there were 144 licensed homes in which, for the time, no infants were boarded.

Although as a general rule it is recognised that, as regards the number of infants in one home, the fewer the better, it has not been found necessary, in view of the varying conditions of the homes, to prescribe any absolute limitation. Every home is, of course, limited to a stated number, but whether that number is one or more depends upon the circumstances. In every case in which the license is for more than one infant care is taken, if the limitation appears necessary, to prescribe how many of the number may be under the age of twelve months,