

During the year 219 orders of adoption were made, and one order cancelling an adoption order; 32 of the adoption orders provided for premiums, and 187 were without monetary consideration. The following shows the ages of the adopted children :—

Under 6 months,	21 with premium,	56 without premium.
Between 6 and 12 months,	1	18
„ 1 and 2 years	3	29
„ 2 and 3 „	2	21
„ 3 and 4 „	..	13
„ 4 and 5 „	..	15
„ 5 and 6 „	1	12
„ 6 and 7 „	1	1
„ 7 and 8 „	..	9
„ 8 and 9 „	..	1
„ 9 and 10 „	..	5
„ 10 and 11 „	..	2
„ 11 and 12 „	..	2
„ 12 and 13 „	..	1
„ 14 and 15 „	..	2
	32	187

The adopting persons were,—

Husband and wife jointly	..	..	..	..	204
Wife alone	..	..	..	..	8
Unmarried man	..	..	..	..	5
Spinster	..	..	..	..	2

The amount of the premiums ranged from £10 to £100.

There is much reason to believe that monetary transactions arising out of agreements for adoption are not always disclosed to the Court, and that in consequence the protection contemplated by the Act is not always extended to the infants for whose benefit it was intended, for the Department has no status in respect of any adoption unless the payment of a sum of money forms part of the agreement. It is much to be desired that all adoptions should either be preceded by a probationary term—such, for instance, as would be afforded if there were preliminary and final orders separated by a period of, say, twelve months—or (what would amount to the same thing) that every adopted child were to be under official supervision for, say, twelve months from the date of the order. According to the terms of the Act, a Magistrate making an order of adoption has to be satisfied “that the person proposing to adopt the child is of good repute and a fit and proper person to have the care and custody thereof, and of sufficient ability to bring up, maintain, and educate the child, and that the welfare and interests of the child will be promoted by the adoption.” Nevertheless, out of the small number of adoptions that have come under the observation of this Department no less than eight have for one reason or another been the subject of more or less serious concern. The following is an outline of these cases :—

1. A child boarded out with foster-parents. Reports respecting these foster-parents were so unsatisfactory that steps were being taken to cancel the license and remove the child. In the meantime the foster-mother obtained an order of adoption.

2. Child adopted, with premium, by a labourer with a wife and five children. The District Agent reports that the house is small and overcrowded, and that had it been an ordinary application for license the application would undoubtedly have been refused.

3. A woman to whom a license as a foster-parent was refused, on the ground partly of character and partly of having an extremely unsuitable home, obtained an order for adoption.

4. A woman who, on account of her age, was refused a license as a foster-parent obtained an order to adopt an infant aged four months.

5. Child adopted from foster-home, and five months later transferred to another home by a second adoption. In the interval child suffered much neglect.

6. Child adopted, with premium, was shortly afterwards found at the point of death from neglect. Later the adopting father was imprisoned for some offence, and the child had to be sent to a Home. But for the unremitting supervision that was given to this case the child would undoubtedly have died.

7. Child adopted, with premium. Three months later the family fell into straitened circumstances, and it appeared that the child ran a risk of dying of starvation.

8. Child adopted ostensibly without premium. Some months later the adopting mother was brought before the Court for neglecting it; the order of adoption was cancelled, and the child sent to a Home.

The Act, of course, provides that any Magistrate may cancel an order of adoption, but it is obvious that much suffering may be endured by an adopted child before any neglect or ill-treatment to which it may be subjected becomes so patent as to call for public interference.

ILLEGITIMACY.

This matter may be referred to as being more or less directly connected with the operations of the Act. The number of illegitimate births registered in the Dominion during 1908 was 1,105. There is a wide difference between this number and the number (343) below the age of twelve months that were placed in foster-homes under the Act during the same period, and, in connection with what has been