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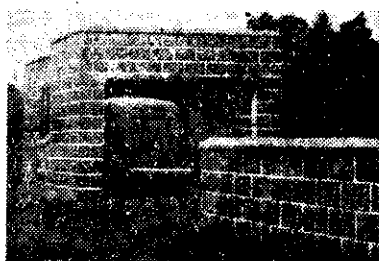
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This very attractive garage and ornamental wall was made with a Lightning Mould.

ORPHANAGES WITHOUT ORPHANS

Mrs. Mirams Answers Her Critics

THE mildness of the reaction to my article has been a surprise. I had steeled myself to meet a storm of indignation (that was the weather forecast) and while it raged to keep my eyes fixed on the future. Perhaps the reason for this friendly response is that we are all really on the same side. We are all on the side of the children. I agree that I left out many important matters, but the article was too long as it was and my aim was merely to paint the picture as I see it to-day and not to write the history of institutions for children in New Zealand as some correspondents seemed to imagine. Mr. Mathew's book is, of course, an old friend; my own copy has been well thumbed and marked, but with rare exceptions I have never been able to persuade those directly concerned to read books of this nature (Dr. Winterbourn's book on backward children is another instance). They are simply not interested.

Barking Title Was Necessary

I used the term "Orphanage" in the title because that is what most people think they are, and a title must be intelligible at a glance. If a misnomer dies hard, the authorities themselves are to blame for using an obsolete term long after it applies. As a matter of fact I was rather pleased with the title; it barked, and that is what a title should do.

I have been taken to task because I did not mention inspection by the Welfare Department; but why should I? Except perhaps to say that it does not appear to me to probe very deeply. But no doubt it goes as far as the regulations require it to go.

Another correspondent asserts that the article is based on the Curtis report. This is incorrect: it is based (1) on my own observations and deductions (2) on a fairly wide knowledge of institutions over the greater part of New Zealand, and (3) on my friendship with a large number of the children themselves, both while in the Homes and afterwards, and this is how illumination comes. Without telling you anything they tell you everything.

"A Hard Thing"

And now I am going to say a hard thing, but I must say it. The opinion of anyone not in close touch with the children themselves is worthless. Like a doctor without clinical experience: and often those who are most dogmatic are the ones who have no first-hand knowledge whatsoever. This applies with equal force to members of committees.

Congratulations to the O.P.S.S.A. for allowing no corporal punishment.

I wonder how many institutions can claim that. I regard Canon Acheson's letter as one of the most constructive of those published. He has obviously given the subject much thought in the widest sense, and his scheme might well be the pattern for future action. One writer says that if the children feel inferior it must be the fault of the public. Whose fault it is, is beside the point; the important thing is that they *do* feel it, and often suffer under it very severely.

Several writers have challenged my interpretation of the David Wills quotation. Let us take an example. If a father, or even a mother dies, the child has not yet suffered the major disaster; but should the home be broken up and the child put in an institution he is then uprooted, his emotional ties are bruised and torn, and he becomes a casualty. I am not going to be beaten on the highlight of the article! I cannot agree that a child's need for security is met in an institution. He still has no background, or at best an unhappy one, and he later enters a cold world as an isolated unit.

Good Motives Not Enough

It is true that churches started voluntary Homes in this country, and with the best motives, but the dismal fact is that good motives are no safeguard. Some of the worst deeds in history have been committed with admirable motives. One official says that parents resented being questioned, another that some parents have to be told that the Homes are not there to relieve them of their responsibilities. Exactly; there is a great temptation for some parents to use the Homes as dumping grounds: sometimes they get away with it, and that is why I emphasised the great importance of vigilant admission committees. I rejoice that some of Mr. McEldowney's boys have rallied round to defend their Home. He deserves

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