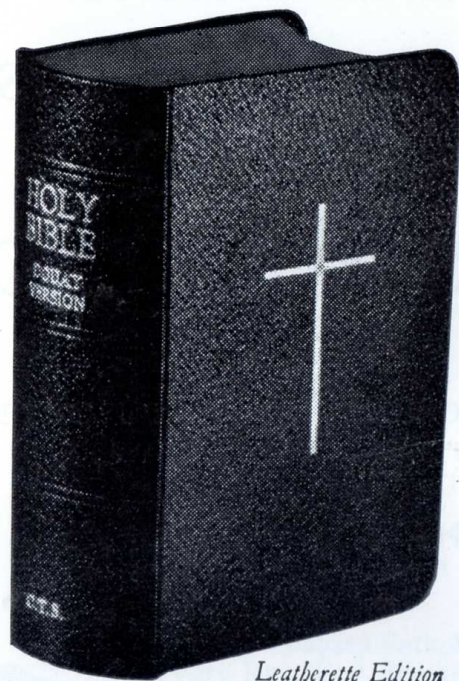


THE UNMARRIED MOTHER AND HER CHILD

By
Mary Walsh



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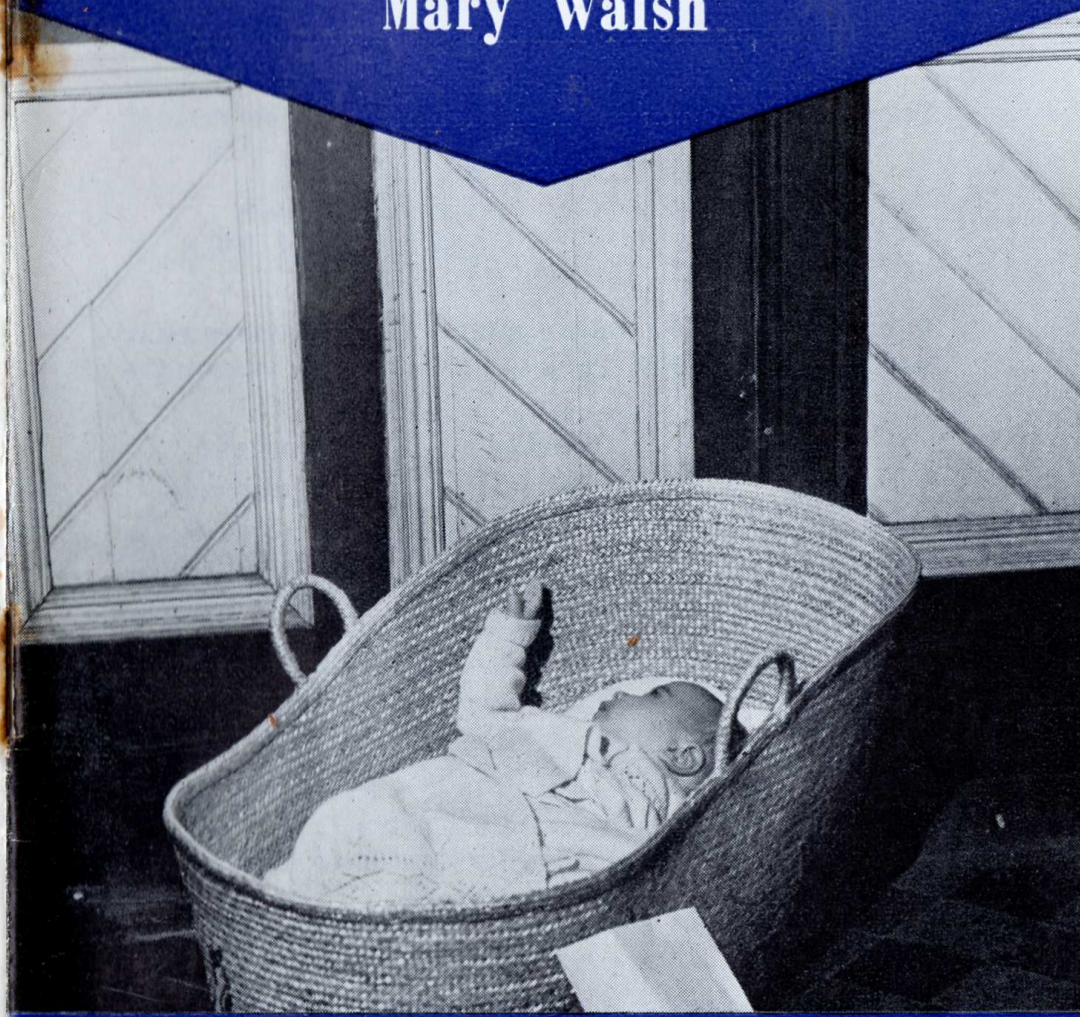
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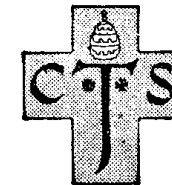
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THE UNMARRIED MOTHER AND HER CHILD

BY

MARY WALSH



LONDON

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THE UNMARRIED MOTHER AND HER CHILD

SINCE the first issue of this pamphlet in 1938 much has been done to ease the temporal problems of the unmarried mother, much more than even the most optimistic social workers could have hoped for fifteen years ago. The years have also given the writer opportunities to see at first hand a vast number of girls 'in trouble' and to see the children growing up in their various environments, and so in preparing this second edition of *The Unmarried Mother and her Child* I feel I can bring to the task a more mature mind and a wealth of new experiences. As Catholics we have a special duty to help and sustain those who, by weakness or ignorance, have brought upon themselves the burden of bearing and rearing an illegitimate child.

I would then ask my fellow Catholics to study and to try to alleviate the causes of moral failure, and especially to do all in their power to condemn the hypocrisy which makes so many families turn on their own at a time when they are in such great need. All social workers can tell of young girls sent away from home—often even out of their own country—to live in lodgings, to lie about their identity, and then to return home without the baby, often the family not even wanting to know what has happened to the child or where it is to be in the future. Shame is a very honest sentiment, and we can feel very sorry for the good family which feels itself let down and disgraced by one of its members, but this is no excuse for the uncharitable treatment so often meted out to the girl who has failed.

We are living in an age when social service is a generally approved human activity ; people in difficulties are willing

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to seek guidance from those who are competent and willing to give it, particularly if such assistance has the sanction of law or custom. Our fellow men and women outside the Church have, for various reasons, become anxious about the problems of slums, sweated labour, prostitution, broken homes and their tragic consequences.

The Catholic Church, through the great encyclicals of her Popes, offers the best practical guide to social service. Moreover, though many regard this voluntary service to their neighbours as a twentieth-century innovation, the Church has encouraged it consistently through the centuries, and the first furrows in the field of modern social work were ploughed by founders of religious Orders to meet the needs of their own day. St Vincent de Paul, whose followers, both religious and lay, are today labouring for the spiritual and temporal well-being of millions of human beings, is but one notable instance of these pioneers.

A careful analysis of the circumstances connected with the moral failure of many girls whom the writer has met in the past few years has led to a definite conclusion regarding the primary cause of these failures. This is that a feeling of insecurity, either spiritual or temporal, is always a predisposing condition.

Spiritual insecurity occurs when the individual human nature has become unbalanced because the passions, which in the right order of things should be subservient to intellect and will, have attained to a position of mastery. This may happen through the individual who has no belief in God, and therefore no fear of sin, indulging his or her sensual appetite without restraint. Numberless opportunities and encouragement for their indulgence are provided in the modern world; lust is extolled in plays and films, and books in which heroes and heroines live in an eternal triangle teach the false philosophy that in sexual fulfilment alone lies the way to human happiness. This evil has been

extended and intensified by the widespread diffusion of contraceptive knowledge and the propaganda connected with it. These activities have taught men and women a means of ridding their selfish acts of their natural consequences, and, as we might expect, this has not confined itself to the pagans who fostered its growth, but has permeated all classes of society. It has become fashionable to be immoral, 'to have a good time', and this always with the excuse that the world has changed and that men and women must move with the times. With people who preach these theories we can do little. Their philosophy is one of utter selfishness; they look only to what they can get from the world around them, whereas a sound social doctrine must take cognizance of the fact that men and women must give as well as receive, and that they are happiest who contribute most to the social good. In relation to God we are all receivers, and are givers only in so far as we serve Him by using His gifts in accordance with His designs. These are made known to us in the Ten Commandments, the acceptance of which, together with the ideas of responsibility to our Maker and our position as stewards of His goods, has in the world today come to be regarded as part of an obsolete system, but no system of thought which neglects these basic facts can lead to spiritual security.

Turning to the question of temporal insecurity, times have changed greatly since the first publication of this pamphlet in 1938. We have now a Welfare State which has abolished the means test, given family allowances, free hospital and many subsidized services, and for the present the tragedy of unemployment does not add to the causes of moral failure as it did in the years between the two wars. We have, however, a very bad legacy from the war of thousands of young couples without homes of their own; many unable to marry because of this, and many who

find their affection incapable of being sustained under the stress of living with other people, especially with in-laws, and so we have an increasing number of broken homes. Added to these are many homes broken up because of the easier divorce laws and the unfaithfulness of some married people when parted for long periods by war service, evacuation, etc., and not least the homes partly broken by mothers going out to work, many of whom are doing so because they had to during the war and grew to like the companionship of shop and factory and so find their children a burden. They also got used to having more money to spend ; this has a subtle effect on the father of a family who finds he has not the same need to provide for the material wants of his family, and in time he becomes disgruntled if he is unable to have the extra spending money which his wife's wages have made possible, and so many women go on working, leaving their children to spend the greater part of their day with strangers, thereby loosening the tie that binds the family, the tie that is forged by happily doing together the daily jobs—children going shopping with mother, waiting for the father to come home, instead of, when mother works, one of them having to rush home to light a fire and sort out a haphazard household when tired and irritable—and there is a great unifying element in family meals, when the interchange of the day's news takes place, and in the family prayers at bedtime. Where this is lacking there is danger to the children in the future. We must then, as Catholics, lend our weight to any schemes for improving the lot of working parents, to give the father a wage sufficient to enable him to support his wife and children in comfort and decency ; as neighbours we should do all we can to help young couples in their special difficulties, minding their children occasionally to let them go out together, doing a bit of shopping, welcoming them to the district, and to the church if they happen to

be Catholics, and in this way helping to make stronger and happier families.

The fact that bad housing contributes to immorality can excite no wonder. In many slum homes, human beings are unable to secure any privacy, and growing adolescents of both sexes share the same sleeping accommodation. The generally insanitary conditions prevailing seriously affect the health of these young people, tending to make them apathetic and idle. Although it is true that the level of morality is low in these places, there are people living in the most sordid slums who manage to keep their purity unstained and to live lives of intense holiness, but the fact that such as these withstand the evil effects of slum dwelling should not make us complacent. They go scathless because, though insecure in their tenure of the temporal necessities of life, they have the spiritual security of the children of God. Our moral failures come from those who want for both forms of security.

Where does Social Service Begin ?

The place to detect and to discipline the potential moral weakling is in the nursery and later in the schoolroom. Therefore the first link in the chain of service must be forged by the mother. The baby in its cradle who cries until it is picked up is already an exacting little person. He knows what he wants and gets it, and unless dealt with firmly and kindly the cry-baby changes into the worrying, fretful toddler, into the difficult school child, and so perversity develops, the character becoming more twisted with the years until we have the juvenile delinquent, the youth who will not keep a job because he doesn't like it, who runs illicit affairs because he 'must' indulge his passions, and who, if he should marry, develops into a selfish tyrannical husband. So the vicious circle widens with age and as more opportunities for indulging particular whims present them-

selves. Children need love and understanding and can only be really happy within a disciplined group.

The training of children calls for unselfishness, for loyalty and the co-operation of both parents, for they must not err in being too strict nor in being too lenient, and above all they must be united in their attitude to the children, sharing all their difficulties with each other. We so often find mother not telling father, or *vice versa*, and in dealing with unmarried mothers this is a common finding, the girl has told one parent 'but daren't tell the other'.

The school, too, must take its share in safeguarding children from serious moral lapses in later life. This is done in the first place by such religious training as will strengthen the sense of spiritual security. Moreover, the discipline of the school should call for self-control on the part of the children. In addition to this, those responsible may do much by making school work vital and interesting. This is specially necessary in regard to the teaching of dull and backward pupils, for it is from the ranks of these that the greater number of moral failures come. Particularly in the last three years of school life, such pupils should be the subject of careful and sympathetic observation, and teachers in charge of them should take pains to find out useful activities for which they individually have aptitude. The school programme should be adapted so that these children may be helped onwards in these pursuits, thus finding encouragement through the experience of success, and developing interests helpful to them later. The subjects of the ordinary school curriculum often deal with matters too remote from the lives of children to awaken interest in the weaker pupils, and the consequent apathy, boredom, and sense of failure have unfortunate effects upon character. The present set-up of schools with very large classes makes this extremely difficult in practice.

Sex Education in Schools

The question of whether the facts of life should be taught in schools is a vexed one, but my own personal experience is that few young people go wrong as a result of complete ignorance, but many do so as the result of half knowledge acquired furtively. This teaching should be given in the home, or, rather, it should be acquired during the years by children watching the close relationships of the family, the mutual love of the parents for one another, their unceasing care and nurture of the children, who will ask questions as they are growing up. The school can add to this knowledge when teaching Catechism and giving instruction on the Commandments. The difficulty of any group teaching on the sexual function is that individuals vary enormously in the rate at which they develop intellectually, and emotionally, and so it would be rare to find all in one group ready for the same teaching at the same time. There is always the danger that experiment may well follow sex teaching in certain adolescents. The starting of marriage-training courses for engaged couples could do a great deal to help the parents of the future to face the training of their children with greater confidence than did the parents in the past, who frequently dodged the issue because of their own inadequate knowledge. It is most important that the child's outlook on sex should be as normal as possible, and this is only achieved when it is accepted as part of the creative plan of an all-perfect Creator.

Preventive Work

There is one group of girls who are rarely met with as unmarried mothers; these are the daughters of comfortably circumstanced practising Catholic parents. Therefore in order to determine the best means of preventive help it is well to consider the advantages enjoyed by these which are

denied to the group in which so many failures are found. The average middle-class girl enters a profession or a business career which she has chosen for herself, and so for the working part of the day is happy and satisfied. She has had from infancy the background of secure home life where each member, playing an active part in the scheme of things, feels his real worth and responsibility to the family. The parents are the type who remain in one locality, where their children make friends, grow up with them and later develop their own social life. Compare this state of things with the circumstances of a child who has experienced unhappiness and maladjustment in the home, or who has been brought up in an institution, or has been forced to leave its natural environment in search of employment in a large city. The loneliness of the individual in the second case is a serious handicap in life and its replacement by genuine friendship is one of the surest means of averting evil. I remember the late Fr. Vincent McNabb, O.P., stressing over and over again through his years of labour the importance of making young people feel that they are needed and that as individuals they matter tremendously. He used to point out the lesson in psychology to be learned by watching the lovely rite of the Sacrament of Baptism in which the child from the slums is met at the church door as if he or she were an important dignitary of the Church.

Do we as Catholics remember to make friends with those who attend our churches? I think not. It is an all-too-common sight to see the regular congregation of the churches entertaining one another and going off in groups from Mass without so much as a thought or a look for the outsiders. During the last war I attended a Catholic church in the Midlands every Sunday for three years. My work was such that I had little opportunity to join organized parish activities, and never once in all that time did any member of the congregation so much as wish me 'Good

morning'. To that church came many Irish labouring lads and also aliens working on farms. They used to line up against a wall opposite the church and talk in little groups amongst themselves until the public houses opened their doors. This goes on every Sunday in the year all over Great Britain and its remedy is simple neighbourliness and kindness without condescension. This is the greatest form of preventive work, and is not the business of the clergy, but of the laity who have homes of their own, and can become the friends and advisers of those who are far from their own homes and families. This kind of work for souls requires effort and self-sacrifice. It is harder to take on one girl or boy, perhaps of little intelligence, and work steadily for his or her welfare, regularly writing to him or her, or inviting him or her to one's home for a friendly chat, than it is to become enthusiastic about many good works that demand little or no self-sacrifice. Preventive work is much less spectacular than rescue work but is much more constructive. Moreover, if wisely undertaken and carried through, it is a means of averting many of the tragedies which, even when dealt with by a skilled rescue worker, are really only patched up. No boy or girl who has known moral failure comes through unscathed and with a power of resistance as strong as it was before the failure.

Case Histories

Case 1

Margaret M., aged 16½, illegitimate herself, brought up in convent orphanage. Placed out in service when aged 14 years at a wage of £1 weekly. When seen was six months pregnant and did not know any relevant details of the father of her child. She had been taken to a dance hall by a girl she had met casually whilst shopping for her employers. Her employers were Catholics, gave her a weekly half day and two free evenings, but had not done anything to ensure

any social life for her. The orphanage in which she was brought up was in the country and their after-care work was sketchy. This girl's baby was adopted because she was entirely without a family to help her. She was found employment in a hospital, where amongst a happy friendly group of young people she has made very good progress.

Case 2

Mary E., aged 22, five months pregnant when seen, an Irish girl of working-class family in a small town. She had worked as nursemaid with a family of three children. When Mary had been there three years the mother of the children left the house following a quarrel, her chief complaint being her husband's attention and praise of Mary, who was a very competent girl. The parents of this girl were written to by a Catholic social worker and asked to take her home. They ignored the request. Their parish priest was written to, but he did not succeed in getting the parents to act. The husband is now divorced by his wife and Mary is still acting as housekeeper to the man. Her baby, born prematurely, died.

Both of these cases show how tremendously important it is to choose employment wisely when placing a young girl. It is so usual for employers to receive references as to the character of their prospective employee, but most unusual for them to provide a reference. In the second case one feels that the girl's parents were weak. When interviewed, they said they did not believe their daughter capable of living a bad life as she sent home money regularly, etc.

Rescue Work

When a girl is actually expecting a baby, it is imperative that she should be helped. Apart from religious considerations, her physical need is urgent. In order to assist her it is important to study the change in mental outlook

which her condition produces (most married couples would agree that pregnancy and the adjustment to it can be difficult and towards the end of the time many normal, placid women become nervy and inclined to be temperamental). There can be no group or mass methods applied in dealing with these cases, each girl needs individual care and guidance. Unmarried mothers tend to be extremely difficult and trying. This increases the need for patience in the would-be helper. The latter must understand the pain and humiliation of the other woman when she realizes that (as so often happens) the father of the coming child no longer cares what happens to her. Life holds no sadder experience than to be deserted by a friend in a time of need and stress.

The girl should be advised to see a priest and to discuss her problems with him. One finds so often that as a result of this she goes to Confession and Holy Communion and feels happier and more ready to face the future.

When the advice of a trained social worker can be obtained for the solution of the material side of the problem, it should be sought. There is so much to consider when offering advice which is likely to be overlooked by the inexperienced. For instance, the tendency of the inexperienced lay person who deals with a case is to fall in with the suggestions made by the girl, and these may be unwise or selfish, or both. Usually her one desire at this stage is to escape until the whole affair is over and then to be free to leave the baby and start life as though nothing had happened. It is the common urge of frail human nature which wants to escape suffering, but it is not always for the girl's ultimate good that she should be assisted to do this. Charity demands that the coming baby be considered; it is so helpless and its whole future may be determined by the advice given to the mother before its birth. The whole

question should be discussed with her and she should be urged to put forward her own plans and to accept a certain amount of responsibility for making arrangements for her confinement and for the after-care of the baby. Another person's trust in her can have a most uplifting effect on her spirits. The illegitimate child has a sad, shifting existence, however much it is possible to remedy this position—unwanted before birth, unwelcome at its birth, in many cases spending the years of babyhood and early childhood in a series of different homes, and faced at adolescence with the loneliness and hardship of making its own way in the world, without a niche in a family circle to which it may turn in times of sickness and privation. With few exceptions this is only too true a picture of the life of an illegitimate child. For its parents society has a place, however bad they may be, but so often the child must be kept in the background, not belonging to any warm family circle.

Once the girl is willing to face up to her responsibility she should be given generous help. We must always bear in mind that the seemingly difficult, unco-operative girls are the ones who are most deeply hurt, and my own experience has been that if all that resentful energy can be directed into constructive channels, these are the girls who cope with their problems and make good mothers to their babies.

As regards the best arrangements that can be made, these obviously will vary with individual cases. In many dioceses Catholic homes for unmarried mothers exist. It is usual for the girl to enter the home for about three months before the birth of her child and to remain for about three months afterwards. This is often the best course to advise for a very young girl or one who is homeless.

The older woman is best advised to seek hospital care, particularly if she has a relative or friend with whom she can live during the waiting time. My own experience has

produced and strengthened the conviction that in suitable cases boarding out with a motherly woman acts better than the treatment meted out in institutions, where rules must be made for the greatest good of the largest numbers. This arrangement is particularly satisfactory if the woman is willing to take care of the baby whilst the mother goes out to work. It gives to the mother a domestic background and to the baby a niche in the scheme of things because when a baby is fostered in a good working-class home it finds a place in the affections of members of the family and their friends. In this way it makes for itself the next best thing to the real home which is a child's birthright and which experience proves to be its surest bulwark against the buffetings of the world.

In dealing with each case we have to consider the financial aspect. This is where the help of the trained social worker is invaluable. He or she will advise so that the financial responsibility is borne by the individual or authority whose duty it is to support the girl. It is not fair to expect a home outside the diocese in which the girl normally lives to support her without payment. In suitable cases the National Assistance Board will make a grant towards the girl's maintenance. In others, the parents of the girl—and unfortunately only in rare cases the man responsible—can be persuaded to help. Where the case is clearly suitable the local Catholic Rescue and Protection Society will contribute. When the pregnancy is advanced National Health benefits are payable (for thirteen weeks normally), commencing six weeks before the confinement. It is most unwise to try to support a girl wholly or to expect voluntary societies to take over the cost without tapping other sources from which help may be forthcoming. Unfortunately there are many girls who through force of circumstances are not able to obtain help from public funds and these will be dependent on charity. These are chiefly of

the drifting type who lose insurance cards or don't stay long enough in employment to be in benefit, and who by drifting from one place to another have no settled abode. The support of the destitute, is a duty of the State for which Catholic and non-Catholic taxpayers alike contribute heavily.

Here one might add the hope that many more Catholics will offer themselves at the Universities as students for the Social Science courses. We are heavily in the debt of the trained social workers of all denominations who are found ready and eager to help Catholic mothers and children, notably the almoners of the various hospitals, the Children's Officers and Public Health staffs of local authorities, and officials of the Ministries of Health, Labour and National Assistance. They manage to infuse so much kindness and human interest into their work. I would like to be able to say that salaries for social workers are good enough to attract the right type of intelligent people, but unfortunately this is not the case. Most of them are below the £450 a year level. One hopes this will improve—as an incentive to recruitment and as a recompense to those who are doing such good work from a sense of vocation. Despite this, I still hope many of my fellow Catholics will consider training in social work, for they have so much to give, especially in these times.

Catholic Societies dealing with Social Problems

DIOCESAN CHILDREN'S WELFARE SOCIETIES

WESTMINSTER AND BRENTWOOD	The Rev. Administrator, Crusade of Rescue, 73 St. Charles Square, Ladbroke Grove, London, W.10.	LADBroke 5305
BIRMINGHAM	The Rev. Administrator, Birmingham Diocesan Rescue Society, Coleshill, Birmingham.	Coleshill 3187
CARDIFF	The Rev. Secretary, The Catholic Rescue Society, 30 Bute Terrace, Cardiff.	
CLIFTON	The Rev. Secretary, Diocesan Rescue Society, Our Lady of the Rosary, Kingsweston Lane, Lawrence Weston, Bristol.	Avonmouth 3380
HEXHAM AND NEWCASTLE	The Rev. Administrator, Diocesan Rescue Society, 9 Jesmond Park West, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 7.	Newcastle 81-1955
LANCASTER	The Rev. Administrator, Lancaster Diocesan Protection & Rescue Society, 28 Bairstow Street, Preston.	Preston 2703
(CARLISLE OFFICE)	27 Spencer Street, Carlisle.	Carlisle 22376
LEEDS	The Rev. Administrator, Catholic Welfare Office, 9 Mount Preston, Leeds, 2.	Leeds 21137
LIVERPOOL	The Rev. Administrator, Liverpool Catholic Children's Protection Society, 150 Brownlow Hill, Liverpool, 3.	Royal 2374
MENEVIA	The Rev. Administrator, Menevia Diocesan Rescue Society, 35 Lloyd Street, Llandudno, Caernarvons.	Llandudno 7546
MIDDLESBROUGH	The Rev. Administrator, Diocesan Rescue Society, 106 George Street, Hull.	Hull 33590
NORTHAMPTON	The Rev. Administrator, Northampton Diocesan Child Protection and Welfare Society, 23 High Street, Shefford, Beds.	Shefford 317

NOTTINGHAM	The Rev. Administrator, Diocesan Rescue Society, The Garden Cottage, Colston Bassett, Notts.
PLYMOUTH	The Rev. Secretary, Plymouth Diocesan Children's Rescue Society, The Blessed Sacrament Presbytery, Fore Street, Heavitree, Exeter. Exeter 2596
PORTSMOUTH	The Rev. Administrator, Catholic Child Welfare Society, 18 The Ave., Southampton. Southampton 28092
SALFORD	The Rev. Secretary, Salford Catholic Protection and Rescue Society, Parrs Wood Road South, Didsbury, Manchester, 20. Didsbury 1376
SHREWSBURY	The Rev. Secretary, Shrewsbury Diocesan Children's Rescue Society, 7 Park Road East, Birkenhead. Birkenhead 1832
SOUTHWARK	The Rev. Secretary, Southwark Catholic Rescue Society, 59 Westminster Bridge Road, London, S.E.1. WATERloo 5767/8

CATHOLIC MORAL WELFARE WORKERS

WESTMINSTER	Miss S. Rielly, 73 St. Charles Square, Ladbroke Grove, London, W.10. LADBroke 5305
HEXHAM AND NEWCASTLE	Moral Welfare Committee, 9 Jesmond Park West, Newcastle, 7. Newcastle 81-3110
LANCASTER	Miss H. M. Lamb, 27 Spencer Street, Carlisle. Carlisle 22376
LEEDS	Mrs. D. K. FitzSimons, 9 Mount Preston, Leeds, 2. Leeds 21137
LIVERPOOL	Miss M. S. Rockliff, 150 Brownlow Hill, Liverpool, 3. Royal 2374
NORTHAMPTON	Miss Farrah, 37 Brook Green, London, W.6.
SALFORD	Sister Augustine, Catholic Moral Welfare Council, Gaddum House, Queen Street, Manchester, 2.

Other officials who are always helpful are the Medical Officers of Health, Children's Officers, and National Assistance Officers, the addresses of whom can always be obtained from the local County or Town Hall.

The National Council for the Care of the Unmarried Mother and her Child

21 CORAM STREET, LONDON, W.C.1

This Society, which is undenominational, has done great pioneer work for unmarried mothers and their babies.

It exists for the furtherance of every effort directed towards constructive help for unmarried mothers and will at all times supply information regarding homes, hostels, baby homes, and details of the legal position of unmarried mothers and their babies.

Probation Officers

At all local courts probation officers will help and advise and are most helpful in sifting the girl's story to see if she has evidence on which she could obtain an order for payment from the father of her baby.

The Care of the Baby

It is to be hoped that every effort will be made to keep the mother and baby together in the early weeks of the child's life. The inexperienced helper all too often has an idea that it is kindness to keep the baby away from its mother, especially if—as is so often the case—she intends to have it adopted. After the strain of pregnancy and labour one finds that the mothering of the baby has its compensatory effect and so often the girl during these weeks becomes more settled and able to think. My own feeling is that if she is thinking of adoption, she should at least know what she is parting with. I have met quite a number of older women who have parted hurriedly with

their newly born infants years before and have as the years passed become neurotic and had a sense of grievance against those who advised them. This was most marked in the women who had never even seen their babies—no doubt as a result of someone's misguided ideas of kindness.

If every effort to keep the baby within the mother's family circle fails and she still wishes to keep the child, a foster-mother should be found if possible. The Children's Officers can sometimes help, though Catholic foster-parents are in very short supply. The clergy can often help because they know of motherly women in their parishes and I have seldom appealed to them in vain.

Intending foster-mothers must register with their local authority before taking a child into their homes; they will obtain information from their local Council Offices.

Nurseries

Both day and residential nurseries exist in some areas but are rarely able to cater for the numbers of children needing admission. Details will be supplied by the Matrons in charge. Even where vacancies exist, the health authorities do not look with favour on their admitting very young infants on account of the risk of infection.

Adoption

Adoption into a family provides the illegitimate child with material advantages as a rule far in excess of those it would have in its own home. In addition it has the advantage of two parents, and provided these are wisely chosen they give the child the secure background necessary to mental well-being and development. There is a shortage of Catholic adopters, possibly due to the fact that in most Catholic families there is usually no shortage of children so that nieces and nephews are often brought up by childless aunts and uncles. Provided adopters are balanced people with the

right motive for wishing to adopt a child they gain endless joy and happiness from taking a child—or, better still, children—into their home. The rearing of a family gives to a married couple a purpose in life and the greatest incentive to work and sacrifice.

It should be remembered that adopting a child can never mend an unsuccessful marriage or improve the nervous system of an unstable man or woman. So often well-meaning people suggest that an unhappy couple can put all their troubles right by having a child in the house, but in practice this is rarely found to result. Again, one should avoid letting children go to people who want them as an assurance against loneliness or privation in their old age. It is always to be hoped that children, whether natural or adopted, will be a comfort and a blessing in old age, but this should not be the primary reason for adoption. The greatest consideration must be the welfare of the child.

Possibly the greatest disadvantage to the adopted child is that, whereas parents make allowances for the failings of their natural children in order to save their own pride, they have always in the background the parent of the adopted child who may have just the failings they are noticing in the child. It is this lack of someone to bolster them up in their adolescent difficulties which is the greatest hardship of many adopted children. Where the would-be adopters are willing to face problems without harking back to the child's antecedents they do succeed in giving the child a real sense of belonging to them and this is the sense from which springs the feeling of personal responsibility for the happiness of the group.

I know of very many happy homes where adopted children are growing up a source of continual joy to those who have opened their hearts and homes to them. When considering adoption it is best to consult with experts, e.g. the Administrators of Diocesan Child Protection

Societies, the Children's Officers of the local authorities, or the Secretaries of the Registered Adoption Societies.

After Care

For many months these girls need personal help and should be in constant touch with some one person who will stand to them as 'guide, philosopher and friend', one on whose willingness to help they can rely and in whose capability they have confidence. Otherwise their position is a very lonely one, because in many cases they have had to break with home and friends at a time when they most needed them, and it takes them some time to regain their confidence in people and to take their place again in society.

In a work of this size it is impossible to mention every home and activity controlled by both religious and lay organizations and every society concerned with the alleviation of this urgent problem. A full list may be found in *The Charities Register and Digest*.*

From this very brief survey, however, it is clear that every power working in this cause within the community, working both for the spiritual and temporal well-being of men and women, is, in its own way, sharing in the great work of the Good Shepherd. But it must be clearly realized that the fundamental causes of moral failure must be removed, that rescue and slum work are merely palliative measures; they do not reach the roots of the evil. Catholics should consider themselves under a strict obligation to make full use of their civic rights, to be in the forefront of those who raise their voices against oppression of the poor and defrauding labourers of their wages; they should lead the demand for a single moral standard for the sexes as the only means of keeping intact the life of the Christian family

**Charities Register and Digest* is obtainable from Family Welfare Association, Dennison House, Vauxhall Bridge Road, S.W.1.

and of preventing the demoralization of the young. And in actually dealing with those who are tempted and with those who have fallen, with those who depend upon the help of their more fortunate fellows in order to retrieve their errors, the counsel of the Hon. Laura Maria Petre (in religion Sister Mary of St Francis, S.N.D.) might well serve as guidance to all would-be helpers: 'The bad qualities we notice in others should serve not to weaken but to strengthen and purify our charity in their regard. Their virtue has its limits, the motive of our charity has none: for we love them as those whom God has put in His stead to be loved with a kindly, effective, all-embracing charity.'

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