

DIFFICULT TASK

Fanling Home Struggling Through Hardships

CHILDREN'S QUALITIES

Despite difficulties and vicissitudes which can well be imagined in a task such as Mrs C. M. Bird's, she is somehow succeeding in running the Fanling Babies' Home and bringing happiness to some 57 foundling babes whose ages range from five weeks to nine years.

The Home was originally founded by Miss M. F. Dibden, a missionary who came out to the Colony from England in 1936 and, after occupying several houses in and around Kowloon, finally set up the home at Fanling. During the occupation, however, Miss Dibden was interned in Stanley Camp, but on being released last year she immediately set up the home in its old location, despite a severe attack of malaria.

Miss Dibden returned to England towards the end of last year, however, and Mrs Bird generously undertook to run the home until such time as Miss Dibden could return.

Difficulties came often, as the house was left in a bad state of repair by the Japanese and Mrs Bird was not always able to acquire the necessary material and assistance that she required, but by improvising clothes from old Japanese mosquito nets and by continued perseverance with a vegetable garden that was not always a willing co-operator, she has managed to restore the babes, many of whom were left on the doorstep of the home when only a matter of weeks old, to the happy affectionate group which met a Post and Telegraph reporter when he visited them recently.

Something of her own charming personality seems to have been imparted into the children who, unlike so many children of their age, all possess a commendable spirit of "share-and-share-alike" unselfishness and an incredible aptitude for obeying what they are told to do. The children are taught Chinese, English and needlework etc., and on occasions their physique benefits from short physical training lessons when the home is visited by Red Cross workers or by members of a nearby Commando unit.

The Commando medical officers are also frequent visitors and they give any assistance that may be required in the Home's small but efficient dispensary.

Difficulties still beset the Home, however, and Mrs Bird often finds it hard to provide for the children all that they need to restore them to health after years of malnutrition, and though her determination seldom flags, determination is not the only thing that is needed to run a home of this type.