

Christmas at the Industrial School, Halifax.

A LOOK AT THE BOYS.

The Industrial School is, perhaps the charitable institution that is most popular in Halifax. It has succeeded so well during the last five or six years that it has inspired public confidence in its management, and now it is easier to raise money for it than for almost anything else.

I invited a friend to take a walk out to the institution on Christmas day, as the committee had provided a good dinner and were expected to be there to serve it, and then to say a few words to the boys. The new home is two or three miles out of town, near the head of the North-West arm, and is well worth a visit from every sensible and kind hearted stranger who may have an hour or two to spare while in Halifax. The building is plain and substantial, but quite imposing in appearance, and as it crowns a rising ground, a capital view of the whole peninsula can be had from its roof. There is a fine grove of sombre pines and spruce at the back, that shelters not only the house and the large workshop, but also the den of a black, glossy-coated young bear that is a great pet of the boys. Other pets abound; hens and ducks, guinea pigs and rabbits in boxes, a solemn crow domesticated by the combined influence of clipped wings, and human petting, horses, cows, and—for aught I know—fowl and “bestial” of other kinds. The Superintendent wisely thinks that gardening and the care of animals are two of the best means of education. Boys who love flowers or pet animals are not apt to be brutal. They learn, too, a good deal of natural history almost without knowing that they are learning.

We got out to the institution between 2 and 3 o'clock. The school room was prettily decked with festoons of spruce, but hearing a mild clatter of knives and forks and spoons from below, we at once went down stairs, and saw Mr Grierson's large family just beginning to be exhausted with as hard work as ever they had had. Fifty-five boys, varying from nine to eighteen years of age, were seated round eight tables. The bare skeletons of many geese were being

carried out to the kitchen, while here and there amid the groups was a boy with sufficient energy left to toy with a “marriage bone.” A huge plum-pudding had just been placed at the head of each table, and a member of committee was cutting it up and serving it out in such enormous slices that it was quite evident he had not forgotten his own keen appetite when he was a boy. No word was spoken as the boys girdled at the pudding. Plates were emptied, and handed back again for “more;” and “more” was given. How long it might have lasted I know not; but at length the Superintendent took compassion on them, sounded a bell, and the whole corps rose and sang a thanksgiving. They had breakfasted early, had marched in to church and out again; the dinner was an hour or two later than usual; and it was Christmas. What wonder if the notes of the blessing were languid, with just an occasional spasm of energy, indicating that the languor was only that of repletion.

Take a look at the boys. Who are they and whence do they come? They are the lost shipwrecked children of our city, the poor flotsam and jetsam on our sea of life. They are the Arabs of the street, born under evil stars, cradled in want, surrounded by vice, predestinated to crime. Some have no parents; others would have been better off had they too lost theirs early. Some are direct from the Police Court, some from Rockhead, some only from the highways that lead to prison and the penitentiary. Some had good parents, but bad companions led them astray, and weak widowed mothers could no longer control them. Let the priests and Levites pass them by, let the modern Cains say ‘we are not their keepers,’ and what will these spoiled ill-used children turn into? The ‘dangerous classes,’ the costly criminals, the sores and plagues of society. Well for our civilization that there is still sufficient Christian life pervading it to seek out and save those straying and lost ones.

Let us look at them: not bad faces and forms on an average; some ugly enough, with low foreheads and back of the head correspondingly large, or thick lips and heavy look, or with cunning averted eyes. But to make up for this,