

Ups and Downs

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TORONTO, NOVEMBER 2ND, 1896.



AN INTERVIEW WITH A "SOCIAL REFORMER" OPPOSED TO OUR WORK.

IN connection with the presentment of the grand jury at Kingston, which is referred to in "Echoes" by Mr. Owen, we had a long conversation recently with a prominent member of the editorial staff of one of Toronto's daily papers, and we were very much surprised to find the gentleman in question—an earnest worker in the cause of social reform—upholding the grand jury in their conduct which seemed and still seems to us utterly indefensible. Our reason for referring to the interview is, that the point of view and the opinions of this gentleman are practically those of a section of the community inimical to our work "on principle"; and from him we learned something of the *raison d'être* of those unfavourable opinions held by himself and others, including not a few grand juries, although the utter lack of taste exhibited by the latter in their method of dealing with the subject was naturally much deprecated.

The argument was advanced in all seriousness that if a number of men forming a grand jury or other examining and advisory body, find that one young immigrant is exercising an evil influence in the district, that grand jury is not only justified but required by considerations of duty, to prescribe a remedy and a preventive, even to the extent of calling upon the Government to prohibit the immigration of juveniles; it mattering not whether they, the grand jury, know or do not know that the one malefactor represents but a very small percentage of the whole body of young immigrants: that ninety-nine others in the same district are leading quiet, unheard-of, but honest, useful lives.

That these ninety-nine should suffer the cruel injustice of being branded as criminals by heredity and habit, because one had turned out to be an evil-doer, was admitted to be a matter for deep regret, but we were told we must "come out of the clouds," "to deal practically with hard facts," "to cast sentiment to one side."

The only "hard facts" patent to us were that one boy had failed and was in gaol awaiting removal to a reformatory (we learned a few hours later that he was not one of our boys, and had never been in any way connected with Dr. Barnardo's Home); or, to deal with the work as a whole, that less than two per cent. of Dr. Barnardo's young people had failed; that

nearly seven thousand are to-day, and have been since the day they landed in Canada, leading useful lives as honest, industrious citizens. But to deal "practically" with these facts meant that we were to admit that the evil wrought by the two per cent. who had failed, or by the one unfortunate then in gaol, was of such magnitude as to completely nullify any good that might have been accomplished by the seven thousand. Needless to say, we are not willing to "cast aside" the "sentiment" which prevents acquiescence in this or in the monstrous proposition that the entrance into Canada of another seven thousand, or of seven, such useful, well-conducted workers should be rendered impossible by legislation, because, forsooth, again would there be nearly two per cent. evil-doers in their ranks. We sought to demonstrate the arrant injustice, not to say absurdity, of such a doctrine by applying it nationally; a veto on any nationality which could not show less than two per cent. of failures among the numbers who had already come to Canada. We could imagine the howl of execration that would go up throughout Canada if a grand jury or two were to suggest that the Government should prohibit the immigration of Englishmen, or Scotchmen, or Irishmen, because they occasionally found men of one or other of these nationalities among the criminals of the country.

The analogy was not allowed for this remarkable reason: In one case a *systematic attempt* was being made to find homes for lads *predisposed to crime*. It is on this entirely erroneous conception of the kind of lads Dr. Barnardo sends to Canada that rests whatever is *honest* in the opposition to our work; and we draw a very wide distinction between the opposition due to misconception of the facts, and that which is based upon wilful ignorance, and which is kept alive to further the selfish interests of irresponsible but clamorous politicians of the lower or lowest class.

We have more than once referred in these columns to the principles which Dr. Barnardo laid down when he inaugurated his emigration system, and strict adherence to which he insists upon as absolutely essential to the success of that work. They are:

(a) That only *the flower of my flock* shall be emigrated to Canada: those young people, namely (1) who are in robust health, physical and mental; (2) who are thoroughly upright, honest, and virtuous; and (3) who, *being boys*, have been industrially trained in our own workshops; or who, *being girls*, have had careful instruction in domestic pursuits.

(b) That *continuous supervision* shall be exercised over all these emigrants after they have been placed out in Canadian homesteads: *first*, by systematic visitation; *second*, by regular correspondence. *Emigration without continuous supervision, particularly in the case of young children, is, in my opinion, presumptuous folly, and simply courts disaster.*

(c) That in the case of the total failure of any emigrants the Colonies shall be safeguarded by their RETURN at our expense, whenever possible, to England.

In view of this, and with the results of fourteen years bearing such convincing testimony of the thoroughness with which Dr. Barnardo's regulations are carried out, to speak of "a systematic attempt to find homes for those *predisposed to crime*," shows an absolute lack of knowledge of the facts.

Insomuch as human judgment can never be infallible, a certain number of evil-doers will always find their way into every organized body. Commenting upon this very subject in the *Review of Reviews* recently, Mr. Stead observed that he doubted if the House of Commons could show a smaller percentage of criminal convictions among its members than that which obtained in the case of Dr. Bar-

nardo's young people in Canada. And, be it remembered that it was a strict investigation by the Government of Canada that established these figures—two per cent. failures, and not one-half of these committed for crime.

Anything short of superhuman foresight could not ensure better results than have followed Dr. Barnardo's weeding-out process in making up his parties of emigrants for Canada.

When we asked our severe critic to reconcile these results with the presentments of certain grand juries and with his own opinions, he at once refused to accept statistics as evidence of the extent of criminal and immoral *propensity* that existed among those under discussion. We readily admit that it is very unsafe to measure the *moral* of any community by its police court or criminal statistics. These ignore the immoral who are not law-breakers; but it says little for the efficiency of a country's police administration if its official statistics cannot be relied upon to give a fairly accurate idea of the comparative criminality of various sections or classes.

The *immoral propensity* (as apart from the *criminal*), or otherwise, of a body of men or youths can be learned by observation only. We are at one with our opponent on this point, but we divide at once on the question of what constitutes competent observation. He finds for the grand jury, the social reformers, whose labours, as such, are confined to scouring the country's jails and kindred institutions, meeting occasionally therein a "Barnardo boy"—or at least a youth so termed by some imaginative scribe—but who also meet during the year hundreds of respectable, industrious, law-abiding citizens, who are likewise Barnardo boys, although they, the grand jury and the "reformers," know it not.

"Personal observation" conducted on such lines will give about as accurate a conception of the moral tone of the whole body of young immigrants as a man would obtain of the architecture of London if he confined his sightseeing to one or two back streets in Whitechapel.

On the other hand, we maintain that the best judges of the moral tone of the average "Barnardo boy," and those whose opinion is alone authoritative, are the farmers and others who, for over fourteen years, have had our boys in their employment and living with them in their homes. When the adverse critic says that the young immigrants are as a whole predisposed to immorality and other evil, he casts a serious reflection upon the farmers of Ontario, who are by implication thus charged with bringing, not once, but time and again, youths of dangerous moral character into the privacy of their homes, allowing them to associate with more or less of the freedom of home life with the members of their families.

Either the farmers are guilty of this almost criminal neglect of their families, or the adverse critic—be he reformer, journalist or one of the grand jury—is talking the most arrant nonsense; and we do not hesitate to say that to no man on earth is the purity of his home more sacred, and no man on earth more jealously guards the purity of his home, than the average Ontario farmer; and in the continued demands for our boys from these farmers do we find the strongest rebuttal of the infamous charge that the young immigrants who come to Canada under the auspices of Dr. Barnardo are "predisposed to crime," or that they are as a class one whit less desirable citizens than any other body of men in the country. Poverty and distress our boys may have known, nay, must have known, to some extent. Therein lie the head and