

Out of this aggregate the Toronto jail furnished 90 boys and 40 girls, or nearly a third of the entire number in Canada West.

Thus it appears that last year 130 children under sixteen were prisoners in Toronto jail, a most melancholy fact for the consideration not only of the Grand Inquest but of every Christian man in the community.

This picture is further darkened if we turn to the number of prisoners over 16 and under 20; and we find 84 males and 94 females—in all 178 youths of both sexes at this most impressible and perhaps most dangerous period of life. In all, over 300 prisoners in one year, under 20 years of age.

A glance at the jail statistics for the past five years gives us no reason to believe that the evil is decreasing. The total number of prisoners in each year varies slightly till 1864, when the number was lowest, thus:—

Total Prisoners.	Children under 16.
1860	2,054
1861	1,815
1862	2,091
1863	1,971
1864	1,595
	155
	73
	104
	129
	130

For the last four years we find the number of children in our jail steadily increasing, with but little change in the city population. Last year, though the total prisoners were nearly 400 less than in 1863, the children prisoners were slightly more numerous. During the last five years nearly 600 children, male and female, under 16, have been confined in the Toronto jail. We need hardly ask what may be the probable after-life of those who begin the world under such degrading conditions. We may ask, firstly—Is such a state of things without a remedy? Secondly—If there be a remedy have we sought to apply it? Toronto has not neglected to provide for her children the blessings of education. On the contrary, in no city in the world is a better education offered freely to all. We have noble school-houses, excellent teachers, and a sound English education, at a cost to the ratepayers of many thousands of pounds each year.

But are our street vagrants reduced in number? Is our jail burdened with fewer boy and girl criminals? Is the *dangerous* class of society reached, the under darkness of vice and ignorance pierced by the light of instruction? There are few subjects on which men differ more widely than the manner in which this admitted evil can be dealt with.

Many persons insist that the common school system is not designed to meet, and cannot properly be expected to meet, the case of the vagrant children who will not accept the free education offered.

Others argue that compulsory attendance, under a truant or vagrant Act is the proper supplement to compulsory taxation.

Another class contend that as the law compels them to support common schools, they ought to see at least a portion of their rates expended in a vigorous attempt to reach and educate the only class from whose ignorance and destitution they apprehend danger to the peace and prosperity of society—and they argue strongly that it is a grave thing even to talk of applying portions of the rates to establishing high schools for boys and girls or to expend our energies in raising the standard of education; at least so long as vigorous efforts are not made to reach the vagrant classes—by working *downward*, as it were, instead of upward—and trying to get hold of the forlorn little creatures who fill the ragged schools and shoeblack brigades of which we hear so much in the old country cities.

I have no intention to discuss the soundness of these differing views. I only desire to invite attention to things as they are and as they ought not to be.

We may feel pleasure in noticing that of late the subject seems to be attracting more attention than formerly, and it seems an evidence of a more healthy public opinion that the expression of a doubt as to the perfect working of our present system, no longer calls down ungenerous charges against the doubter of being an enemy to the cause of free education.

With the jail statistics of the last few years before us, it is not easy to suggest a more fitting topic for the consideration of a city grand jury than the possibility of extending the healthy influence of education to the class of children by whom our streets are infested and our jails burdened.

As already remarked, no place offers greater educational advantages than Toronto—a most excellent English education is obtained for a mere trifle.

The school assessment is two cents in the dollar—say five pence in the pound. An annual value of £25 or £30 will comprehend the dwellings of perhaps a majority of the ratepayers and of respectable and comfortable citizens, and on such the school rate would be ten or twelve shillings annually, and for this any number of boys and girls can receive an excellent education.

The school report for 1863 (the latest I have seen) states that 1,632 children within school age (of whom 1,165 were Protestant and 467 Roman Catholic) neither attended school nor were taught at home.

The classes most in want of instruction, and the most dangerous to society, are always those on whose ear the invitation to come and be taught falls unheeded.

Often filthy and unwholesome in appearance and ragged in clothing, they are rarely to be found in the clean and orderly ranks of our schools. It is quite possible, and perhaps natural, that many respectable parents have but little desire to see these unfortunates mixed with their own clean and well cared for children.

It is, of course, the interest of all who use the schools to elevate their character and efficiency, and it is doubtless an advantage to the community to have all its members thoroughly educated. It may still be a matter of profound regret that year after year is passing away, and a generation of children ripening into crime in our midst, and refusing to avail itself of our noble provision for the free teaching of all.

It is for others to decide how a remedy is to be applied, whether by legislative action or the voluntary efforts of the ratepayers and citizens generally. It is to be earnestly hoped that some attempt may be made to work downward to reach the grade of children, apparently below the influence of our present system, to gather them in their rags and squalor (if necessary), apart from those of their own age who shrink from their contact. Those who know the poor can testify how they, too, shrink in their filth and tattered clothing from church and school. It is idle to discuss the soundness of their reasoning on such a subject—it is enough that the feeling exists.

I am painfully sensible that this is an unpleasing subject to many ears, but it is one constantly forcing itself on the consideration of a judge, who has before him so often the sorrowful spectacle of the young criminals left alone in their sin and misery, in the midst of a Christian community.

No subject more important from its terribly close connection with the state of crime amongst us, can be suggested for your consideration.

From the figures which I have quoted, it is clear that juvenile crime is not decreasing in our city.

I am sure, gentlemen, that you will join me in the earnest hope that some means may be devised to lessen, what all must admit, to be a most dangerous symptom in our social state."

REPLY OF THE GRAND JURY.

"Every Christian man and woman in our city must feel the deepest sorrow at the present life and probable fate of what may be termed the substratum of our juvenile population—the little outcasts who hang around the post office—the post office lane—and those who are daily applicants for charity at our doors. According to the precepts of our Christian faith, for these the Saviour died—notwithstanding their rags and poverty, 'of such are the kingdom of Heaven.' Your Lordship has pointed out the fact that during the last four years the number of children imprisoned under sixteen years of age has been steadily increasing.

It was mainly with the view of reaching the depraved and dangerous classes of the community that the respectable inhabitants of this city consented to be taxed so largely. It was thought that the common schools being made free, these Arabs of the streets would be induced to attend; but judging by the result of an extended experiment of fifteen years, it would appear that making the schools absolutely free has not been entirely successful in the main object, for not only has juvenile crime increased, but we learn from the report of the Local Superintendent for 1864 that the attendance under the free system has been less in proportion to population than it was under the rate-bill system; for it appears that under the rate-bill system the attendance was as 1 in every 20½, while under the free system, it has been only 1 in 23. The attendance is also stated to have been more irregular and unreliable under the free system than it was under the rate-bill. The Superintendent's report for 1865 states the daily absences as 722, or about one-fourth of all on the roll, besides, 150 half day absences. By the same report the grand jury learn that 5,550 children received some amount of instruction during the year, yet so irregular and desultory has the attendance been that no less than 756 attending less than twenty days, 1,296 from fifty to one hundred days; in other words, out of the 5,550 children, no less than 3,157 attended less than one hundred days, a period much too little to be of any real utility, either for their own good or the good of the public.

The free system has been very costly to the rate-payers as compared with the rate-bill system, for it appears from the annual School Report for 1864, that the annual average taxation for school purposes under the rate-bill system, including rent, was only \$7,400, to educate about 1,200 children, while under the free