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WHILE we are in the throes of one of the biggest surgical operations which the world has ever been called upon to pass through, it is pleasant on the eve of Christmas to turn from its awful handiwork of hate and destruction to something of love and construction that has been quietly operating in our midst for over half a century.

This is the story of how the bodies and souls of very many thousands of boys and girls who would probably have gone to the underworld have been saved to society, not only to the best of its rank and file but in numerous instances to become its brightest ornaments. It reads with all the piquancy of a romance, but its plain unvarnished record of actual achievement is a contribution to our national history that has never been out-classed by anything our empire story yet knows of in the training of its men and women for the battlefield of life.

It shall be the theme of our Christmas story; it briefly relates the rise and progress of an entire nameless effort on the part of one humble man but which subsequently became known as the "National Refuges for Homeless and Destitute Children," having for its sponsor the good Earl of Shaftesbury and claiming the constant and whole-hearted services of a galaxy of the British aristocracy, and of England's leading business and professional men.

Canada owes a debt to this one institution which it can never repay—in dollars at least. Not far short of a thousand of the young

## Real Empire Builders

From the Story of the "National Refuges for Homeless and Destitute Children."

men who have been educated and trained—most of them specially for farm work—at one or other of the homes of the "National

Refuges" have been sent out to this country. Those who picked and sent these lads might not enjoy the doubtful distinction of being accounted great politicians, but they certainly are humanitarians and possessed of an abundance of commonsense and paternal foresight.

These young emigrants are not given tickets and packed off to sink or swim. In not a single instance has a lad been sent out unless in the judgment of his kindly discriminating foster-parents he was considered physically and

temperamentally fit for Canadian life. The consequence is that spread over a period of years, the manhood of this country has re-

advisedly because every boy is kept in sight for at least two years after leaving the home and safeguarded from exploitation at the hands of unscrupulous employers as far as that can be secured. He is given all that a young man starting out on his own wing would reasonably require in clothing, equipment, etc., and usually carries in his cabin trunk a nice little collection of books and other souvenirs—tokens of the love and good wishes of his old chums, and of those who have had him under their care.

The human touch is the distinguishing mark of this great training home, and were it possible for our readers to look into the faces of those men and women who form the great unpaid executive and committees of management, what we mean by "the human touch" would be more easily comprehended than described.

The great work had its inception in 1843 as an evening ragged school in the slums of Seven Dials, London, by William Williams, a poorly paid lawyer's clerk, who had a heart far bigger than his little hunch-backed body and took pity on a few outcasts he found seeking shelter from the wind and rain of a fierce April night.

He was discovered and helped by the late Earl of Shaftesbury, and a permanent home was established in 1849 with five boys and four girls. At the date of writing, over 900 boys and 300 girls are under care and training, divided over twelve homes and two ships—the frigate "Arethusa" and brig "Chichester," (the latter used for



Training for the best profession on earth. Young farmers in the making.

ceived recruits from this one source alone who would have done honor to the best families and public schools of the old motherland.

The writer (who has followed with intense interest the operations of this institution for something like 25 years) is not aware of a single disappointment in the shape of an "undesirable" having started out in Canada who received his training and came out under the protection of the "National Refuges."

We use the word "protection"

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