

be absolutely free from any ailment or physical blemish; must be very well-mannered, clean, good-looking, well grown, and so forth. Apart from these general excellencies, we have a good many particular and especial stipulations to bear in mind. One person wants a boy brought up in the country; another must, on no account, have a boy with red hair; another particularly wishes to get an Irish boy, while with another it is a case of "no Irish need apply." Someone else requires a boy who is fond of music; another must, on no account, have a boy who has been to sea.

We feel sometimes disposed to remind people that we are not yet in telegraphic communication with the upper regions, and cannot, therefore, have a young angel sent down to fill their various requirements, but, however, without our telling them this, our constituents generally manage to accept very contentedly the terrestrial beings we send them, and "very well satisfied with the boy you have sent me" is the general tenor of the first letters we receive after our parties are distributed.

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Our visiting work has been sadly hampered during the past month by the fearful condition of the roads in many parts of the country. Both Mr. Griffith and Mr. Gaunt have had to return home, finding it impossible to make any satisfactory work in the districts they had gone to owing to the extent to which the roads were blocked with snow. We are hoping, however, that the worst of the winter's storms are over, and as soon as we get better weather and the roads become more open we shall look forward to overtaking our arrears of visiting.

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There has been no dearth of letters during the month and the post has brought us budgets of news of our boys in their homes out in the country. Gratefully we record that the immense majority of this news is good news, telling of honest work accomplished in the past, and bright hopes for the future. More than ever have we reason to thank God for the success and good record of our boys now in Canada and to take courage for their future and for those who shall come after them.

Against this our foes have not been idle. Various little newspapers have kept up the fire of misrepresentation and attack, and, especially, one or two County Councils have been petitioning the Government in a spirit hostile to our work and praying that legislation may be enacted requiring all societies immigrating pauper (*sic*) children to be compelled to provide for their own eighteen years of age as become a public charge—as though, forsooth, we were imposing a burden upon the municipalities of the country of which they were forced to seek the help of the Government to rid themselves. We defy any municipality in the country to point to a solitary case in which we have allowed one of our young people to become chargeable to them, and in which we have not exerted ourselves, to an extent that is almost quixotic, to live up to the principle laid down by Dr. Barnardo for the guidance of his immigration work, that no child sent out by him should become a burden upon the country. Within the last month we have either been maintaining at our own cost and charge, or have returned to England, several young men over 21 years of age who, through no fault of theirs or ours, and after several years' faithful, honest work in the country, with good characters, have, through sickness or accident, been deprived of the means of livelihood. Legally and morally we should have been abundantly justified in leaving these cases to be cared for by the municipal authorities, but we decided on Dr. Barnardo's behalf that it was better to "stretch the point" in order to leave no loophole or possibility for a reflection being cast upon us as being in any shape or

form a tax upon the country. And yet at the beckoning, and under the guidance, of that sinister influence that is antagonistic to Dr. Barnardo's work, and to so much else that works for the freedom and uplifting of individuals and population in this and other lands, we find petitions being submitted that we may be compelled to do what we are already going out of our way to do, and which has been over and over again laid down as one of the cardinal principles of our work.

The Council for the counties of Durham and Northumberland was one of those from which, we learned, this petition was forthcoming. We at once compiled a list of our boys placed out in the two counties and put this in the hands of the county judge. The list contained the names and addresses of 198 boys, of whom 188 were doing well, eight indifferently and two badly. With such statistics before them it would suggest itself that the Council might find better employment than attacking our work, and that there are abuses and grievances among their constituents which are less purely and absolutely fictitious than the grievance of having to provide for Dr. Barnardo's boys.

When this issue reaches our readers I shall be on the high seas, but during my absence Mr. Davis will hold the fort and will attend to any pressing business that may arise. His hands will be very full and we will venture the suggestion that any letters or business that is not urgent should be held over till my return in April.

Alfred B. Owen.

OUR LITERARY AND MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT SOCIETY.

WHEN, last month, we tentatively threw out a suggestion for the formation of a Literary and Mutual Improvement Society, we did so with some trepidation. To make such a feature successful it was absolutely essential that we receive the constant co-operation of a considerable number of our friends. Given that co-operation, we had little doubt that the departure would serve a useful purpose.

The ready response which had greeted Mr. Owen's request for co-operation, when the proposition to start a journal of our own was first mooted, was certainly an encouragement to hope that our suggestion of a Mutual Improvement Society would meet with some measure of appreciation and promise of support. But in this case the support of our friends must be of a more personally active character; the performance, in fact, by them of a considerable portion of the actual work of the department. Until we had assurance of support of this kind to some extent, we could not seriously think of giving effect to our suggestion. Since our last issue, however, we have received letters from a number of our friends which warrant us in going forward. Our aim is to make this new feature of our journal a source, not only of interest, but of profitable instruction to all those who wish to supplement their previous educational opportunities, and acquire information on many matters of interest to all men, young and old, whatever their vocation may be. The farmer who knows nothing beyond the mere routine of farming, and the mechanic whose knowledge coincides exactly with the bare requirements of his trade, are in these days placed under a great disadvantage and will fall behind in the race with their more enlightened fellows. We read

ily grant that opportunities for educational improvement, except by self-effort, do not cover the path of those working on a farm, and it is for this reason that we think our united efforts for mutual improvement will prove of great assistance to the self-helpers.

A man very often honestly believes he knows a great deal about a certain subject until he comes to converse with others upon that subject; and then his self-appreciation receives a severe shock. On the other hand it not infrequently happens that a foundation of sound useful information lies buried in the mind of a man, its extent unknown to the man himself, simply because he has lacked opportunity of exchanging thoughts with his fellow-creatures. If he had had such opportunity his information would have been strengthened and increased, while he would, in his turn, have proved a help to others.

As we have now decided to resolve ourselves into a Mutual Improvement Society, we must arrange the lines along which our work is to proceed. We, who are acting in a capacity similar to that of a chairman, shall always strive to be an impartial critic.

The first thing to do is for one and all to lay well to heart the conviction that each has much to learn. The idea which must underlie such work as we are laying out for ourselves is that of *learning*, not of *teaching*. There is always a tendency to reverse this when young people—and old people, too—meet together, even though it be only in the columns of a journal, for mutual improvement. As a rule, the result in such cases is a superabundance of teaching (?) with a minimum of learning. This we must avoid or our time will simply be wasted. To whatever heights our efforts may lead us in the more or less distant future, let our aims be modest at the beginning.

We will publish each month a few selections from works of the best writers of various classes of literature. These selections will provide a nucleus on which can be based a bounteous store of useful knowledge, and they will at all times prove a means of extending acquaintance with good literature. This in itself affords an excellent opportunity for acquiring a more facile and cultivated style of expression. It is unfortunately too true that many men who, as the phrase goes, are well educated, can not, or do not, give expression in a really intelligent and pleasing manner to their knowledge of a subject with which they are well acquainted—an anomaly generally due to carelessness and force of habit.

The papers or essays written by our friends on the topics selected for each month will afford a test, not only in this respect, but of the progress they are making in other directions.

Six full months will elapse before our issue of September. These six months will constitute the first session of our Mutual Improvement Society. At the end of the session we will award three suitable prizes as follows:

First, a prize for the best paper written on any topic included in the programme for the six months.

Second, a prize to the boy whose papers receive the highest number of marks during the session. It may happen that a boy will send in every month a really well written paper, which is, nevertheless, not the best of all received during the session. His work being always good, however, he may, at the end of the session, have a larger number of marks than the winner of the first prize, who may, by one supreme effort, have written the best paper received during the session, but have failed to maintain the standard of excellence in his other efforts. If, however, the winner of the first prize should also earn the largest number of marks during the six months the second prize will be awarded to the boy next on the list.