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LESLIE



SMALL NEWSBOYS.

There are in all large cities a class of boys who make newspaper selling a pretence for idling on the streets, evading school and the learning of some useful trade or industry. Our aim should be to gradually eliminate this class of business altogether, placing the street selling of newspapers in the hands of men who are incapacitated for regular employment, and insisting upon boys either attending school or learning a trade. Especially should children of tender years be prohibited from this nomadic life, that once acquired can rarely be overcome.

ARE NEWSBOYS INDISPENSABLE ?

There has always been a great deal of sentiment attaching to the life of a newsboy. Many people think they are doing a wise and charitable thing when they give little fellows the extra coppers when buying a paper. Then, too, many kind-hearted magazine and newspaper contributors make the newsboy the hero of their tale, surrounding his life and calling with pathos, and leading sentimental readers to shed tears of sympathy. A lady writer called not long ago with several stories about news-children and submitted them with every expectation of approval and commendation. After glancing through them I was compelled to tell her that, though beautifully written, the stories would do much harm to neglected children, and might even help in the perpetuation of evils that practical workers were earnestly trying to put down. She agreed in principle, and rather reluctantly said that she would suppress the stories.

Newsboys are quick to realize the advantages of their position, and will not hesitate to take advantage of their opportunities to acquire charitable contributions. Citizens generally should avoid charity, and thus give the boys at least a fighting chance of becoming useful, respectable men in the community.

These remarks do not, of course, apply to the lads who deliver papers before and after school, but to the class who make it their sole business, and who are to be found constantly around hotels, theatres and stations.

STREET LIFE BAD FOR BOYS.

The report of the Commissioners of Prisons of Great Britain, recently issued, states that there was a diminution of 2,603 in the total number of prisoners compared with the previous year; also that owing to the greater activity of rescue agencies, the number of juvenile offenders—those under sixteen years of age—received into prison was the lowest on record, being 1,032, as compared with 1,191 in the previous year.

Referring to the causes of crime, it speaks of the danger of allowing so many children to sell newspapers and smallwares on the business streets. Most of the juvenile offenders come from the ranks of the street hawkers, the vast majority of whom, says the Chaplain of Wormwood Scrubs, have nothing before them but a vagabond life. He says: "In my opinion, not one under fifteen or sixteen years should be allowed to live the life they do, but be taken from the streets and put into some institution, to which they should be committed by a magistrate for so long a time as will enable them to learn a trade and be given a chance to earn their living."

The Chaplain of Warwick Prison says: "Street hawking is exceedingly bad for young lads. The little paper-seller especially is almost doomed. He becomes, in the nature of the case, an inveterate little gambler, and from his knowledge of the latest betting, he often does a small business of his own as a tipster; he degenerates into a wastrel, frequents the race-courses, and usually settles down as a race-course thief, varying his charges for thieving with minor commitments for travelling without a ticket—from my positive knowledge this is the history of many a youngster. We have rescued lads of this class, but they need constant shepherding for some time, and are always peculiarly liable to lapse."

This is a subject worthy of at least some consideration.

J. J. KELSO.

Toronto, January 25th, 1911.

