



Stirling of Edinburgh and Leith, the Church of England Waifs and Strays Society among them, established their own Canadian branches. An extraordinarily large proportion of the children, one third of the total, were Catholics emigrated under the auspices of various diocesan committees principally to eastern Ontario and western Quebec.

Children were encouraged to think of emigration as an adventure. Boys who had watched great ships pass down the Thames and revelled in tales of the Great West waited eagerly for their turn to come although girls often viewed the prospect with more trepidation. Surely some children had heard adults express fears of emigration as bleak and punishing transportation. Such apprehensions were common among working people, and many parents tried to resist that fate for their sons and daughters. But relatives had signed agreements surrendering custody of the children to the Homes on admission, and these agreements included clauses assenting

to transfer to Canada. Assurances from Home Officials won the children's confidence. No young person went off to Canada without first having given, *pro forma*, his or her consent.

Prior to emigration, each child was called to the central London Homes, outfitted with new footwear, summer and winter clothing, a Bible, and in the early years of the movement, a copy of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. All these goods were installed in the traditional rectangular wooden box of the immigrant trade, identified by painted markings as the aspiring Canadian's own.

In the first parties of the year to leave were the oldest boys, who travelled in February from Liverpool to Halifax and then overland by rail so as to be installed in farms in the upper provinces before the beginning of the spring work. Later parties of younger girls and boys travelled through to Montreal by ship and then on in special railway coaches.

The institutions in Toronto, Peter-

The girls of the June 1912 party setting foot for the first time in Canada at Levis, Quebec.

borough and Winnipeg were called Distributing Homes, and they functioned true to their names. These structures were only large enough to accommodate clerical and inspection staff and a small number of children in distress. Arriving parties of immigrants were held over temporarily, bunkhouse style, to be placed in Canadian households.

Farmers and mistresses who wrote to the Homes requesting the children's services were asked to fill out applications stating their church affiliation and the size of their household. A confidential reference was solicited from their clergymen and successful applicants were then selected. No interview with the employer or inspection of his premises routinely took place.

Rural placements were preferred for all Home children. Most boys were sent to farms to begin apprenticeships as agricultural labourers, although a few less sturdy young men entered the employ of professional people as manservants. Girls were sent to smaller urban centres or rural homes to begin work as domestic servants.

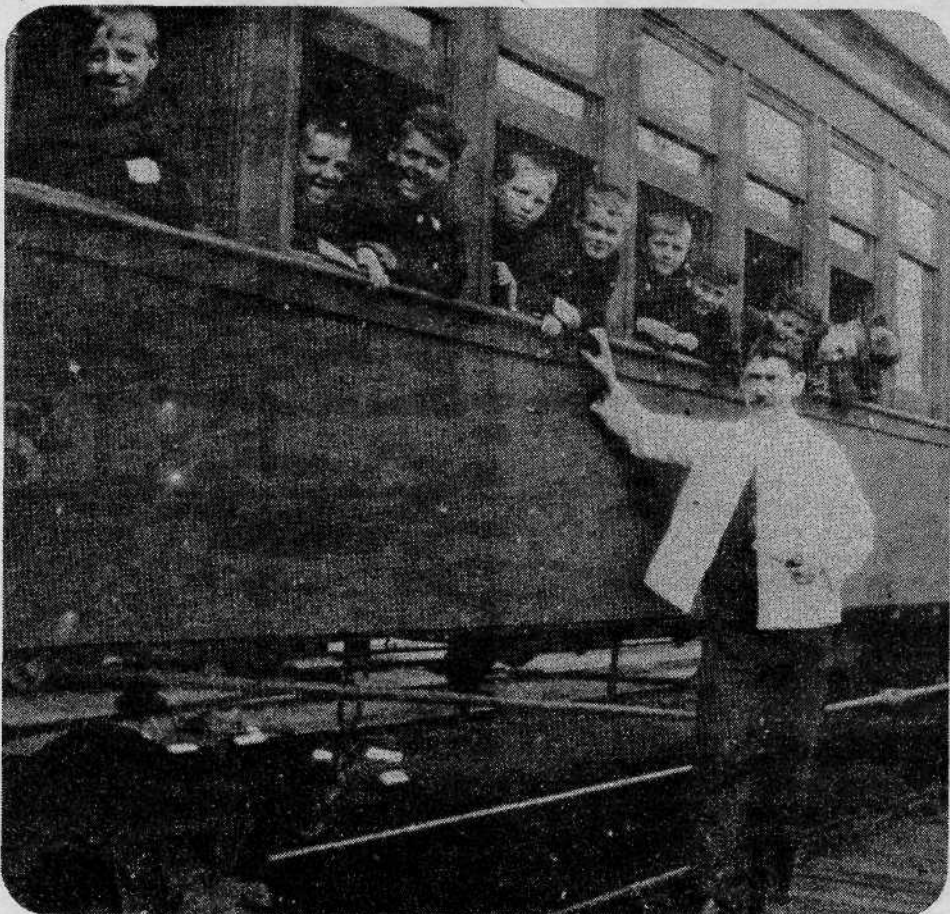
In some rare instances, British children were adopted into Canadian families. Some less scrupulous English agencies asserted that this was the happy fate of all their juvenile emigrants. More reputable officials were more reticent about making such claims. British children in Canada were better off as apprentices than as adoptive family members. The Home's chief Canadian official, not their employer, remained their legal guardian and their work was paid for in wages, not in ethereal promises of inheritance. If Barnardo's ran one of the best juvenile immigration programmes, and many tough-minded contemporary observers concluded that they did, their more thorough recognition of the precarious position of their wards in Canada was at the root of their success. Glowing affirmations of warm-hearted good intentions notwithstanding, Canadians were more interested in labour than in child-like laughter from the young British immigrants they took into their homes. Imperialistic rhetoric aside, British children were perceived to be very different from Canadian children. Barnardo immigrants were

often small in physical stature compared with Canadians of the same age. In the marks of skin, eye and bone diseases many manifested the effects of their deprivations. Their English antecedents were suspected rather than respected. What kind of personal and moral conduct could be expected of children presumed to have been reared by parents of dubious character in the evil dens of smokey Old World cities?

The children's record in Canada is an admirable one. They were not conspicuously idle, nor infirm, nor criminal. But from the opening of the modern juvenile immigration movement in 1868 until the last parties arrived in Canada in the 1930's they were assumed suspect until proven the contrary.

In these circumstances, children were gravely in need of protection from exploitation. The indenture provided the structure through which this protection might be provided. It specified the schooling and wages to which the child was entitled, the inspection rights which the Home expected, and allowed for termination of the agreement with due notice by the employer and no notice by the agent of the Homes. As the immigrant's guardian, Barnardo's officials could more readily seek legal redress in cases of abuse or wage default. Of course, the protective power of the indenture depended crucially upon the vigour with which its various clauses were enforced.

Barnardo's immigrants ranged in age from five or six to mid-and late adolescence. For the first decade in which he sent children to Canada, all young people were placed out to work for board or wages. Experience showed this system harmful to younger children, who were often returned by a series of employers who unanimously declared them "too small". Financial constraints in the English Homes tightened with declining economic conditions in the nineties and made early emigration more imperative. In addition, because reformers believed that the younger child adjusted culturally to Canada more easily, it became imperative to reshape the structure of the apprenticeship system so as to make his or her economic adjustment equally smooth.



Children were encouraged to think of emigration as an adventure



« The boys of the June 1912 party on board the Grand Trunk Railway for the trip to Toronto. »

Dr. Barnardo seeing off a party of older boys bound for Russell, Manitoba at Liverpool, June 1905. »

