

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 3, NO. 283.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 1903.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

PHILANTHROPY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

NEWS comes from Cleveland, O., that Mrs. Sarah K. Bolton of that city, “Will shortly make a tour of the States, stopping in the largest cities to plead the cause of the waif”—

little children, the poverty of whose parents keep them from school, or whom the capitalist high-handed robbery of the working class provides no school accommodation for, and impounds them in factories, sweatshops and mines of the land? Bless your heart, no! The lady is to plead the cause of the waif

“tramp cat and dog”!!

And the dispatches proceed to explain that:

“This energetic woman is waging an active war against the pound, and she is setting up homes of refuge for neglected animals, not only in her home city, but in Boston, Washington and some of the Southern States for her four-footed friends.”

“What!” exclaims a startled Humanity at such news, “What about those two-footed beings, the children of the working class,—of all living beings the most helpless, the least able to speak for themselves?! What of the startling figures thrown up by the census—6,053,940 illiterates in the land, of whom not less than 577,649 are children between the ages of 10 to 14, to say nothing of those below that age, left entirely unrecorded! What of this ominous symptom, that tells so loudly of the spread and the depth of the distress that afflicts those two-footed waifs?!”

“Bah!” answers Philanthropy with Pecksniffian assurance. “Those 577,649 illiterate children between the ages of 10 to 14 must be Indians and Chinese.”

Not so. The Indians, Japanese and Chinese among them amount only to 8,077. There remain 569,572 others.

“Guess they must be niggers,” is Philanthropy’s shuffling excuse.

Neither is that so. The Negro contingent is but 328,992. There remain 240,580 white tots unaccounted for.

“What?” superciliously puts in Philanthropy, “240,580 illiterate white children between 10 and 14 years? Guess they must be foreigners, dagos.”

Mistaken again. The born abroad contingent barely runs up to 17,372. There actually remain 223,208 illiterate white children born in this country.

Out of all patience at being so pestered, Philanthropy turns up its nose, and with a wafture of the hand disposes of the question with: “That may be. But, if not born abroad and foreigners themselves, that 223,208 must be of foreign parentage.”

And yet again mistaken. Of foreign parentage there are only 17,473. There is in the land the shameful figure of 205,735 illiterate native children between 10 and 14 years, BORN OF NATIVE WHITE PARENTS in a country where the increase of wealth has been phenomenal!

And Philanthropy—that identical Philanthropy that wrote books “for sale”, of course, on “Boys Who Became Famous,” and “Girls Who Became Famous”, and that, in the chapter on Elizabeth Barrett Browning, strikes a cheap sentimental pose exclaiming: “Who can ever forget that immortal ‘Cry of the Children’, which awoke all England to the horrors of child-labor? That and Hood’s ‘Song of the Shirt’ will never die!”—that identical Philanthropy now hurriedly decamps, shocked at the vulgarity and irreverence of bringing such ill-smelling facts between the wind and her nobility.—

Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungalled play;
For some must watch, while some must sleep:
Thus runs the world away.¹

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded November 2006

¹ [William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*.]