

¶Those adorable quint—

REVENUES FROM THE QUINTUPLETS

FROM early morning till long after dark, all through the summer months American cars roll through the small village of Callander, Ontario, on the shores of Lake Nipissing at a rate that averages one a minute, outnumbering the local Ontario cars two and three to one, and bearing an eager horde of sightseers bound for the world's wonder children, the Dionne Quintuplets. During the peak traffic hours, which are those immediately preceding the showing of the five little girls, only a few yards separate the cars of the sightseeing cavalcade which numbers, even on an average week day, 3,000 people, and on holidays and over week-ends, upward of 8,000. At the close of their fifth summer the five daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Dionne remain one of the stellar attractions of the continent, a tourist lure whose potency is rivalled only by Radio City, Gettysburg, Mount Vernon, and Niagara Falls.

From worse than scratch, the five girls in their fifty-two months of existence, have helped save a sizable city from bankruptcy, speeded the building of modern roads, improved local

real estate values, increased the township assessment rolls, taken a few hundred people off relief, become the sole support of their parents, boomed the summer tourist traffic, inspired thousands of dollars of new capital investments, and attracted many millions of U. S. dollars to their native province. The value of the American tourist traffic to Ontario, even in a depression year, is said to be between \$100,000,000 and \$125,000,000.

Compared with the money the Quintuplets have helped to make for other people—the restaurateurs and hotel keepers, the railroads and bus companies, the wholesalers and the provincial government—their own earnings seem very modest. According to the latest official statements, the children's gross take has so far amounted to over \$750,000. Of this sum, \$600,000 is invested in Provincial and Dominion bonds, there is \$50,000 in cash in the bank, and the balance is accounted for by expenditures in excess of income. Their capital expenses have included the cost of building their own quarters, known as the Dafoe Nursery, an adja-

cent building to house their staff, and the ingenious playground where they are shown twice daily, health and weather permitting, to the peripatetic multitude. They pay their own living expenses, contribute \$300 a month to the support of their parents, and are sending three of their brothers and sister to school. They pay income taxes to both the United States and Dominion governments.

Exclusive of their parents, and not including the legal luminaries who must be retained from time to time to protect the Quintuplets from the unauthorized use of their names, there are now fourteen people on their payroll. Ten of these are on the nursery or hospital staff: two nurses, three policemen, two maids, a teacher, a housekeeper, and a cook. The outside retinue is made up of the kindly Dr. Dafoe, whose monthly fee remains, at his own insistence, \$200 a month; the Quints' business manager, Keith Munro, who was one of the first newspaper men to reach the Dionne farmhouse after the birth of the babies; Dr. Dafoe's secretary, Gordon Moffatt; and the secretary-treasurer of the Board of Guardians, W. M. Flannery, a North Bay lawyer. Still other debit entries in the Quints' ledger are legal fees, and the incidental out-of-pock-

et expenses of their guardians, manager, advisers, and consultants. Added all together, the costs of caring for the five girls are running about \$22,000 a year, or \$2,000 in excess of the \$20,000 income they receive annually from their investments.

To date, the Quints' largest source of revenue has been the movies. Their first picture, "The Country Doctor," brought them \$50,000, and shortly afterward the same company paid \$250,000 for the rights to make three additional feature films within a given period. The agreement called also for additional payment of \$50,000 royalties. The first of the pictures, "Reunion," has already appeared, the second is in the making, and the third is to be taken before the end of 1939. In addition to this sizable payment to the Quints as actresses, the movies also contribute \$10,000 a year for the newsreel rights. After the movies the principal source of revenue has been advertising. At one time or another, consistent with their ages, the five sisters have endorsed corn syrup, cod liver oil, a disinfectant, diapers, soap, milk and milk products, tooth paste, breakfast food, toys, and children's clothes. One of the few products they are known to have used but do not seem to

have endorsed is the rum which served them so nobly in their early days.

One contract in the soap and dentifrice field will bring them \$55,000 over a three-year period, and their public approval of a well-known breakfast food made them richer by \$25,000. Other advertisers have paid lesser sums for the privilege of associating the five similar faces with their products, and manufacturer of dolls, toys, and novelties using the word "Quintuplet" (their registered trade mark in Canada) pay royalties for the right to do so. The revenues received from these sources, however, are much less than they might have been had not successive boards of guardians steadfastly refused to endorse any product not actually used by the children. This unique ethical scruple—unknown to endorsers generally—has undoubtedly cramped the Quints as money takers, as has the guardians' insistence that all advertising with which they are associated conform to certain rigid standards of dignity.

The third source of revenue, and in many ways the most interesting, has come through the sale of the still-picture rights. Although these have brought in less to the Quints than movies or advertising, they may prove of greater value in the long run,

for they have made the children known wherever magazines and newspapers are printed or souvenir calendars sold. Furthermore, it was the sale of the still-picture rights which proved a life saver soon after the babies were born. They were brought by the Toronto Star, less for commercial reasons than to provide the five tiny premature babies with the funds that were so desperately needed at that time. When the *Star* contract ran out some months later these same rights were purchased by an American news syndicate for \$10,000, and the contract subsequently renewed for \$50,000 for a limited period.

From the very beginning, the personal finances of the Quintuplets have been the cause of a series of dramatic conflicts between those interested in their welfare and those anxious to cash in on their great potential earning powers. The first clash came three days after the babies were born when the bewildered father, with the advice and assistance of the parish priest, signed a contract with one Ivan I. Spear to permit the exhibiting of the babies at the World's Fair then running in Chicago. The contract was an amazing document from every point of view. Under its terms Mr. and Mrs. Dionne were to receive 23 per cent of the net, after all ex-

penses had been paid; the priest, Father Dan Routhier, 7 per cent; and Mr. Spear's Century of Progress Tours Bureau, 70 per cent. The contract had no time limit and included every conceivable right of exploitation. But it did have one redeeming clause, the provision that the babies could not be moved without the consent of their physician, Dr. Allan Dafoe.

The storm of disapproval which broke round Dionne's head as soon as the terms of the contract were known quickly convinced him that he had been unfortunate in the choice of his adviser. Falling back on the saving clause, he repudiated the agreement and Spear later sued all those remotely connected with the incident for a nice round sum—\$1,000,000. The suit, incidentally, is still pending in the Illinois court. To protect the babies and Papa Dionne himself, from the continuing threat of equally dangerous commitment, Dr. Dafoe, with the help of others interested only in the survival of the infants, induced Dionne and his wife to agree to a temporary guardianship which removed the children entirely from their parents' control. Dionne was to regret this move almost as quickly as he had the preceding one; but by this time the pro-

vincial government, under pressure of outraged public opinion, had assumed control.

The Provincial government replaced the temporary guardianship with a permanent one making the five children wards of the King until their eighteenth birthday. The Dominion government, incidentally, has never had anything to do with the quintuplets, nor has it ever interfered with their affairs; they are exclusively a Provincial problem.

The quintuplets' \$600,000 nest egg would be considerably larger but for the horror their guardians, and Canadians generally, have of what they call "vulgar ballyhoo." The terror of being accused of "exploiting" the children, even to their advantage, has obviously limited their incomes.

No large billboard proclaims the Quints' nearness as one approaches their native health, no neon sign welcomes the weary motorist with the news that he is approaching his journey's end. Instead, there is a neat roadside route market, similar to all those that have identified the lakes, streams, and hamlets along the way. This market points eastward and states simply: "The Dionne Quintuplets."

The highway swells gently to the crest of a last knoll and

there, suddenly, is the whole amazing scene. On the left is the Dafoe Nursery, neat and squat, with a red roof and brown-stained walls of half logs. Flanking it are the staff house and the playground building, all three surrounded by a high fence of heavy wire. A tall canvas screen runs from the corner of the nursery to the playground, protecting the children from the unsupervised gaze of their friendly admirers. There are flower beds, straight walks and lawns, right-angled and uncompromising. Behind the fence all is orderly, restrained, and dignified. Outside there is a

huge macadamized plaza with long rows of cars neatly arranged and across the plaza Papa Dionne's refreshment and souvenir pavilion. Behind it is a vast parking space that could take care of a thousand cars.

Quickly grasped is the grim determination of the guardians to save their five small charges from any taint or flavor of commercialism. No charge is made to see them nor is any charge made for parking. The Quints do not take a nickel from the hordes who come hundreds of miles to gaze upon them.—*Merrill Denison, condensed from Harper's Magazine.*

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Trust Thyself

TRUST thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Insist on yourself; never imitate. That which each can do best, none but his Maker can teach him. There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better, for worse, as his portion. The power which resides in him is new in Nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried.—*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*