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## PUTTING THE BAD BOY UNDER A MICROSCOPE



**A**FTER Having Cared for 700,000 Children, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Has Created a New Department Scientifically to Search Out the Weaknesses or Disorders That Are Blamed for the Generation of Weakness, Viciousness and Crime.

When it was announced that the society was about to open a department for the reformation of juvenile criminals it was once concluded that the society had in view widespread operations for turning bad boys and girls into good ones on the theory that all evil behavior in youth was the result of some abnormal construction of the skull or of some other physical malformation.



Boys Awaiting Trial in the Children's Court

Copyright, 1910, by the New York Herald Co. All rights reserved. NEW YORK, Saturday. VERY delinquent child in New York city is to be carefully, thoroughly and scientifically analyzed. He is, as it were, to be placed under a microscope. His ancestry is to be examined and conclusions are to be drawn as to his progeny.

When Eleven Years Old He Was Charged with Stealing a Pocketbook from a Woman in the Street.

All this is in the effort to discover whether the juvenile delinquent is a hereditary criminal; whether he is the result of environment or the product of a mental or nervous condition which is congenital and which has transmitted to him tendencies which render him difficult of control and apparently without moral sense.

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children is at work on the delinquent now, and its new department of psychiatry and neurology will search out with an exact eye the weaknesses or disorders that are blamed for the generation of crime and weakness.

The society has cared for 700,000 children during its existence of thirty-five years. Every child in the city who has become sufficiently delinquent to be apprehended as a violator of the laws has been under its care from time to time. The cases of nearly fifty thousand children were considered last year. This the society in the natural course of its business sweeps into its headquarters all children who in any circumstances would be proper subjects of such inquiry, and again in the natural trend of its affairs observes their development, for a few years at least.

Its records have been so precisely and so fully kept for many years that they are constantly in the service of the courts when information touching on particular cases is required. Therefore the society needs only to call science to its aid in the gathering of these statistics to become a perfectly equipped bureau of the utmost importance to all who are interested in improving the race.

Dr. M. G. Schlapp, of the Cornell University Medical School, is the head of the new department, for which charts have been prepared which will record the information gathered about the child's ancestry. Symbols are to be used to indicate normal ancestry, alcohol, epilepsy, hereditary imbecility, acquired imbecility, insanity, hereditary blindness, acquired blindness, tuberculosis, hereditary deafness, acquired deafness and other physical conditions. The mother's history is to be scanned especially in order to discover whether she has suffered any shock of vital importance since the beginning of her married life.

**The Red Headed Boy.** Much of the material with which the new department will have to deal drifts into the society thus:—"Dear sir, society. "Please call at 1st ave between 31 and 32 and you will find a red headed boy who has no home, and his mother is a bum and goes with all the bums. It would be a god send to put him away.

A mother" A ray of light thus cast across the path of the red haired boy results in a visit from the agent of the Children's Society, who finds him accurately described, both as to personal charms and home surroundings. Nor has the social circle of his mother been unjustly characterized. The mother is a drunkard, and, worse, the friend and daily associate of petty thieves and beggars. Sometimes she deserts her home for days and leaves the boy to his own devices and to the companionship of others, only less destitute than himself.

Sometimes she has wretched lodgings, which the boy shares and in which he is witness to innumerable brawls and detachments. In the mind of the boy two convictions, the fruit of much observation, grow and wax strong—one is that a mother is a person whose principal use is to send one for beer and the other is that home is a place on whose altar all things, including the heads of the family, are broken in time of stress.

As to the future, he sees himself as the victim of a heritage. The neighbors have warned him of its inevitable triumph, so have the policemen, and so has

When Eleven Years Old He Was Charged with Stealing a Pocketbook from a Woman in the Street.



His Mother Is a Bum and Goes with All the Bums

his mother, when she has noticed him at all. This heritage is that he will be "put away." It has happened several times to his mother, and if he understood hereditary traits he would at once conclude that being "put away" was one of them.

As it is he awaits his doom without question and is not at all surprised when the Children's Society appears and takes him. He feels it his duty to protest, partly because it is the tradition of the neighborhood to do so and also because the love of liberty is strong. He is led away, and after a session in the Children's Court he is made over to the society until he can get a permanent home in some charitable institution. He learns for the first time in his life what it is to have a warm bath, a well prepared meal and a comfortable bed. Then a home is found for him, the best that institutional life can afford, and the boy passes out of the care of the Children's Society. His case is not in the least remarkable. He is one of the 70,000.

**The Crucible.** If a boy happens to become good and industrious, a desirable member of society, then he has risen above the evils of his early environment. If he turns out to be not exactly a boon and a blessing to mankind, but an improvement on his mother, he still is to be considered a success and a triumph for institutions, transferred as he is to the other hand he should turn out not at all a worthy member of society he is not to be wondered at. After all he is what might have been expected.

But there are other boys and girls who come under the care of the society who present problems not easily solved. Here are a few examples:

some idea of the many perplexities which beset the path of the person who is seeking to solve the problem of juvenile crime and vagrancy for which education does not account.

Boy with good home, surroundings in every way desirable, well dressed, in no need of money, when ten years old broke into a shoe store and stole several pairs of shoes. He was tried for this offence and discharged.

When eleven years old he was charged with stealing a pocketbook from a woman in the street, convicted of grand larceny and paroled on suspended sentence.

At twelve he was convicted of grand larceny for snatching a pocketbook from a woman's hand and was sent to the Catholic Protectory.

Soon after coming out of the Catholic Protectory he was found intoxicated, taken before the Court on the charge of improper guardianship and discharged, as it was found that there were no evidences of improper guardianship and his home was a good one.

A few months later, just before he was sixteen, he was convicted of petit larceny for stealing a horse blanket and was sent to the House of Refuge.

Boy of ten years, home conditions apparently excellent, charged with burglary, discharged.

At eleven, charged with stealing brass and lead; discharged.

At twelve, convicted of stealing a bicycle; paroled on suspended sentence.

At thirteen, punished in stealing lead; discharged.

ment expects to plod along the path it has marked out for itself with the dogged persistence that is required for the attainment of all important ends. The results may be observable in a short time or not for many years. They may be in accord with what has been learned already or may afford startling disclosures hitherto unknown to the experienced workers in these fields. The society cherishes no expectations of speedy returns for new endeavors. Patience, accuracy and unremitting enforcement of remedial agencies are its watch words, and its emblem is not the scalpel, as has been supposed, but the investigating instruments of the scientist.

It is true that at times surgical operations may be recommended, although Superintendent Thomas D. Walsh, who has been connected with the society for many years, said to a Herald reporter that he never had seen a boy in all his experience who had become a criminal as a result of a fall or a good boy when the lump caused by a fall was removed. Operations for adenoids and for swollen tonsils undoubtedly will be recommended for some of the children exactly as these operations are recommended for perfectly good children who never have come within the society's building.

The remedy will vary with the individual case and will be principally directed toward an improvement of the nervous condition. It may include medical treatment, surgical treatment or simply a change of environment. That will be decided according to the facts of the particular case.

**A Boy's Two Sides.** One of the cases which has come before the society already is that of a boy who seems to be a congenital delinquent. He is the son of a well to do man who provides an excellent home for his family, where all the conditions are of the best. There is nothing in

which possibly could account for the boy's delinquency. The boy is very docile and sweet, is never bad tempered and is apparently obedient. But he is continually engaged in working out dishonest schemes whereby he can get money. He is well dressed and has all the money to which boys of his age are accustomed, but he continues to think out plans for extorting money from friends of the family.

When he is found out and reproached with his wrongdoing he does not attempt to deny it but docilely admits his guilt and says he knew what he did was wrong. Nevertheless he immediately begins to play a similar scheme just as dishonest as the one he has so recently been regretting.

This has happened so many times that his father has become discouraged in his efforts to improve the boy and has appealed to the society for aid. Investigation of the case has brought out the facts that events which took place at the time of the boy's birth and for some time previously to it which vitally affected his mother may have been the cause of making the boy a delinquent.

As an example of the varied treatment which the new department will give, this boy has been taken from his home and placed in an institution where he will have the constant companionship of perfectly normal boys of his own age, while at the same time he is constantly watched. Neither medical nor surgical treatment was necessary in his case, and while it is thought there is some derangement of the nerves this will be treated gradually by other than medical means.

Another boy, who was found to be the victim of a frightful inheritance which undermined both physical and moral structure has not been taken from his home, but is being treated medically at one of the city dispensaries. He has led such a frightful life for the last two years that the society despairs of saving him, but if he is faithful to the instructions of the physicians he has a fighting chance.

A case which has attracted much interest and which will be considered by the new department is that of a child who has been called the wickedest boy in New York. He is one of twins, both of whom have been particularly delinquent. The father of these boys is a well to do manufacturer, and the family has a comfortable and attractive home in a highly respectable neighborhood. There are several other children, none of whom ever has given any trouble to his parents.

Almost from infancy the twin boys have been a source of worry to their family. They are both very healthy looking boys and apparently have no physical defects of any kind. Both are mentally normal, quick at their books, alert, animated and responsive. They have been guilty of numerous violations of the law, some of quite a serious nature. Most of their schemes have been for raising money, and it is these activities, which have resulted in their being sent to an institution.

The wickedest boy in New York was the last to go because he was so bright and interesting that when he came into court charged with a misdemeanor he always talked the Judge over and got another chance. Among his exploits was a trip to California, which he took without his father's knowledge or consent, at the age of twelve.

On his return to New York he started a candy syndicate of boys who were to sell their wares outside the theatres. The wickedest boy met his young salesmen every night and settled accounts with them. He was doing a very good business when he was arrested one morning at three o'clock for peddling without a license. In the meanwhile his family had been entirely ignorant of his whereabouts.

"I'll Cut It Out." While he was being tried he astonished the Judge by informing him that anybody can make money if he only wants to, and made good his statement by various extracts from his own experience. On this occasion, however, the wickedest boy met his Waterloo. He departed for the institution which was to shelter him with the announcement that he was entirely reformed.

"This crooked business don't pay," he remarked, reproachfully to the Judge. "I'm going to cut it out."

The authorities, however, are by no means convinced of the permanent reformation of the boy. So widespread was his reputation that the institution to which he was assigned protested against receiving him. Since his brother already was in the House of Refuge the Judge could not send him there and the reluctant institution was obliged to receive him. How he is developing under the institutional system it will be the business of the new department to consider. The boys' parents will be examined to see whether there has been anything in the history of the family which would account for the perversity of himself and his brother.

No treatment of any kind will be given to a child by the physicians of the Society without the consent of his parents, nor will any child be sent elsewhere for treatment without his parents' consent. While the children are in the care of the Society, either before they have been tried or afterward when they are waiting to be taken to an institution, they are examined by physicians with the object of detecting contagious diseases. They also receive such medical treatment as is immediately necessary for the preservation of their health or should a surgical operation be necessary before their parents can be notified, they are sent to the hospital, but none of this is a part of the work of the new department. This always has been so, and speedy action in such matters is not now taken any more frequently than it always has been. When the new department wishes to do anything of this kind there is no such hurry about it and the parents are always called.

The Society is able to examine the children on an order of the Court without consulting the parents. Then if the results are such as to suggest a radical course of treatment under Dr. Schlapp's direction, the parents are informed, and so far all of them have shown a sincere desire to aid the effort for the assistance of their children.

Whether there are to be special institutions for the care of those children who are found to be in need of the ministrations of the new department the Society is not at present ready to state. They never have maintained any institutions or homes for children except the temporary home in the headquarters of the Society, where youthful delinquents and those who have been taken from their homes because of improper guardianship are cared for until the Children's Court decides on their future home. It is said that the six farms recently purchased by Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt in the upper part of New York State are to be used as homes for boys who need exceptional care and treatment. The Children's Society, however, is not prepared to make any statement in regard to this.