

Solving the Problem of the Bad Boy

Commissioner Wallstein Reports on Juvenile Delinquency in New York.

Nearly a year has passed since the Justices of the Children's Courts called upon the Commissioner of Accounts to make an investigation of the subject of juvenile delinquency in New York in the hope that something might be done to prevent boys from becoming lawbreakers in place of trying to reform them after they had become criminals. A few days ago Commissioner of Accounts Wallstein completed his investigation and transmitted his report to the Mayor. In it he calls attention to the fact that there is no provision whatever at present for taking boys brought before the Children's Court and remanding them for observation, temporarily separating them from associations that have brought them into trouble and giving them a brief period of discipline under custodial care instead of sending them to reformatory institutions.

The magnitude of the problem is shown by the fact that the Children's Courts each year handle more than 100,000 cases, of which 82 per cent. are boys and that each year nearly 8,000 boys are arraigned on charges of juvenile delinquency. More than one-third of these boys, or some 4,000, are first offenders. Commissioner Wallstein says, and their appearance in the Children's Court is often due to conditions for which they are not responsible.

"The first object of the court," he continues, "is properly to preserve the home life of the boy, correcting conditions there if possible. Institutional life is regarded as a last resort in the work of reformation. But in most cases, inasmuch as the Justice is convinced that a boy cannot be effectively dealt with by immediately returning him to his home, even under the supervision of a probation officer; yet such boys do not merit a long term in some institution."

For these and other reasons Mr. Wallstein recommends that for boys who are found guilty of minor offenses or for other causes mentioned in a place shall be provided to which they can be sent for a short period of detention instead of having them sent to a reformatory for a long period. And he suggests that the Brooklyn Training School be used for this purpose.

In the course of his investigation of juvenile delinquency the Commissioner discovered a very marked difference of opinion as to his proposed plan. On the one hand it was heartily approved by the Justices of the Children's Courts as well as by many others working independently of institutional life for the welfare of children. Yet a strong opposition developed from managers of institutions to which children are sent. For example, I. L. Schiff, president of the Jewish Protective Society, does not believe in short term commitments, as they seem to him to be contrary to the proper theory of dealing with juvenile delinquents.

This opinion is shared by Franklin H. Briggs, superintendent of the New York State Training School for Boys, who explains his views thus: "An experience of twenty-five years in dealing with delinquent boys has convinced me beyond the shadow of a doubt that a short term commitment is the worst possible thing that can happen to a boy." And Mornay Williams, for more than twenty years a director and for thirteen years president of the Juvenile Asylum, says that he is totally opposed to short term commitments for children who are in need of reformatory training.

An individual idea is expressed by Miles Tierney, president of the New York Catholic Protective Society, who after considering the whole question suggests that the city at its own expense build a building conveniently located for the housing of those who are committed.

Hastings R. Hart, director of the department of child training of the Russell Sage Foundation, is another who believes that a plan of short term commitment to any of the institutions which are available in New York is unadvisable. Yet in direct contradiction to the views of these and other managers of reformatory institutions the establishment of a detention home and clearing house is urged as an imperative necessity by the Justices of the Children's Courts, by volunteer workers, by probation officers and by various social welfare agencies. The position taken by the Children's Court in this matter is explained thus by Franklin Chase Hoyt, the presiding Justice:

"There is no question in my mind of the absolute and imperative necessity of establishing some kind of institution for the reception of children on remands of from one to four months or longer. Personally I had long ago discarded the old practice, now fortunately discarded, of sending a child to a reformatory institution for thirty or ninety days, with an absolute release at the end of such time. There is no connection between that justly obsolete method of punitive treatment and the existing necessity of remanding a child pending the determination of his case.

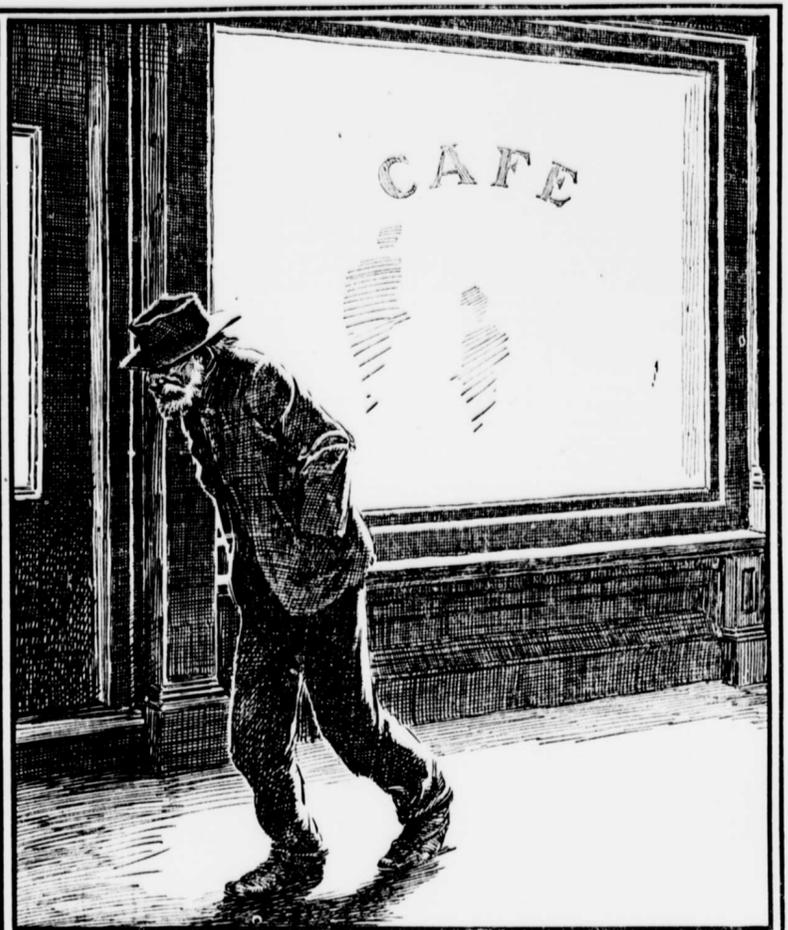
"The essential need at present is to have some place where a child can be sent for a short period of time, which will not only be a reformatory, but which will last two years or more, but which will act as an effective measure of discipline for the time being.

"Class arise daily in the Children's Court where such treatment is necessary. A delinquent child whose environment is so bad that it should be reformed until that environment can be changed.

"Then again children on probation who fail to live up to the requirements may be benefited by a short term in all of such cases the court should never lose its jurisdiction of the case and the remand should be treated not as a final, punitive treatment of the child, but as an effective instrument in the broader work of probation.

"The success of handling cases through the Brooklyn Disciplinary Training School has been undoubtedly due to attention through many courses. Poor as was its physical

SEED TIME AND HARVEST TIME---Drawn by Rodney Thomson



equipment, it did a marvelous work in the last two years of its existence. "When I tell you that not a day passes in the Children's Court of Manhattan in which I do not receive at least five to ten requests from parents, school principals and others interested for short remands for one child or another, and that every official of the court, every probation officer, every volunteer, every religious organization and social agency I know all unite in advocating the establishment of an institution there is little more to be said."

Justice Wilkin of the Children's Court expressed himself as "very much in favor of having some temporary provision made whereby the court will be empowered to care, for a temporary period, for boys who require some slight correctional treatment in order to enable them to return to the community as good citizens."

"Regarding the best way to meet the situation," Justice Wilkin continues, "I am in somewhat of a dilemma. Personally I believe that private, or partial private management will give better results than a purely municipal institution; but I do not believe that it is possible to secure private cooperation to the extent necessary; therefore, if anything is to be done, it must be through a municipality."

Still another who urges a home for remanding boys, instead of sending them to reformatories, is Ernest K. Coulter of the Big Brother movement, who for ten years was

himself connected with the Children's Court. Mr. Coulter said: "It often happens that a stay of a few weeks in an institution is all that is necessary to bring a boy to a proper realization of his responsibilities and what the community has a right to expect of him. The ordinary reformatory institution, for reasons which are quite apparent, cannot accept children on short term commitments. That it would be an economy, both from a moral and a financial standpoint, for the city to establish such a home there is absolutely no doubt. This fact was borne on me almost daily all the time I was connected with the Children's Court."

Miss Katharine B. Davis, Commissioner of Correction, was asked for her opinion and her willingness to have under her department such an institution as suggested; and her views are regarded as important for the reason that she formerly was one of the board of managers of the Brooklyn Disciplinary School. Miss Davis replies as follows: "It has long been my opinion that the city of New York needed a detention home in which boys could be placed by the Juvenile Court for short periods, in order that a careful study could be made of family conditions and of the physical and mental condition of the boys before decision was reached as to whether it was wise to place a given case on probation or return him to his home or to commit him to an institution."

"The question has arisen as to the proper city department to have super-

vision of such a clearing house or detention home and the suggestion has been made that the Department of Correction is the proper place for it. I personally have no objection to this, and recognize that it would save the city the expense of a new administrative staff.

"There is a question of policy, however, in having an institution for juvenile delinquents connected with a department which deals with adult offenders. This is a matter of sentiment rather than a practical question. Provided the Children's Court have the necessary administrative machinery I should think that were perhaps the better place for it. I am willing to undertake the work, however, if the Board of Estimate feel that this is the desirable place."

Justice Morgan M. L. Ryan of the Children's Court not merely expressed his mature opinion regarding the matter discussed but he drew up a brief in support of it in which the principal points are as follows: "Approximately 90 per cent. of the delinquent children placed on probation have been reformed without any institutional care whatever.

"All delinquent children, however, are not fit subjects for probation, and we are therefore still dependent to some extent upon reformatory institutions.

"There is a third class of children who cannot be reformed by probation alone, but who are not sufficiently hardened to require a long course of treatment in a reformatory.

"It has been demonstrated to the

satisfaction of all the Judges of the Children's Court that about 76 per cent. of the children who apparently belong to this class can be successfully reformed by a short commitment of from four to six weeks, followed by a course of probationary supervision."

Justice Ryan calls attention to the fact that instead of being an added expense to the city the establishment of the proposed institution would save money. In 184 cases of children successfully reformed for short periods instead of being sentenced to reformatories he estimates that there has been a saving of \$38,225 as compared with the cost of sending the same children away for indefinite terms.

Arthur B. Towne, superintendent of the Brooklyn Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, supplies Justice Ryan's brief with a statement showing eleven cases of boys who would be benefited by short term commitments. Later Justice Ryan explained in some detail his views as to the problem of juvenile delinquents.

"For many years before the establishment of the probation system delinquent children were either immediately paroled under a suspended sentence without any supervision whatever or committed to a reformatory. The court was obliged to rely solely upon the institutions for the reformation of delinquents, and it was therefore deemed advisable to make all commitments for indefinite terms, usually extending over periods of from one to three years. Under the old practice short commitments were

not very effective for the reason that the court had no means of exercising supervision over the child after his discharge.

"The establishment of the probation system was a radical departure from the old methods of dealing with juvenile delinquents, but it has been clearly demonstrated by several years of practical experience of the Children's Court of this and other cities throughout the country that probation is an unequalled success. Approximately 90 per cent. of the delinquent children placed on probation have been reformed without any institutional care whatever.

"Delinquent children may be roughly divided into three classes, as follows: "1. Children who are susceptible of reformation by probationary treatment without institutional care. The great majority of juvenile delinquents belong to this class.

"2. Children who for various reasons are not fit subjects for probation and who can only be reformed by institutional care and disciplinary training extending over a long period. It is still customary to commit children of this class for indefinite terms, leaving it to the managers of the institution to determine when they may safely be discharged.

"3. Children who cannot be reformed by probation alone but who are not sufficiently hardened to require a long course of treatment in a reformatory. It has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of all the Judges of the Children's Court that about 76 per cent. of the children who apparently

belong to this class can be successfully reformed by a short commitment of from four to six weeks, followed by a course of probationary supervision.

"Some boys who are not really hard do not take probation seriously. They feel that the probation officer, like the teacher, has no power to enforce obedience to his commands and they gradually drift back into their old habits without, however, at first committing any serious offense. Boys of this type sometimes require an object lesson to impress on their minds the fact that there is a penalty for every violation of law, which may and, if necessary, will be enforced.

"Instead of committing these children to an institution for an indefinite term, which usually extends over a period of about eighteen months or more, when they are returned to court in a very penitent mood and paroled on probation, we seldom find it necessary to make a second commitment, but if the short commitment should fail to produce the desired results we can always, as a last resort, fall back on the indefinite commitment.

"The short commitment has also proved to be very effective in dealing with cases of habitual truancy.

"We must not lose sight of the fact that the juvenile courts are maintaining not only for the protection and reformation of individual children, but also for the preservation of the public peace and the protection of property. It is sometimes necessary to commit a boy not only for his own good but as a warning to others."

Russia Takes Vengeance on Aged Woman

"Little Grandmother of the Revolution" Condemned to Solitary Confinement.

READERS of THE SUN who have been interested in the remarkable career of Catherine Breshkovskaya, the "Little Grandmother of Russian Revolution," especially since her visit to this country in 1906, were shocked on reading in a recent issue that this woman of 71 years, with catarracts on both eyes, had been sent to remain in solitary confinement for the rest of her life in Yakutsk, where the winters are nine months long and the temperature often reaches 55 degrees below zero.

This information was contained on a postal card enclosed in a letter received by Miss Alice Stone Blackwell. A bleak, snowy mountain pass in northern Siberia was pictured, and through the pass a little band of prisoners struggled along herded by Russian troops. The pass is on the 2,000 mile journey from Irkutsk to Yakutsk, where Mme. Breshkovskaya has been sent. The letter was dated at Irkutsk on June 27 and stated that Mme. Breshkovskaya was scheduled to start for Yakutsk in July. No doubt she has reached her destination by this time.

In the letter Mme. Breshkovskaya declared that no change would frighten her because life was made so hard for her both at Kirovsk and Irkutsk.

Mme. Breshkovskaya has spent a great many years in the Russian prisons on account of her revolutionary activities. The "Little Grandmother of Russian Revolution" was born in luxury, the daughter of a Russian noble who was the possessor of hundreds of serfs employed upon his vast estate. Her early youth was spent amid the luxurious surroundings of her family manor. When only a child she was the centre of a little court, copied in detail after that of the czar. But the gay life of the court did not suffice. The active minded child craved for something else, something that would make other people happy. Imbued with this idea she eluded her father, guests and the servants and in the early morning she went to the villages where she ministered to the serfs.

When she reached the age of 18 years she imagined that the serfs had gained all they craved for when they were emancipated. But when the Government allotted to each head of a family an amount of ground smaller than that which he had held as a serf, and then imposed exorbitant taxes, she knew the serfs would revolt at these conditions which they were unable to meet. After seeing troops enter the villages and commit outrages Mme. Breshkovskaya realized that the serfs were even worse off than they had been prior to their emancipation.

Mme. Breshkovskaya valiantly endeavored to mitigate these conditions and made every effort to help her suffering countrymen. She soon became convinced that the Government had no intention of meeting the wants of the people. Failing to gain the assistance of her father in her chosen work she left home to throw herself into the work. This was in 1879 and she soon drew to herself a large following.

In 1874 the power of the czar was exerted against her and she was arrested in St. Petersburg and taken into prison, where she remained two years before being transported to Siberia, where she was put to work at hard labor in the mines with a barrow. After a year she was transferred to a hamlet in the Arctic Circle, where the inhabitants were all convicts of a class inferior to political exiles.

Mme. Breshkovskaya and some of her friends decided to attempt an escape, with America as the objective point. As no railroad was accessible the only road to liberty lay over the Bashi Mountains. After a time the fugitives reached the Taimyr forest, where for a month they endured indescribable privations and suffering, only to be finally recaptured and returned to more cruel confinement. She finally gained her liberty after sixteen years in Siberian prisons.

Despite suffering and hardships Mme. Breshkovskaya when she visited New York in 1906 had a sweet, simple face. In repose her face was calm, meditative and sympathetic, her brow broad and smooth and her hair a delightful combination of pure white and jet black. Her complexion remained remarkably fresh and few lines could be noticed.

It is believed that the Russian Government never forgave Mme. Breshkovskaya for coming to this country in 1906 and collecting a sum of \$10,000 for the cause. When in March, 1910, she was arrested in St. Petersburg and charged with criminal activity in the revolutionary organization it was openly hinted that the Russian officials were simply getting even with the aged woman for coming to the United States four years before.

On the subject of Mme. Breshkovskaya admitted that she was a member of the Social Revolutionary party, but declared that most of the statements in the indictments were false. In spite of this she was convicted and sentenced to be imprisoned in Petropavlovsk fortress.

Her American friends made determined efforts to obtain her release. The Russian Petition Commission was organized and inside of two days a petition signed by fifty prominent New Yorkers was presented to Baron Rosen, the Russian Ambassador at Washington.

The petition asked for the release of two revolutionists, Mme. Breshkovskaya and Nicholas Tobaykovsky, on the ground that it "would be interpreted as an act of friendship to a host of American citizens who are warm friends and well wishers for the welfare of Russia."

In spite of the efforts of this committee the conviction of Mme. Breshkovskaya was upheld and she was sentenced to perpetual exile in Kirovsk in March, 1910, after a trial held behind closed doors.

In December, 1, 1913 she made an attempt to escape. She eluded the guards and was free for three days, but was captured by the guards on December 4.

Since her conviction Mme. Breshkovskaya had been confined in the penal colony of Kirovsk, over 400 miles northeast of Irkutsk.