

Our Young Offenders: What the Juvenile Court of Washington Has Accomplished During Its First Year.

HOW JUDGE DeLACY AND HIS SMALL STAFF OF OFFICERS DEAL WITH DELINQUENT CHILDREN.



TRYING A CASE



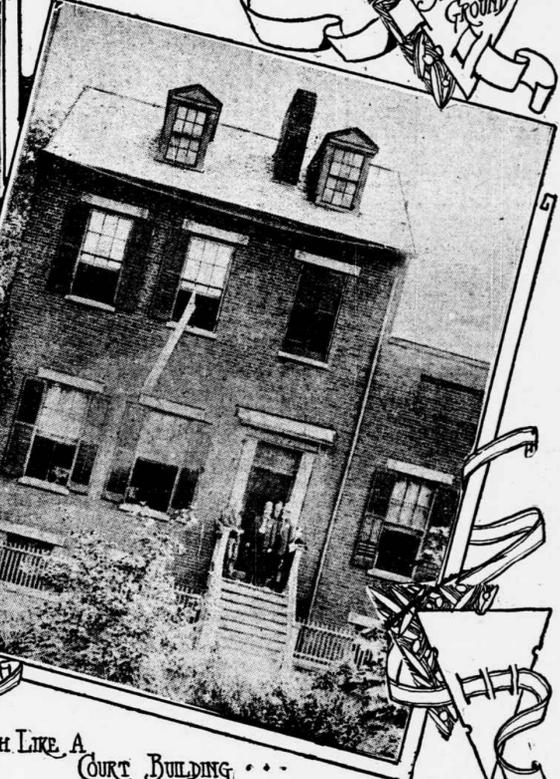
JUDGE W. DE LACY



THE TREE SHADED PLAY GROUND



THE MONTHLY ROUND UP



NOT MUCH LIKE A COURT BUILDING

IN an old-fashioned brick residence, set high on a terrace, over on West F street, Judge William H. DeLacy and his small, efficient, hard-working staff of juvenile court officers have been waging a year's battle against squalor, misery and crime. With their hearts in their work and their shoulders to the wheel, this little force of good citizens has combated valiantly against evils, plucked away ceaselessly for the uplift and given generously of their vitality in the cause of children against poverty and criminal tendency.

Little does the general public know of the great work undertaken and accomplished at this year-old institution. Without fuss or furor the juvenile court officers have carried the banner of good citizenship into thousands of Washington's most squalid homes and the result of the year's campaign is a bright page in the history of the District. Children brought to the door of the penitentiary through the influence of home conditions; children in training to become thieves, murderers or inmates of insane asylums; children advancing in years with little or no knowledge save of evil and the prospect of becoming derelicts of society—hundreds and hundreds of them, have been reached by the helping hand of the juvenile court, lifted to their feet and guided along the straight and narrow way until they have become sure-footed enough to tread the path alone.

Find the cause and remedy it—this is the slogan of the court. Punishment, to avenge society for the infraction of its code, plays no part in juvenile court methods. It is an institution for correction, not punishment, and in every juvenile case where punishment for an offense is meted the offender it is done with a view to the prevention of a recurrence of the misdemeanor and not merely to answer the stern demands of justice. It often happens that the real guilt rests upon the neglected father or mother or guardian. In such cases punishment, if any, is dealt the adult and the child is protected from future evil influences from the same source.

Force Too Small.

Washington was slow in answering the great need for such an institution as the juvenile court. Denver had led the movement, and other large cities had followed suit and built their juvenile courts up to the highest grade of efficiency before the worthy solons and representatives at the Capitol saw fit to endow Washington with a similar institution. Meager enough was the appropriation to establish and maintain the new court, and the deficiency of funds, making it impossible to support a force large enough to handle the work thoroughly, has been the one great handicap under which Judge DeLacy has labored.

The court held its initial session July 2, 1906. Judge DeLacy was on the bench. Clerk Joseph Harper sat at a little table in front of the court, with a huge notebook open before him. Chief Probation Officer Zed D. Copp and Probation Officer Mrs. Gertrude B. Darwin sat to one side. Standing in the doorway to the court and witness room, Deputy Marshal J. J. Hoey held forth in his new position. Scouring back and forth between court and witness rooms, rounding up prisoners and witnesses and answering questions, William A. Hickey pursued the manifold duties of his office as bailiff, assistant clerk, messenger, court officer and proba-

tion officer. These were the half dozen worthy citizens that entered enthusiastically upon their duties over a year ago in the old brick house at 1816 F street. The casual visitor to the court will find on any afternoon the same six workers, laboring with undiminished enthusiasm for the cause. There is only one difference. The big record book has had successors. During the first twelve months of the court in the neighborhood of 4,000 children came under the personal observation of Judge DeLacy and his assistants. Of juvenile defendants actually brought into court for trial there were 2,254. Of these about 899 were dismissed by the court, leaving approximately 1,355 children about whom some action was taken. When it is remembered that each of these 1,355 youngsters is given personal supervision by probation officers and each case carefully looked into from all sides the magnitude of the work undertaken by Judge DeLacy's little corps of officers may in measure be appreciated.

Investigating a Case.

With the fundamental idea before them that correction is the objective and punishment incidental, it is necessary that the probation officers should know the merits of each case before it comes up for trial. To this end the court sessions have from the beginning been opened in the early afternoon. The morning hours are spent in looking into the cases on the docket.

A boy, for instance, is arrested Wednesday afternoon for attempting to gain an entrance through the rear of an empty house. He is taken to the house of detention, and, if his parents or guardians are unable or unwilling to deposit the necessary collateral, he is held over for trial. Early in the morning the arrest is made known to the probation officers. Mr. Copp or Mrs. Darwin, or, as is often the case, Marshal Hoey or Court Officer Hickey talk with the prisoner and get his side of the story. Then a visit is paid the home of the unfortunate lad. Parents are interrogated and talks had with the neighbors. The probation officer is usually able to pick up a fairly accurate idea of the boy's character, habits and surroundings in an hour or two, and is prepared to assist Judge DeLacy to a proper solution of the case when it comes up for trial that afternoon.

At the appointed time the boy and the witnesses in the case are haled into court

and take their seats in the front row of chairs before Clerk Harper's table. The probation officer who investigated the case has already told the judge the facts and deductions picked up during the morning inquiry, and the court is ready to carry the investigation to an equitable solution.

Judge DeLacy is the judicial Pooh Bah of the District. In his official capacity he performs four functions—those of judge, jury, prosecutor and counsel for the defense. He is a czar, but a kindly one. His court is first to attain the facts, and, secondly, to decide what action should be taken to help the youthful defendant to become a useful, industrious citizen.

The defendant and witnesses stand and are sworn. More often than not—such is the pitiable ignorance that the juvenile court's officers have to deal with—neither defendant nor witnesses know what it means to be sworn. Suspecting this, the judge usually asks them whether they do or not before Clerk Harper administers the oath. If ignorance of the meaning of an oath is professed the judge has a simple, set form of explanation for young and old alike:

"When you are sworn as a witness in court you hold up your right hand and take God to witness that what you are about to tell the judge is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Moreover, you ask God to help you tell the truth, saying 'So help me, God,' and if you don't tell the truth you are guilty of the awful crime of perjury. We send perjurers to the penitentiary for as long a term as ten years. Now, do you understand?"

They usually do after that, and the oath is administered by Clerk Harper.

Direct Examination.

Judge DeLacy then calls the young defendant to the platform and has him sit at his side. Usually the court has to combat fear, reticence or sullenness before he can break the ice of interrogation and glean anything from the prisoner. If the lad is very young the judge assumes a kindly, friendly manner and tries to frame his questions in words that can be readily understood. Usually he asks about home conditions—how is the defendant treated by his parents, how about school, does he get enough to eat, what time does he come in to bed?—and so on.

Leading up to the "crime" by degrees the court is usually able to form a correct

opinion of the guilt or innocence of the defendant. The isolated case previously mentioned—for instance—of the boy accused of attempted housebreaking is brought by painstaking interrogation to the point of a partial confession.

"What did you want to break into the house for?"

"Just ter look aroun'."

"Look around for what?"

"Nothin', jus' look aroun'."

"You had no idea of taking any lead pipe, I suppose?"

"No, sir."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes, sir."

But there is a guilty look in the lad's eyes and his averted face tells the true story. At this point Judge DeLacy, having assured himself of the boy's guilty intention, has a set question invariably to be asked.

"Would you like a thief to live in the house with you?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"He might take sumpin' of mine."

"That's it exactly? Now what did you make yourself when you broke into that house to steal lead pipe?"

"I didn't steal no pipe."

"But you meant to just the same. What did you make yourself?"

"I didn't mean to steal no pipe."

"You and I both know you are not telling the truth. What did you make yourself?"

The judge harps upon this string until the breakdown comes and the confession that he "made himself a thief" is wrung from the now trembling lips of the lachrymose defendant.

Questioning Witnesses.

Having attained this much the judge

tries to imbue the lad with an appreciation of the ugly position of a thief in the eyes of the commonwealth. Usually there follows a let-up, during which the defendant takes another chair and the witnesses are put through a severe examination. Parents and relatives, friends and neighbors are thoroughly questioned with a view toward acquiring detailed knowledge of the daily life of the defendant. In the majority of cases home conditions are found to be mainly responsible—a drunken father, slatternly mother. If the judge believes that the boy has no chance to reform if kept at home, it is decided to send him to the industrial school or some institution of similar character. If the father can be induced to take the pledge, or the mother promises to do better by her child, the defendant is put on probation for a period of from three months to two years.

Juvenile Cases.

Larceny	530
Violation of police regulations	353
Disorderly	425
Incontinency	149
Destitution of suitable home	278
Assault	21
Vagrancy	27
Truancy	21
Destruction of property	45
East Driving	39
Carrying on anti-social games	10
False fire alarms	10
Concealed weapons	4
Grand larceny	4
Threats	1

Disposition of Cases.

Dismissed	899
Security forfeited	543
Probation	421
Children's guardians	267
Fixed out	159
Boys' Reform School	129
Girls' Reform School	11
Personal bonds	1
Grand jury	5
Not guilty	1
Junior Republic	2
Working Boys' Home	2
House of Good Shepherd	2
St. Vincent's	1
St. Ann's	4
Industrial Home School	60
Sentence suspended	71

Adult Cases.

Non-support of wife	278
Abandoned child	9
Beating child cruelly	9
Responsible for delinquency of child	6

These figures tell their own story. It is interesting to note that only ninety-eight of the children released on probation were brought into court a second time.

Non-Support Cases.

A great deal of interest is attached to the non-support cases handled by Judge DeLacy. Through his vigilance in prosecuting the delinquent husbands he has become the most feared District official among the lower classes. The great majority of the non-support cases are brought into court by colored women. When it became known that Judge DeLacy was inclined to take the woman's viewpoint of the case more often than otherwise, the word spread among the alley dwellers that all a woman had to do to take life easy for the summer was rake together the ashes of some long-querried matrimonial romance and hale the ex-lamb into the "juvenile cote." But Judge DeLacy quickly "got wise" to this and the husbands, glancingly mother. If the judge believes that the boy has no chance to reform if kept at home, it is decided to send him to the industrial school or some institution of similar character. If the father can be induced to take the pledge, or the mother promises to do better by her child, the defendant is put on probation for a period of from three months to two years.

SONS OF PRESIDENTS WHO HAVE THE CHANCE TO REACH THE HIGH PLACE OF HONOR HELD BY THEIR FATHERS

SOME of the former Presidents of the United States are not to be discounted as factors in public affairs. The boys of President Roosevelt and President Cleveland are still too young to be reckoned with, and McKinley had none, but those wearing the names of Lincoln, Grant and Garfield are holding prominent places in public life, and it is by no means an impossibility that one of them may yet go to the White House.

The case of the Grants at once suggests itself. There are two of them now holding high places in public esteem, and one of them, Frederick Dent Grant, has followed the calling of his father and is a soldier. The other, Jesse Grant, who has spent most of his years in California, was not quite so well known until recently a number of boomers suggested him as available material for the democratic nomination to the Presidency.

Then folks began to sit up and take notice and ask questions about Jesse Grant. They found out that Jesse was the third son of Lee's conqueror, that having retired from business, in which he acquired liberally of wealth, he is now settled down in New York.

A Democratic Grant.

Perhaps the strongest plank in Mr. Grant's platform is opposition to Mr. Roosevelt. He does not believe in the policies inaugurated by the strenuous man from Sagamore Hill. He does not think that a trust is necessarily pernicious, he favors a restriction of immigration and he deprecates the elaborate ceremonies that are now deemed essential to White House hospitality.

Mr. Grant delights to recall the days when his father was President and to tell of their simplicity. His father's first act, he says, was to order out of the White

House all the soldiers placed there on guard.

"The President of the United States is only a citizen," was the way Gen. Grant put it, "and needs not the guards that are used to surround monarchs."

The other prominent Grant, Frederick Dent Grant, is not now a presidential sug-

gestion even, but the advance of a man in the military service is often meteoric. Riding up San Juan Hill put Theodore Roosevelt in the White House, and it is ever a possibility that Gen. Grant, who bears a most striking resemblance to his distinguished father, might figure in some episode of valor that would at a stroke

lift him above the choice of the politicians. Though he is much younger, Secretary of the Interior James Rudolph Garfield, youngest son of the martyred President, perhaps stands a better chance of some day going to the seat his father occupied than any other President's son. His career has been of the kind that in-

creases expectation. He was a boy around the White House, he went to school at Harvard, studied law, graduated, made himself an honorable record in the Ohio senate in the state. Harry declined the place and it then went to James R. Roosevelt's first choice for civil service

commissioner. The place was originally offered to his brother, Harry A. Garfield, a leading Ohio attorney, and the man who gained fame because of the persistency with which he has opposed political corruption in the state. Harry declined the place and it then went to James R. Roosevelt's first choice for civil service

As soon as the latter got a foothold as

Garfield has the best chance, for he is in the cabinet of a President who is the idol of his party, and he is young enough to build up a sentiment that in eight years from now could be turned into the force. Moreover, he comes from Ohio, which has taken the principal place of Virginia as a mother of Presidents.



ROBERT T. LINCOLN



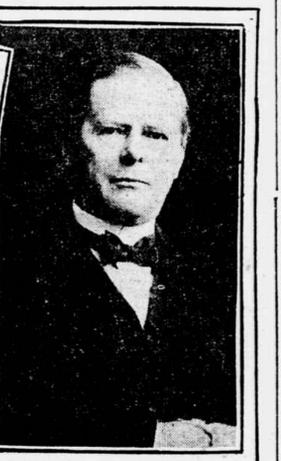
HARRY GARFIELD



GEN. FRED D. GRANT



JAMES RUDOLPH GARFIELD



JESSE GRANT