

THE DELINQUENT GIRL

Mrs. Julius Andrews, Boston

The problem of the girl in court has never seemed sufficiently serious to attract public attention. Statistics show that only about 10 per cent. of the Boston juvenile cases from 1906 to 1911 were girl offenders. In Massachusetts we have but one girls' penal or industrial school, while for delinquent boys we have two State and two city reformatory schools.

Larceny, truancy, waywardness and stubbornness are the common charges against the girl delinquent. Where larceny and truancy are not complicated with other misdemeanors, the court is often successful in correcting the fault. But the wayward and stubborn girls are more difficult problems—only too often indicating immorality. The probation officer finds one case of this type more difficult to supervise than several of the usual boy cases. Frequently public complaints are made of "hoodlumism," implying violation of property rights. These offenses are indignantly resented by all communities; even when girls are guilty of property offenses the public does not hesitate to report and accuse. But the complaints against the wayward or immoral girls rarely come from the public, it is the discouraged parent or private agency who seeks protection for the offender.

Girls congregate on the streets, in low dance halls and other commercialized amusement places—free from public interference. It is in such surroundings that many of our young people, seeking diversion from miserable home conditions, begin their downward careers.

In an investigation of recreational opportunities in Greater Boston, a pretty young girl naively informed us that she went to the public dances twice a week and wished she could go every night. When asked by the manager of the store whether she was escorted, she said, "No, we dance with any fellow who asks us." It was amusing to see the manager's surprised look and to hear his remark, "I didn't know nice girls danced with strangers without an introduction." We do not seem to realize the danger to the adolescent, of improper recreation, but the results of our lack of foresight are serious. When the inevitable

harm has been done we ostracize the girl, making reformation almost impossible, while the boy or man, if charged with his share of responsibility, easily escapes by paying a small penalty. Today, as a result, we are facing the problem of 15,000 feeble-minded, in Massachusetts, besides the many innocent victims of inherited diseases.

One of the most pathetic instances of our social standards was illustrated at a trial of a high school boy, who was held responsible for the condition of a girl of 16 years. In order to escape the penalty of his wrongdoing, he brought to the court, as witnesses, several boy friends, who willingly testified in his behalf. They displayed no personal shame nor any sympathy for the young girl, but boldly acknowledged their participation in her downfall. The light penalty imposed by the court can but encourage repetitions of like offenses. The general statutory penalties, for all sex offenses, are too trivial to act as a deterrent. A degenerate, who had for many years demoralized scores of little school children, was recently held on a \$300 bail. On the same day a lad of 20 years was held for \$2,000 for the larceny of \$430.

Until the law holds man and woman equally guilty and all sex offenses are consistently punished, we shall not be able to control immorality.

In speaking to the superintendent of a well-known maternity home for unmarried mothers in regard to the causes which were responsible for girl immorality, she said: "The freedom and privileges allowed girls during the past fifty years were now bearing fruit. They had influenced for good and for evil. The mentally strong girl had benefited and is today our best standard of American womanhood, but the weaker girl and many of foreign parentage, not understanding the ethics of such freedom, fall easy preys to what is presented to them as American privilege and liberty."

The social service departments of our hospitals, the charitable and philanthropic societies dealing with girls, the capacity of all the maternity and refuge homes are today overtaxed with cases of girl sex of-

fenders who rarely reach the court. A visit to the institutions for unmarried mothers would awaken our deepest sympathy and distress. Here we find the young girls of 13 to 14 years burdened with infants, whom they must often support.

It is evident that more supervision is necessary, not only in the overcrowded homes of the poor, but in many of the homes of the more prosperous families.

Public neglect and indifference are accountable for a large per cent. of girl delinquency, but as many of the direct causes are now recognized we may, in the future, do much to lessen the evil.

1. By holding the parents (when justifiable) responsible for the girl's delinquency.

2. By emphasizing the need for better housing.

3. By advocating more municipal evening recreation in school buildings, such as gymnasias, basket-ball, swimming pool and dances (under proper supervision). Teaching of music combined with choral and orchestral clubs.

4. By appointing special women police to protect the boy and girl on the street.

5. By synagogue and church realizing their responsibility to provide recreation as well as spiritual guidance for the young wage-earner and the youth of the congested districts.

6. By providing and enforcing, throughout the State, better regulations, not only in the city commercialized amusements, but particularly in beach and other summer resorts.

7. By amending our statutory laws so as to increase the penalties for sex offenders.

Speaking under Jewish auspices, it seems fitting to say a word in regard to the Jewish girl in the court. As is the case with all other denominations, the records show but few girl offenders, but I fear the inherited morality, which has been the proverbial glory of Jewish womanhood, is leading us to forget the dangerous influences of bad environment, extreme poverty, overcrowded tenements and particularly the misunderstood American liberty, which fosters disregard of parental authority.

We, too, then, have a still greater obligation placed upon us, in order that we may, in correcting the neglect and oversight of

recent years, pass on to our descendants the age-honored heritage of Jewish morality.

Since this meeting has been arranged, particularly in regard to volunteer social service, we should consider the opportunities for volunteer co-operation.

A most effective activity in preventing girl misdemeanors is the "Girls' Home Club." One of these clubs of twelve young girls, organized several years ago by a young volunteer, obtained results that more than repaid her for the time and conscientious effort put into the work. The girls with their leader met once a week at one another's homes. Reading, dressmaking, millinery, fancy work and home economics were introduced. Several of these girls are holding responsible positions today, others are mothers of self-respecting and prosperous families. The friendship between the club members and the volunteer has continued up to the present time.

The school visitor affords another opportunity for guiding girls into desirable vocations and for helping deserving students to higher education. By keeping in touch with all the elementary school graduates much beneficial preventive work could be accomplished. In many of the evening school centers the volunteers also could find a splendid field for social service.

I would pay a deserved tribute to the hundreds of young people from all classes and denominations, who though surrounded by temptations or discouraged through poverty, remain pure and self-respecting, splendid examples of inherent moral strength; but while recognizing their worth and numbers, do not let us neglect the weak and unfortunate, who, unable to battle alone with existing conditions, need our consideration and our help.

Get Together

All New York workers who expect to attend the Conference in Memphis are kindly requested to notify Mr. Morris D. Waldman, 356 Second Avenue, New York City, who will arrange for special rates and accommodations, if ten or more will travel on one train.

MEMPHIS HEADQUARTERS
CHISCA HOTEL

Illustrated Charity

Editor of Jewish Charities.

Sir: You have, no doubt, seen the picture in *The Survey* of January 24th, designated "Charity in Two Reels," showing "an every-day occurrence of our United Jewish Aid Societies" and depicting a group of poor Jewish men and women, who have come to the charity office for aid. This, according to *The Survey*, has been put into the motion picture circuits by a reputable Federation of Jewish Charities, supposedly for the purpose of acquainting the public with the work they are doing in their endeavor to increase their funds.

The writer knows that the columns of your estimable paper are not intended for petty and inconsequential fault-finding, and such is not the purpose of this communication. This novel method of stimulating generosity is so contrary to the principles of modern philanthropy that a candid opinion of this matter should rightly be expressed in JEWISH CHARITIES.

It is a cardinal principle of organized charity to aid the deserving poor in such a manner as to avoid the loss of pride and self-respect of the recipient, and with as little notoriety as the circumstances of each case permit. To photograph the unfortunate applicants and display them before the general public is contrary to the best ideals of philanthropy, and violates the very spirit and purpose of organized charity. The motive for so doing is not material, and the fact that this is used as a means for raising money does not justify it. A display of the faces of the poor wounds their tenderest feelings and brings disgrace upon their families.

Charles Strull,
Superintendent.

Louisville, February 9, 1914.

Editor of Jewish Charities.

Sir: While I fully concur in the view expressed that "photographing unfortunate applicants and displaying them before the general public is contrary to philanthropic ideals," I regret that the picture reproduced in *The Survey* was misunderstood, as they did not carry the article of explanation,

which we sent them together with the pictures.

I might mention that, prior to taking these pictures, we avoided any possibility of exposing any individuals, and *all the characters depicted in the film story are actresses and actors, and not relief applicants.* I also quote the following extract from a letter received by the Federation from Mr. Robert W. DeForest: "I warmly commend the example you are setting in using motion pictures to show the effectiveness of your charitable work." This is only one of many other similar letters received from prominent philanthropists as well as editors of the press and other channels of literature, endorsing the use of these motion pictures in an effort to bring the work of charitable institutions before the public.

I am enclosing, for your information, a copy of a letter which is self-explanatory, bearing on a private performance of these pictures; also article which was carried by the *New York Times* in its issue of the 28th ultimo. To demonstrate that the gentleman from Louisville does not voice the sentiments of all, I might add that we have received requests from federations and other charitable societies asking for these films to display in their cities.

Max Ábelman,
Asst. Secretary.

Brooklyn, February 22, 1914.

HUNTER AND WALLING

Two books by prominent leaders in socialistic thought are in press for early publication. These are Robert Hunter's "Violence and the Labor Movement," which deals with the mighty conflict that raged throughout the latter part of the last century for possession of the soul of labor, and William English Walling's "Progressivism and After," a study of what the immediate future of government and politics in this country is to be. Mr. Hunter's book will probably appear this month, while Mr. Walling's will come out early in March.

Seven sessions and fourteen papers, with ample and competent discussion, constitute the program for Memphis.

CITIZENSHIP CLASSES

A bulletin of the Census Bureau of the United States Government issued in 1912 contained the startling information that there were in this country at that time 3,612,700 foreign-born males of voting age who were not naturalized. And it is, accordingly, by no means an unusual experience for investigators to find sections of our large cities densely populated with foreigners who possess all the qualifications necessary for suffrage, but who have been unable to procure that right because of the constant interference of personal and business exigencies. It is, for example, a common experience to have a member of the citizenship class, who has been a most regular attendant and a diligent student, suddenly withdraw from the class and then appear after several months, with the explanation that sickness in his family or the necessity of working overtime forced him to give up a membership in the class that had been a source of pleasure to him. This situation presents a problem that is of more than academic interest. For every urban district, particularly those inhabited by foreigners, has its own pressing needs and urgent demands; none of which can be satisfied or met but by the remedy of legislative enactment. Legislative enactment, in turn, can be obtained only by the exercise of suffrage or by the influence of some non-resident group which can train the power of its votes upon the representatives from its districts in the support of measures destined to improve conditions in those districts where the majority of the residents have not yet been naturalized. There is little doubt, however, that the pressure which is exerted upon the representatives by their own constituents is both more desirable and more effective than the influence of citizens residing in other sections. With these facts in view efforts are now made in most larger cities to help new and old immigrants to obtain their citizenship papers.

These efforts have been exerted in Baltimore, under the auspices of the Jewish Educational Alliance, in two directions: (1) in urging upon delinquents the necessity and desirability of citizenship, a message communicated by means of a public meeting

addressed by a local public official, and (2) in preparing those who have responded to the message for their examinations in court. Last year there was an average weekly attendance of about 25 or 30. Of the members of that class all but a few, who have delayed submitting their applications, have received their citizenship papers. This year, because of the improved quarters and because two classes each meeting weekly have been substituted for the single semi-weekly class, the average weekly attendance has risen to between 50 and 60. And of those attending this year, 10 to 15 received their citizenship papers at the examinations held in December. Inasmuch as there has been a fairly regular attendance, the members of the classes have been advised to fill out and submit their applications at once; in this manner thirty, at least, should receive their papers at the next April or May session. In future years it should be possible to hold two semi-annual courses. Those entering the class in November could hand in their applications at once and would ordinarily be examined in the last part of January. The bulk of the class, those who pass the examination, would, consequently, stop the course when they receive their papers, and the same process might be repeated with a new group the second half of the term.

It must be remembered, however, that in addition to the regular attendants there are a large number of transients who drop in one or two weeks before the time when they are called to court to stand their final examination. This class usually consists of men who are unable to attend regularly, and who, therefore, seize the opportunity of supplementing their private study of the constitution with whatever additional facts they can collect in one or two hours. When their presence in the class is known to the instructor, and they usually see to it that it is, the point is made to direct the more important and fundamental questions, or those that are generally asked by the judge, toward these short-termed members of the class.

The character of the instruction is, of course, determined by the necessities of the class. The materials for lecture are taken