

If He Were Your Boy.

He was born and bred in a Canadian village. His father was one of the wealthiest men in the community. He made his wealth through close attention to business, and because his business occupied his attention so fully, he neglected the duties of home. The responsibility of managing the family was placed upon the mother of the flock, and as she had many household cares, limited physical energy and perhaps less energy of will, the children were allowed to grow up pretty much as they pleased. At the age of ten the young lad began to go to school irregularly. At twelve he was leader of a gang that spent the evenings on the streets without supervision. At fourteen he was considered unmanageable and his parents sent him to a residential school. At sixteen he was withdrawn to enter business and shift for himself. It was right here that the trouble began. All his life he had been accustomed to luxury. To express a wish was to have it gratified. So with expensive habits in dress, food, and luxury, he found that his slender salary was insufficient. And his father was determined not to aid him. The result is that at seventeen he forged a note and the responsibility of the signature was easily traced to him. Now he is serving a sentence of two years in one of our penitentiaries.

HIS COMPANIONS

Who are his companions in confinement? Let us look at a few of them as they are working at that long stone wall which surrounds their prison. This first is a man of fifty. He is imprisoned for life. He was proven guilty of manslaughter and of burglary. Certainly there is nothing attractive in his appearance. His furtive glances and his wrinkled brow declare that if he could he would commit even greater crimes than are already charged to his account. Next to him is a wife-beater, a man who also cruelly beat his children and his dog—a veritable brute. Surely he is not a fit companion for a boy of seventeen, but he is placed next him on the wall. Then comes one whose home was in Central Europe. He drank too much at a wedding feast. He became a participant in the quarrel which followed. When the shouting died a motionless form was found in the yard and a man with an unpronounceable name was being taken into custody. And so we pass along the row of workers and we find bigamist, thief, incendiary, train wrecker—all men well up in years. In the centre of the gang is the boy of seventeen—guilty of wrong-doing without doubt—but who will say that he should be working out his sentence under such conditions? What would you say if he were your boy? In the long run that is one of the best ways to answer a question—to apply it personally.

HIS OUTLOOK.

The most serious feature of this young man's imprisonment, however, is not that he is associated with hardened and frequent offenders but it is this—that during his whole term of confinement there is nothing enters his life to give him hope or courage or an upward look. He knows that he is for all time an outcast from society. The future offers him nothing. Therefore he is becoming harder and more rebellious. Though he may have been an unworthy member of society on entering the prison, he will be more unworthy and vastly more dangerous when he is liberated. So that again it is in order to ask: What would you say if he were your boy?

THE EFFECT UPON SOCIETY.

It is sometimes said that punishment by imprisonment is necessary for three reasons: It protects society; it deters others from crime; it improves the offenders. It needs no comment to prove the hallowness of the claim in this case. The young man will not come back improved. If owing to faulty home training he erred, he still had a genial disposition and was generous and kind. He will return bitter and cruel. He was learning a useful business and would have been proficient in his calling, but on his return he will have nothing which will fit him to take up a man's work among men. Moreover he knows, and you know, and all society

knows, that his parents are more to blame than he was, and that there are thousands who are greater sinners against the good customs of society and who yet are enjoying the sunshine of freedom. Because of this, his punishment does not deter others from crime. It may make people a little more careful in the selection of crime, and that is all. Even although we grant that punishment for such offences is necessary, we must conclude that the punishment in this case is not suitable to the offence. That it is not fair to the unfortunate young man to surround him with seasoned criminals; that it is unjust to send him back into society without ability to enter a useful calling. What would you say if this were your own boy?

WHEN PREVENTION AVAILS.

This would be a very insipid world if it were not full of temptation, but where temptation is there must be some crime. The two grave duties that face us are to lessen crime through prevention, and to deal wisely with it when prevention has not been

YUSSOUF.

A stranger came one night to Yussouf's tent,
Saying, "Behold one outcast and in dread,
Against whose life the bow of power is bent,
Who flies, and hath not where to lay his head;
I come to thee for shelter and for food,
To Yussouf, called through all our tribes 'The Good.'"

"This tent is mine," said Yussouf, "but no more
Than it is God's; come in and be at peace;
Freely shalt thou partake of all my store,
As I of His who buildeth over these
Our tents his glorious roof of night and day,
And at whose door none ever yet heard nay."

So Yussouf entertained his guest that night,
And, waking him ere day, said, "Here is gold;
My swiftest horse is saddled for thy flight;
Depart before the prying day grows bold."
As one lamp lights another, nor grows less,
So nobleness enkindleth nobleness,

That inward light the stranger's face made grand
Which shines from all self-conquest. Kneeling
low,

He bowed his forehead upon Yussouf's hand.
Sobbing, "O Sheik, I cannot leave thee so;
I will repay thee: all this thou hast done
Unto that Ibrahim who slew thy son

"Take thrice the gold," said Yussouf; for with
thee
Into the desert, never to return,
My one black thought shall ride away from me.
First-born, for whom by day and night I yearn,
Balanced and just are all of God's decrees;
Thou art avenged, my first-born, sleep in peace!"
—James Russell Lowell.

possible. It is evident to everybody that prevention is better than cure. "Better a fence at the top of the cliff than an ambulance down in the valley." Therefore, schools are more important than prisons; teachers and preachers are more useful than judges and juries. Careful public supervision of playgrounds, bill-boards, picture-shows, and book-shops, is of more account than the maintenance of a police force. Our homes should be places of happy and helpful experience; our schools should in word and in deed stand for morality. Economic reform is also of preventive importance. Men provided with and trained for well-paid labor under healthy conditions and with proper hours are not likely to develop crime. It is the sense of injustice in industrial and economic conditions, that so often goads or leads men to crime. When men see or read of millions made by speculation, at corporations laughing at or ignoring the country's laws, of public graft and private greed, they come to feel that moral laws have little efficacy, and the man who can not steal a rail-

road will break a railroad's bank. Cheap justice is one of our needs in preventing crime.

WHEN PUNISHMENT IS NECESSARY.

But when crime has been committed what then? Surely the first duty is to consider the effect upon society and upon the individual who has transgressed. Just as a parent frequently forgives his erring child, so society may forgive those who have violated its laws. When forgiveness seems to be unwise, separation is necessary. Hence our jails and other places of confinement. Now, just as the wise parent in inflicting punishment upon his children, makes the penalty suitable to the offence and the offender, so the state, through its courts should mete out its punishments in such a manner that not only the gravity of the offence but the age, sex, physical and social condition of the wrong-doer should be recognized. A court for men, and a juvenile court. A place of detention for hardened criminals perhaps such as was pictured in the opening paragraph, but a reformatory for those who are still young and who may be trained to useful service. A boy's prison should be a school. In it he should be taught morality through practice, and he should learn how to work at some useful calling. He should be separated from society, not chiefly in order to be punished, but in order to be educated for good citizenship.

THE JUVENILE COURT.

The juvenile court has come to stay. The judge should be one who knows boys and can sympathize with their frailties. Down in one of the American cities some boys were brought before a judge for vandalism and for trespassing on private property. After a confession of their wrong-doing, during which the judge ascertained that the boys had no place in which to play unless they trespassed, he asked the gang to go out and find some vacant place which in their opinion would be suitable for play. They returned in twenty minutes with a very definite proposition. Then the judge dismissed the boys and began an agitation which ended in the purchase of the very grounds the boys had selected. And so vandalism and trespassing ceased. The boys retained their boyhood and the city regained its happiness. All of which is to say that for some boyish crimes it is not punishment of the boys that is necessary but a little Christian justice on the part of the older people.

THE FARM HOME.

All crimes are not of the kind just mentioned. There are real reprobates among boys. Then let us send them to a reformatory where they may have something of use. Call it not a prison, or even a reformatory, but a continuation school or something of the kind, so that the name jail-bird may not forever curse the young unfortunates. Let us make their school a place of real education. Let there be book-learning, of course, but a very little of it will do. Physical training, work with the hands, in the shop and in the fields—regular hours, plain food, fresh air, and above all a body of directors who know boys—who are humane and yet not to be imposed upon—these are some of the things that the state must provide. Would you not wish it to be so if your boy had committed the crime?

THE FOSTER PARENT.

Parents, you do not always perform your duty; because you are unwise, unwilling, or unable your boy slips into sin and wrong. It is not right that he should be put under a foster parent for a time to learn how to act the part of citizen and gentleman? That is after all the meaning of the reformatory or continuation school. Will you help the agitation to secure such in every province of this Dominion? The farm home, in which are taught not only farming but many useful callings, will save many a young man from a life of crime. It will create a sense of personal worth, and will develop skill and capacity, and will restore to society those who had made a bad start, but who will do better on a second trial. Somehow we all feel that every fellow is entitled to a second chance. How would it be in the case of your own boy?