

Whatever is bad in the environment should be got rid of. If the home is at fault it must be improved. If it cannot be improved the child should be removed from it to a foster home.

Above all, the probation officer should exert his influence upon the child himself. He should see the child frequently. At first it should be every day. His idea is not so much reformation as formation—to form the character of the child, still in the formative period. I have likened a child to putty gradually hardening and taking the marks of the pressure applied to it. It is the work of the probation officer, by gentle, continued effort, to efface the mark impressed by evil surroundings and to replace them with lines of virtue and honesty and truth. It must always be remembered that probation is not mere supervision or watch-care. It is much more than that. It is constructive work. It means character building and home improving.

In dealing with a delinquent child it is obvious that you must use either moral force or physical force. But physical force, brutality, the lash, the lock, are now thoroughly discredited. Even in insane asylums treatment is moving farther and farther away from that. Success undoubtedly depends on our ability to apply moral force successfully. We must learn how to produce moral characters by establishing right ideals and by generating the capacity for self-control. We must learn to impress upon the child the necessity and the advantage of right conduct.

Moral treatment means the implantation of ideas, and there are two ideas to the implanting of which a special effort must be made. One of these is, that no matter who else may be to blame, the boy himself is primarily at fault for doing what he knew to be wrong. No doubt his delinquency is to a great extent the result of his environment; but he must be made to realize that no combination of cir-

cumstances can constitute a valid excuse for wrong-doing. The other idea is that the future rests with himself; that he has free will and can do whatever he decides to do, if he will but make the effort.

We are apt, while studying the causes and influences which have brought about delinquency, to minimize unduly the element of personal responsibility. But however true it is that the delinquent has been largely the victim of circumstances, the product of his surroundings, those considerations are not for him, but solely for the investigator. With the delinquent himself the element of personal responsibility for the past as well as for the future cannot be too strongly insisted upon.

He must be taught to say, even though in less poetic or symbolic language:

"It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishment the
scroll,
I am master of my fate:
I am captain of my soul."

The most powerful weapon of the probation officer is suggestion. Suggestion, as has been recently pointed out by a popular writer, is one of the most potent of all influences determining human behaviour. This is true even of adults and how much more powerful is its influence in the case of children. Suggestion is the explanation of successful advertising, it is the secret of the power of a good salesman. It has even much to do with the influence of a religious leader.

It is surprising how frequently those who have the care of children not only fail to make use of suggestion to accomplish what they aim at, but even employ it to their own detriment. For instance, a parent will keep telling a child that he is naughty, or a bad boy, a liar or a thief. Now what is the effect of this? It is to induce the boy to believe that he is what he