

THE NEED FOR PUBLIC PLAYGROUNDS

It is as important to learn How to Play as How to
Work—Honest Play is a Healthy Stimulant
to the Mind—Keep Children off Streets

In looking over statistics concerning criminality, one is struck with the manner in which two startling facts stand out. First that one-half of those convicted of crime are unskilled workers, that is to say, have no knowledge of a trade, and about one-third of them range in age from 18 to 21.

Idleness appears to be one of the most prolific germs of criminality. "The devil finds some mischief still, for idle hands to do," seems to be a proverb to which we may attach considerable weight.

For the average healthy boy to be absolutely idle is about the worst thing possible. This applies equally to girls. Let the boy or girl be kept constantly busy, either at school, or at play, and by play I do not mean running haphazard about the streets, but by playing some game, such as baseball, hockey, football or cricket, where the child gets his first lesson in organized effort amongst his fellows; thus occupied he will give little trouble on the score of mischief.

I have come across boys, ranging from ten to fourteen, who had no idea how to play games such as are common among boys of similar age. I have often stood and watched lads like these hanging round street corners, swearing, quarrelling and jostling against passers-by for the simple fact that they had absolutely no form of amusement. To swear, to fight, or to gamble for the few stray pennies coming into their possession was the only medium they knew of working off their youthful flow of animal spirits.

Value of Honest Play

The famous Duke of Wellington is reported to have said on one occasion that "The Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton." However true this may or may not be, there is no doubt whatever that the boy under a proper play-leader, learns on the playground, self-control, self-confidence and that spirit of rough-and-ready, give-and-take, which will stand him in good stead in the world of work throughout his after-life.