

**Juvenile Delinquency**

Eric Robin, '37

Crime is the commission or omission of any act which is forbidden by law, and endangers social welfare. A smaller but none the less important phase of crime is juvenile delinquency. A juvenile delinquent is any boy or girl under the age of eighteen years who violates a law or civil ordinance. It is important that we consider this problem, because most criminals began their career when they were young.

There must be reasons for this trend of youth towards crime. This trend cannot be attributed to one, but to many, causes. It is evident today that the most important causes are: A—defective religious and moral education; B—defective home life; C—bad companions; and D—the moral attitude of the community towards crime.

The first cause could be eliminated by the inculcation of and adherence to the principles of religion and sound ethics. The principle of justice which the delinquent disregards was founded by God Himself, and since the Christian religion accepts, and moral education teaches it, children should be made to practise it. Delinquents have lost their sense of duty towards God and their fellow men.

Why is it that children leave school at such an early age? On whom should the blame rest—the system of education, the teacher, the parents or the boy? Each of these factors plays its part. Written "examinations" are not a satisfactory method of testing a boy's knowledge. Often the teachers do not know their pupils or the circumstances under which they have to work. The parents for their part do not take enough interest in their children, but depend entirely upon the teacher. The boy, completely discouraged by these circumstances, turns to less tedious things with the inevitable result that he leaves school and his education ceases.

Defective home life proceeds from a variety of sources. Some parents are worthless, ignorant, immoral, and consequently have a bad influence on their children. Again many widowed mothers must work away from home, and their children are left to their own devices. Bad housing conditions compel the children to seek the street as a playground, and invariably associate with bad companions.



Another important factor in the increase of crime is divorce. The home is broken up and the children are left without adequate home life and attention. Each of these evils could be removed by paying a limited wage, by eliminating slum districts, by giving an allowance to widows with dependents, and by abolishing divorce courts.

It is impossible to emphasize sufficiently the danger arising from bad companionship. Local street gangs are usually a school for crime. There are many boys who have led a good honest life until they associated with those whose ideals and principles of life are anything but desirable. A close companionship with such persons invariably leads to a life of vice and crime. This condition could be remedied if parents were to keep a closer watch over their children. The adoption of a curfew law would go a long way towards remedying street gangs, corner loafing, and late hours for children.

The lack of interest that manifests itself in a community is very difficult to understand and explain. It seems impossible that any community, police department or court of justice could look with leniency on this phase of crime and not make a definite effort to combat it. There are many who take too literally the oft repeated phrase, "boys will be boys." The members of the community should realize that, if juvenile delinquency were eliminated permanently, the greatest source of crime would be removed. The police, for their part, should keep a systematic record of juvenile offences, classify them and in each case, give if possible, the cause. In all the cases of juvenile delinquency which come before the court common sense should be mingled with justice.

That it was better to deal with juvenile cases, as soon as possible, was first recognized by Great Britain in eighteen forty-seven, when she permitted judges to give summary hearing to all juvenile delinquents, except those charged with homicide. In eighteen ninety-nine Chicago established the first juvenile court to treat all delinquents, dependent and neglected children. The chief purpose for instituting the juvenile court was removal of the danger of forcing youths to associate with adult criminals in jails, reformatories, detention homes, etc. In such a court there are several departments: 1—for the placing out of delinquents, orphans, and neglected children; 2—for the supervision of pensions for mothers of dependent children;



3—for the supervision of families which look after foster children, or families in which children have been neglected but are not yet taken from their parents; 4—for the investigation, trial and supervision of children charged with delinquency and placed on probation, on parole, in foster homes or institutions.

A juvenile charged with an offence is usually permitted to remain in his home until the time of his examination and trial. In some cases where this is impossible the juvenile is kept in a special place called a juvenile detention home. Soon after the charge is laid, an official of the juvenile court should investigate the case from every angle, not only to determine the innocence or guilt of the child, but also the reason for his committing the offence. If he is found to be physically or mentally defective, a remedy should be applied at once.

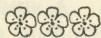
The special characteristics of juvenile courts are: separate hearings for children's cases, informal or chancery procedure, regular probation service and detention separate from adults. By an informal hearing a judge is able to consider the offender and the reason for the offense. The court acts, as it were, "in loco parentis." The judge must know the social history of the case and determine the course best suited for the reforming of the delinquent. He has the choice of three courses. If the child is a second offender, the reformatory is the proper place to send him; if his parents or the circumstances under which he is living are the causes, a probationary period in entirely different surroundings might prove effective; and lastly, he may parole him to his parents or guardians. The judge, therefore, should make a study of juvenile delinquency and have a complete knowledge of children and their habits.

In every community there should be a society to take charge of and assist in checking juvenile delinquency. In a work such as this there is a great field for advance and improvement. May I take this opportunity to offer a word of praise to those men and women who are doing so much towards assisting the work of juvenile delinquency in this province, the Children's Aid Societies. Their field of work is extensive and sometimes very discouraging; but each year they report an improvement, which shows what could be done if everyone would do his share.

It is impossible in so short a space to treat adequately this subject. It was not my intention, nor would I be



able, to suggest a remedy for so great a problem. It is a social problem, and, therefore, requires the united action of the whole community. It was my purpose merely to draw attention to the necessity of combating the trend of youth towards crime, and my only hope is that these few paragraphs will cause other people to take a greater interest in the problem of Juvenile Delinquency.



### The Dress

Anonymous

"Louise, you don't mean to say you can't go to the dance tonight," protested the taller of the two girls who walked along the shaded street, swinging their tennis racquets.

"No Mary, I can't go; I have no evening dress. I did get one started, but it won't be finished in time. I don't mind so very much," she forced a resigned smile.

"But you can wear your blue silk dress? It is just as nice as an evening gown. I don't know why they insist on having them anyway." Her eye brightened with enthusiasm: "Mine is all finished; it's sweet too, white silk, with a pink sash and little puff sleeves," she rambled on, not noticing the wistful look on her friend's face.

"I couldn't go without one. Well, you can tell me all about it in the morning. It will be swell too, the whole high-school will be there."

"Yes, and everyone will be asking for you."

"Oh, no they won't. If anyone asks for me, tell him I sprained my ankle playing tennis."

Louise walked slowly up to her room, throwing her tennis racquet into a corner. She gazed out the window idly tapping one heel on the rug. Suddenly she turned round, took two hesitating steps, and crossed the room to the clothes closet.

The school "hop" was in full swing at ten o'clock. Everywhere youthfulness overflowed, and went gaily dancing round the hall. Triumphant the school orchestra was turning out reels of "Wa-hoo;" the floor swayed with laughing couples. Those who knew it were singing "Wa-hoo," "wa-hoo," the others hummed the air in their part-