

Making Bad Boys Into Good Boys

In no branch of sociology perhaps has such great progress been made in comparatively recent years as in that of the treatment of vicious classes. The old ideas, which prevailed universally until within recent years, were that in treating criminals there were but two things to be kept in view—putting those who did not reform where they would not be a menace to society and to make punishments so severe as to restrain crime purely through fear of such punishment. These ideas were worked out on both old and young alike. Modern thought has made penal institutions of all kinds in a large measure educational and reformatory rather than mere places of punishment for those who violate the laws.

This has particularly been the case in the treatment of the young. It is recognized that vice and crime are largely due to either two causes—heredity or environment. For the heredity criminal there is not so much hope. Proper education and direction may improve him, but cannot entirely deprive him of the instincts with which he was born. To the extent he has been improved education benefits society. With the young there is a large percentage who have no natural bad instincts, but are led into crime or get beyond the control of parents through associations or other influences which sur-

round them. For these, under modern methods of conducting reformatories, there is hope of making good citizens.

for the last three years. Wayward girls, too, were committed here when the school first opened, and up to the time the Geneva institution was ready to receive inmates 150 girls had been received, all of whom were immediately transferred to the Girls' Reform school at Geneva.

The legislature of 1887 changed the title of the school from that of "State Reform school" to "State Industrial school," the title it now bears.

In gathering together the wayward and unfortunate youth for reformation, education and industrial training the state assumes a grave responsibility—virtually the parentage of the child—and is responsible for his moral, religious and intellectual development. The officers have a great responsibility resting upon them which cannot be shirked and be successful. They must be patient and watchful and see that the righteous training of no child is neglected. It is their duty to prepare them to go out from the portals of the school with an education that will fit them for the ordinary duties of life and with a moral training that will sustain them in any adversities that may beset them. The record of the paroled boys from this institution shows that this work is faithfully done. No institution in the whole United States

guards with greatest care. A boy who has a natural desire for any particular trade is given an opportunity to develop his natural ability, and in this way better results are accomplished than could be brought about otherwise. In the printing department is a well equipped printing office where every department of the printing trade is taught by a trained mechanic. Here a class of twelve boys is instructed four and one-half hours each day. Here the School Journal is published, a neat little sheet, issued semi-monthly, which keeps the school in touch with the outside world and other institutions of similar nature. The little fellows "stick type" with as much earnestness and zeal as professionals. A large number of good printers have gone out from this department and are now holding good and responsible positions in different localities in the state. And this may be said of all the departments.

In the shoe shop there is a class of eight boys. Here all the shoes worn by the inmates are made and the work is done in a most creditable manner. In the tailor shop is a class of fourteen busy boys, several of



KEARNEY INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL — SUPERINTENDENT CAMPBELL READING THE BEE—Photo by Laura M. Postel.



KEARNEY REFORM SCHOOL — EX-SUPERINTENDENT HOXIE AND STENOGRAPHER—Photo by Laura M. Postel.



KEARNEY INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL—THE KITCHEN—Photo by Laura M. Postel.

shows a better record for the paroled boys than does the Kearney Industrial school.

Come from All Classes.

The boys come from all classes. Many are sent because they have no homes and many because their parents fail to properly care for them, others because they are incorrigible and have been guilty of some mischievousness and petty offense, and again those who have committed crimes against society. Here the boys are divided into grades where they are under the careful watch of trained officers at all times. They are surrounded by an atmosphere that is absolutely pure. Every influence is used to distract their minds from thoughts that are not good, such as innocent games, gymnastic exercises, the reading of good and wholesome literature, school work and work in the trades department, as well as lectures, concerts and the regular religious services. The good being accomplished here for the future society of the state is incalculable. Through the influence of this school many hundreds of boys have been reclaimed from a prospective life of shame and crime and put upon a plane of honest manhood, and the influence of the school upon the boys paroled will be more deeply appreciated by society from year to year.

The advancement of the boys along the line of industrial training is watched and

whom assert they can make a suit of clothes without assistance, and this fact is vouched for by the man in charge. They make the clothing worn by all of the inmates and the neatness of their appearance at all times speaks much for the success of this department. In the carpenters' department the hum of the saw and beat of the hammer are music to those industrially inclined. Here a class of boys is instructed in the mysteries of the carpenters' trade. In the engineers' department eight boys work. Electrical engineering, steam fitting, plumbing, blacksmithing and general machinist work is taught in this department. Here the boys enthusiastically recite what success other boys from this department had met and what good positions they now hold, and assert in all earnestness that they will spare no effort to be equally successful when they go out from the school. The barn boys, farm boys, kitchen boys, table waiters and in fact every boy in the institution seems fully imbued with the idea of preparing himself for some useful purpose when he leaves here.

demerits, according to the charge upon which they are committed. For each day their behavior here is perfect they receive a credit of ten merits, which cancel ten demerits, and when their record is clear they are subject to parole if in the judgment of the superintendent they have a suitable home to go to. In other words, if the best interest of the boy will be subserved by paroling him the same is done. If the boy has no home the school finds a home for him and all boys committed here are under the care of the state until they are of age. When paroled, if the boy's behavior is good, he remains out, but if at any time he again gets into trouble he is brought back for further training.

Prizes at the Exposition.

At the Transmississippi and International

Exposition at Omaha the school placed an exhibit and was awarded a gold medal for pen drawing, educational work, sewing, tailoring and shoe making, also a diploma for first rank in the collective educational exhibits of the exposition. This excellent showing and the high standard among the very best educational institutions of the country speaks for the results achieved at the Kearney institution.

How a Day is Spent.

The school is divided into four grades, each grade in a separate building and in charge of a family manager and his wife, the former being the teacher for the boys in that grade. The boys are in school four and one-half hours each day, where all the common school branches are taught just the same as in the public schools. The same length of time is spent in the different trade departments each day, where each boy is taught a trade. The average length of time they remain in the school is two years, in the course of which time they master the rudiments of some good trade and acquire knowledge in an educational line that will greatly assist them in life. No boy can leave here without a full and comprehensive conception of what is right and what is wrong.

The students rise at 6 a. m. and retire at 8 p. m. Their leisure time is spent in harmless recreation, either in their grades or on the play grounds. The first thing a boy learns here is regularity of habits, the thing most essential to good health of mind and body. He is encouraged to read good, current literature, play indoor games and treat his superiors and fellow boys with courtesy and respect. He gradually learns discipline of mental and physical powers. He learns to marshal and focus his energies to a definite purpose. He feels a kindly but persistent pressure constraining him to become a good citizen. The reason and wisdom of right action are constantly urged upon his generally perverted understanding of these matters.

The school is very healthfully located. The physical welfare of the inmates is carefully looked after by a salaried physician. The general good health of the inmates is remarkable.

There is a strong sentiment among the people that the school is a prison for hardened young criminals and moral degenerates, which is entirely erroneous. They should understand that it is a training school for boys who through unfortunate home influence are allowed to waste their youthful energies in perverted channels. Society owes a serious duty to these youths. When they are sent out from the school on parole, instead of regarding them as outcasts to be shunned as lepers, churches and social organizations should extend the hand of friendship and aid them in every way to go forward toward the goal of good citizenship.

Not one boy in a hundred is committed to the school who does not receive better treatment and training than he ever received before. Not one inmate in ten but what is better off under the guardianship of the state than the average boy is idly running the streets of our cities and towns, or that species of country boy who is being slaved at hard work without the advantages of school and culture.

Keeping His Word

Chicago Post: "I've just heard of another mean trick on the part of old Gudgeons." "What was that?" "He promised his boy at the beginning of the present term of school that if he studied hard he should have a horse this spring." "Yes?" "Well, the boy has made a great record, so the old man allowed him to eat a Welsh rarebit the other evening and have a night-mare."



KEARNEY INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL—LAUNDRY DEPARTMENT—Photo by Laura M. Postel.

Tact a Necessity.

In dealing with these classes great tact and good common sense are at all times required. No two human natures are alike and they cannot be treated alike successfully even in the ordinary walks of life. To an even greater extent is this true with these young minds, which are either distorted by nature or perverted by surroundings. The boys who are sent there are of course the class which has broken loose from all restraint. When first the restraining hand of the law falls upon them the natural instinct is to rebel. In purely penal institutions this spirit is simply crushed out by demonstrating the futility of it and the pains which follow it. Such a course works no reform in the subject and the feeling of resentment against society smoulders, only to break out when the law's restraint is removed. Proper treatment, especially upon the receptive mind of the young, works a change in the boy and he comes out a better instead of a worse member of the community.

The legislature of 1879 made an appropriation to establish the State Reform school at Kearney, and the first boy was committed in July, 1881, and received by G. W. Collins, the first superintendent. Since that time 1,250 boys have been committed to the school. Eleven hundred and sixty-five of these boys have been paroled, taken out by legal process and otherwise left the school, thus the total number of inmates at this time is 125, which shows a steady decrease



KEARNEY INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL—OFFICERS' DINING ROOM—Photo by Laura M. Postel.

The moral and religious training of the boys receives special attention and is under the direction of a resident chaplain. Sunday school services are conducted in the chapel in the forenoon and preaching services in the afternoon. The chaplain visits the boys in the grades and shops and ministers to them in the manner he thinks best adapted to their needs.

The discipline of the school is splendid. It is the policy of the superintendent to bring it as near parental as possible—strict and watchful, not exacting—firm, but not harsh—and with as much freedom as the circumstances will permit. It is the aim and desire to build up in the boy a frank, self-reliant and independent spirit, together with a feeling of personal responsibility.

Boys are committed here from any court of record and for any offense that in the opinion of the judge justifies committing them. Upon being delivered at the school they are charged with 4,000, 5,000 or 6,000