

## PHOTO PLAYS

**Strand's**  
BRYANT WASHBURN  
—IN—  
**'Why Smith Left Home'**  
Train Wreck—Hotel Fire—Thunder Storm—Earthquake.

**HOUSE**  
MAE ALLISON  
—IN—  
**'Peggy Does Her Darndest'**

**LOTHROP** 24th and Lothrop  
MAY ALLISON in  
**'ALMOST MARRIED'**

# Who Will Give This Child a Child's Chance? Byron Michael, 12-Year-Old Boy, Given 9 Years in Reformatory For Theft Of 29 Books He Loved—Needs a Home, Not a Cell in Prison

Is Bright, Intelligent, Sunny in Disposition and Likeable—the Sheriff Likes Him—Is a "Great Reader and Lover of Books" Say Police Themselves—This Boy Is Plastic Material and May Be Made Into a Man—He Can Be Pardoned—Who Will Give Him a Chance, a Fair Chance?

By WILLIAM TANQUERY.

Theft is inherent in all sentient beings. The baby reaches for the sugar-slyly; even the babe that is too young to know right from wrong. It has no idea it is doing wrong until it catches an eye observing its action, then the hand is jerked away. The dog goes to dig up a bone

buried by another, he approaches cautiously, sniffing, with eyes and ears alert, and dashes quickly away to a hiding place when it has gotten it. If a horse is eating in its stall, or from a peck of corn, and its attention is attracted away, a second horse will reach to take some of it, and immediately that the first horse turns back, will snort and jerk its head away, conscious of theft.

The Case of Byron Michael.

Shall Byron Michael, a 12-year-old boy, too immature to exercise reasonable governorship over himself, be condemned for yielding to this temptation, the one to which the mother of all mankind herself yielded, and which throughout the ages has been immediately coincident with the awakening of the vital spark itself in all forms of conscious life, from the beast in the cave to the babe in the mansion?

Byron lives in Beatrice, Neb. He is bright, sunny of disposition and likeable. The sheriff likes him and says so. He is in jail at Beatrice, awaiting transportation to the reformatory, and, says the story: "Sheriff Shiek gives his youthful prisoner every attention. The lad appears to feel perfectly at home, and spends his time reading and playing about the corridors of the jail as though he were in school. The sheriff says he is a bright little fellow, very polite and he enjoys his company."

The boy was arrested for stealing some books from the public library.

The telegraph dispatch as sent out from Beatrice said: "Byron Michael, a 12-year-old boy of this city, was arraigned in court this morning on a charge of stealing 29 books from the public library. Judge Pemberton sentenced him to nine years in the state reformatory, or until he is 21."

Nine years for stealing 29 books from the public library! It sounded incredible. A moment's

reflection brought into view a wide

view of the state of the world. Is to be buried alive for nine years—because it was his second offense.

Why, even the waves cast up a man the third time.

No incentive to be good.

And it must not be forgotten that the sentiment being will not be good, according to accepted canons, unless there is an incentive to be good.

The beast, or house animal becomes good because of fear of punishment if it doesn't, and man becomes good for the various reasons found in law, society and religion.

Who Helped Byron?

Did Byron have any incentive to be good?

Was any helping hand held out to him? Was the error of his ways poured into his ears between sobs of sorrow over his crime, while held close to a loving heart? Was he taken aside and talked to in a kindly manner, and in one calculated to impress him and inspire him with a realization of what he had done, and what a continuance of his course would lead to?

Or was he merely turned loose with a reprimand, with jeers from his fellow children, and nagging reproaches from others ringing in his ears from morning till night, with the parole officer shaking his stick at him in a threatening, warning manner every time he chanced to see him on the streets?

Not to be Blamed.

In other words, if any ordinary boy of only 12 years, too immature to reason out things for himself, had no incentive held out to him to be good, beyond those threats and fear which inspire resentment in youthful breasts more than anything else, is there any wonder at his second offense, and is he to be blamed for it?

What to Do With Him.

The problem is then presented—what shall be done with the boy?

It seems a pity to lock up this immature child for his crime.

But it is an equal pity to turn him loose again, if he is not to be surrounded with influences that will furnish him an incentive to be good.

To put him back in his same old position is deliberately placing him again straight in the middle of the pathway he had been pursuing.

This alternative is presented: the judge and the law prescribes the reformatory as punishment, if the decision is for punishment.

"Until He is of Age."

"Although the court took into consideration the youth of the prisoner," says the story, "the judge was determined to check Michael's career as a thief, if possible, and promptly sentenced him to the state reformatory until he shall be of age."

Now let the heavens weep and stone statues shed tears of blood.

There should be reason in all things, but there appears to be little in this.

If he had to go to the reformatory—why for NINE years?

Why not for one year, for an indeterminate time, for such a time would warrant giving the child another trial of his freedom?

What Officials Say.

Regarding this, County Attorney Vasey, who prosecuted the boy, said:

"This lad had been paroled and was given an opportunity to do better, but he failed. The state reformatory is the place for him. True, it is hard to see one of his years go there for so long a period, but he undoubtedly will be a better boy when he is released."

Judge L. M. Pemberton, who tried and sentenced the child, said:

"Why, of course, the state reformatory is the only place for such a boy. He will be obliged to do right there, and will not be allowed

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