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THE CHURCH AND THE BOY

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C O P Y R I G H T
B Y S M I T H & L A M A R.
1905.
In reducing four addresses to the limits allowed this paper, it necessarily leaves some points in a raw and unfinished state. The aim has been in the space allotted to make it suggestive of the several phases of the subject rather than exhaustive of any of them. If it stimulates interest and leads to investigation, it will have served its purpose. I should like to have given a more thorough treatment to the criminal phase of the subject, entering into causes and methods of cure, but could not do so in justice to the whole theme.

Author.
THE CHURCH AND THE BOY.

It has been said with more wit than elegance that every boy is the tadpole of an archangel. It is true that both a tadpole and a boy are to become other than what they are; but a tadpole needs only to be left alone to become what he was meant to be, while a boy left alone is likely to become something very different from an archangel.

It is no exaggeration to say that what the boy is to become is the chief problem of civilization. The boy is the key to the situation. The child is father to the man, and what is reaped from a generation of men, be it good or ill, was first sown in a generation of boys. Watch the head of the great knee-pants army of to-day, and you can tell where the nation will pitch its tents tomorrow. Hence we come to speak of the problem of the boys not as an expert, nor as one who
has won a right to speak by signal success in dealing with it, but as a fellow-student with you of what concerns the progress of the kingdom.

Crime in Knee Pants.

The boy who behaves badly, like the man of the same stamp, is a broken cog in the social machinery. He makes friction, and his name is legion. He thrives in all climates, grows rank in all soils—the more soil the better. He defies all barriers from a plate-glass window to a policeman's club. He is at home as Gavroche in Paris, or the hero of Mulberry Bend in New York, or the leader of a "gang" in the rural village. He represents all types from the truant of hook and line to the knight of dirk and pistol.

It is startling to realize how early in life the criminal instincts begin to bear fruit. Jacob A. Riis says that during a certain period there were two hundred and seventy-eight arrests in New York, and fifty of them were under fifteen; and they were guilty of theft, robbery, burglary, drunkenness, assault, etc. All forms of crime were germinant there in those fifty mere children.

In New York State Reformatory, where the
age limit is sixteen to thirty, fifty-five per cent are sentenced between sixteen and twenty—three times as many in proportion for the earlier as for the later years of the age limit.

In 1890 there were in the Federal prisons of this country 711 under fourteen and 8,984 between fourteen and nineteen. Three years ago fifty per cent of the inmates of the Federal prison in Atlanta were under thirty years of age. In June of 1902 in Savannah there were sixty-two convictions. Thirty-six of these were under twenty; only five of them were over thirty.

In a prison population of four thousand in Texas in 1902 over two-thirds were under thirty and about one-half under twenty-five. From ten to twenty-five years of age there were as many as for the next twenty-five years, from twenty-five to fifty.

In the report of the Prison Commission of Georgia for 1902 it was shown that, of a total prison population of 2,315, five hundred and twenty-seven were under twenty-one and over fourteen hundred under twenty-four. More than two-thirds were under thirty. The accompanying diagram will show the comparative number at given ages:
Two facts to be considered make all these statistics more startling. One is, we are not told here the ages at which these men were convicted. They were certainly younger than at the time of the reports. In the Georgia penitentiary nearly two-thirds were serving terms of ten years and over. At conviction the average age was considerably younger. Add to this the fact that courts are slow to sentence the young of-
fender to the penitentiary when there is any way to avoid it, while older criminals get their sentence readily, and the showing of the proportion of criminals who are yet in their youth is astonishingly great. It has been estimated that seventy-five per cent of those who commit crime after they are twenty-three begin before they are twenty-three. Apply this rule to the prison population of Georgia, as shown above, and the result will show that nearly seven-eighths of them began a criminal career before they were twenty-three.

I have presented these statistics to show how early men, or boys, begin to show what they are going to be. No wonder the Chief of Police of Chicago said to a man I know: “If some power will control boys and men from twelve to thirty years of age, I will contract to run Chicago without police.”

The cure of crime is not in dealing with men, but with boys. We must win the battles where Wellington said the battle of Waterloo was won —on the playgrounds.

There is a period of unrest and pliability, when the tadpole is undecided whether to grow wings or claws. The moral forces are then at war, and it is victory for saint or savage. Animal life
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is at its height and mad with riotous energy. The rebellion is on, and the impulses like untamed steeds chafe at restraints. The boy is at the parting of the ways, and, sooner than we dream, a life is made or marred; and, alas! if marred, it is so hard to mend.

Thus from those green and sunny heights of boyhood, beautiful with the bloom of hope and fragrant with promise, come the steady tributaries that swell the black and raging river of crime that sweeps forever through our land. We are only beginning to touch the outer fringe of this great problem of crime, and in finding means for its prevention we have hardly reached as far as the fringe. As to remedies, space forbids discussion here; but it is clear that the statesman or ecclesiastic who essays the cure must begin where the cause lies—with the heart of childhood.

I will say the cure is not in jails and penitentiaries. They are schools of crime. Think of boys of tender years being subjected to the hardening processes of prison life, at an age when impressions are deep and lasting—an age in which your mother folded you in her arms, breathed a prayer for you, tucked the cover about you,
and sent you to blissful sleep with the vision of her sweet face bending over you and the warmth of her good-night kiss on your cheek. Many of them never had a mother worth the name. Their hearts hunger for a caress they never had, and for that hunger shall we give them the strap and the chain? Then prepare to fight, for you have made an enemy who does not know how to forgive. When shall we learn it is better to save than destroy? that more sunshine and less dungeon is needed? that a glimpse of heaven is worth a decade of hell? that one smile of love is worth whole whirlwinds of wrath? that every boy whose baby lips have sought a mother's breast, and who has drawn the inspiration of hope from the peaceful heaven of a mother's face, folded dimpled hands to pray, or looked up to the stars with solemn wonder, is no mere thing to be cuffed at, but has within him all the unmeasured possibilities of saint or demon?

A BRIGHTER SIDE.

There is also a golden side to the shield. The path to sainthood begins on the plane of childhood. It used to be a question how young a child could be saved; it is now more a question how
long the door will stay open. By far the greater portion of all Christians are converted in childhood. Religion is life, and it is natural that it should claim all of life; and we are learning that the only way effectually to save the man is to save the boy and let him grow.

We are also learning that it costs more to lose than to save. It costs this government $600,000,000 annually to punish crime. It is easy to let a boy go to the bad, but that is not the last of it. He will turn up again; then the taxgatherer, the court, the tears. It cost New York $100,000 to bring one murderer to the electric chair. Another young man put his pistol in his pocket and went on a hunt for his victim. In the Bowery he was arrested, not by a policeman, but by a gospel message, and saved. It cost five dollars to save him. Grace is cheaper than guns, and love serves for smaller wages than law. Bishop Phillips Brooks said: “He who helps a child helps humanity with an immediateness and a directness which no help to human creatures in any other stage can possibly have.” “Working for men is salvage; saving boys is salvation,” says one.

There is only one boyhood. One miracle has never been, the miracle of a second youth. The
shadow was turned back on the dial of Ahaz, but
time never yet turned back to boyhood from man-
hood. "‘Save the world in adolescence,' will be
the new war cry of missions," says Dr. Forbush.
However that may be, it is the natural way to do
it. Horace Mann said: "Wherever anything is
growing, one former is worth ten reformers."

Last Christmas at Steve Holcombe's Mission,
in Louisville, I saw a vast company of men at
a charity dinner. They were a defeated, hope-
less, hungry, stranded lot. They had each had
his tussle with life and been worsted. I dare not
say they could not be saved, but I do say there
was not much to save. They had no future, at
least not here. There was also a crowd of boys.
They were not clean, nor well-clad nor polite,
but they were alive and hopeful and energetic.
There were the unspoiled possibilities of life, a
courage that had not learned to accept defeat.
They went out with shout and song. They
danced jigs on the frozen sidewalks, and defied
the north wind to deface the smiles on their ruddy
cheeks. There was the opportunity, the mine of
wealth. Save one of them, you save a life with
undiscovered resources hidden away in its depths.

By far the larger number of our Church mem-
bers come to us in childhood. The average age of conversion is found by Dr. Starbuck to be 16.4 years; the average age of religious awakening at fifteen, about a year and a half earlier. The moral nature is then awake and alive to religious influence. It is not the only period, but the natural period, for conversion. The soul then comes to its own. Personality becomes full-orbed, personal responsibility is realized with solemn emphasis, and the world to eyes of wonder is instinct with God. The Spirit knocks, while nature looses the bolt. It is God's time. We should work with him. When nature and grace coincide, that is our time. That so many are being saved is ground for hope.

Yet, if we fail at the most favorable period, how can we hope to succeed when habit is fixed and the nature warped? If I cannot shape the iron when it is hot, can I hope, with the same tools, to succeed when it is cold? So, while there is hope in the susceptibility of youth, there is also warning. The forces of evil are active, and habits are forming and the heart is hardening steadily. That they may be won also means they must be won while the dew of their youth is upon them.
I have heard it said that before the fatal battle of Franklin Hood's army lay in hearing of the Federal troops as they tramped past through the whole night, and the opportunity of surprise and rout was neglected. Then next day, when those Federal troops were fortified, the brave boys in gray gave their blood in a hopeless attack, where courage meant only death. These are 15,000,000 boys marching on to manhood in the United States. Tramp, tramp, tramp they go, while whole divisions of the Church sleep or feast in camp. Soon they will be fortified with cares and unbelief, and then we shall storm their stronghold with much ado and small results. The tares will not wait, nor evil cease to work, and steadily destiny is being made.

“No change in childhood’s early day,
   No storms that raged, no thoughts that ran,
But leaves a track upon the clay
   That slowly hardens into man.”

The Power House.

I was once shown through a machine shop. I saw there a wilderness of whirling shafts and flying bands and revolving wheels. But I saw no boiler, nor engine, nor other source of power. The owner took me across the way. There was
a building; in it were an engine and two huge dynamos. This was where all the power came from. The machinery could not run without this power house.

The Church is the power house of all reform. The forces that make for righteousness are lodged in it. It is to furnish the power to turn the machinery of civil, commercial, social, as well as religious movements for the betterment of mankind. If the boy problem is solved at all, it will be solved by the Church of God; not by the State alone, nor the school alone, nor the home alone, but by these informed and empowered by the Church of God. These agencies are all to be used, but each wheel and shaft and pulley is to get its power from the Church. The Church alone represents the grace of God, and for that there is no substitute. I was talking with a gentleman who has given thirty years not to theorizing but to practical work in reform schools. We were discussing the theories of the psychologists. He said: "They may spin their theories and construct their tables, but the grace of God knocks them all awry and upsets the whole business. I have seen it done a hundred times."
But the Church must have the intention. We must know what we mean to do with our power. We must aim to bring the results and see that our power is landed at the right place. If the wire that conveyed the power to that machine shop had been broken, that business man would have stopped everything and found out why the power was not delivered. He would not have run his dynamos to turn loose power in the air. The Church is not so wise. She glories in her dynamos, and runs them proudly on, often times without asking what is the matter with the machinery. There is a great clatter, but lack of intention. There is a cry going up all over the land that the boys are not in our Church. Two million and a half only of the fifteen millions in this country are said to be in the Churches. There is much complaint that we lose the boys from fifteen to eighteen, the most critical three years of life, the destiny-making years. Twenty-two per cent of the whole population are Christians. Of the young men, only fifteen per cent are Christians. Of five hundred inmates of the Reformatory of Jeffersonville, Ind., two hundred and eighty-six of them, or fifty-seven per cent, never attended Sunday school, and but one
of the five hundred ever belonged to a Y. M. C. A.

In one of our most Christian cities in the South it was estimated that out of four thousand young men not more than twelve hundred ever attended church. An investigation in Louisville a few years ago revealed the startling fact that ninety-two per cent of the young men were not at church on a given day.

Dr. Starbuck, in his investigations, asked a large number of Christians as to the influences that had been most potent in forming their characters. They answered as follows:

- Parents and home influences
- Other personal examples
- Books and writers
- Church and pastors

The Church only equaled the lowest form of influence, when it ought to have been the highest. This is not an accurate test, for it is hard for one to untwist the influences and get at the strongest, they are so intertwined, and it is probable the Church had something to do with all; but it is remarkable that more did not hit on the Church as the dominant force in their lives, and it is as significant as it is remarkable. All this would
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seem to indicate that there is something wrong; either we lack power or it is not being intelligently directed.

The eighty-five per cent who are not in our Churches furnish recruits for the criminal ranks, and they are falling in to fill that fearful army at a rate to give us pause. In 1850 there was in the United States one prisoner for crime to every thirty-five hundred inhabitants, in round numbers; in 1860, one to every sixteen hundred; in 1870, one to every twelve hundred; in 1880, one to every nine hundred; in 1890, one to every eight hundred—a proportionate increase of three hundred and fifty per cent in forty years.

Mr. W. Douglass Morrison, in his book, "Juvenile Offenders," shows an increase in juvenile crime throughout the world except in England. In Holland the number doubled during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century. In Germany the increase was fifty per cent in the last decade of the century. In Austria and Hungary the number of juvenile criminals far outgrew the population, and at the close of the century ten reformatories in Switzerland were crowded to their doors. In this country we are certainly not far behind in this matter. We are a people
who kill each other. One of our own judges showed, some years since, that one of our States had thirty-five times as many murders in proportion to population as Canada. In 1890 there were in the prisons of the United States four hundred and eleven youths under eighteen convicted of murder. In England there were only six under twenty-one, and none under sixteen. It is in England alone that statistics showed a decrease of thirty-three and a third per cent at the close of the century.

Jesus looked at the criminal instead of at the crime. "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you." Not that the crime was less, but their light was feeble. "That servant which knew his lord's will and did it not shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." The guilt is measured by the light.

He also aimed not at punishment but at cure. "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." We are slow to learn His method. Society is best protected by the cure of crime, not by its punishment. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a
tooth"—that was the old way, and it is the world's way yet—"but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil"—that is the new way. Do not take vengeance. Help, love, give hope, and put light in the sky. Change the environment from one that poisons and kills to one that wakes the latent forces of manhood. That is His message to the Church, and her message to the State and society—a message she must make to be heard with increasing clearness and insistence.

We must not only strengthen the incentives to virtue, but reduce the incentives to vice, cleanse pollution from the moral atmosphere, and speed the far-off day when a youth can make the fight for righteousness without facing a battery of unnecessary temptations. We should combine for moral health as we do for physical, and banish the seething caldrons of iniquity on whose brazen rims our boys must walk their daily rounds. We do not value souls as we do bodies, or we would sit up nights and make life unbearable for the powers that be till the foul and festering centers of moral infection were swept clean from our streets.

We do not value our boys as we do our girls. "He is only a boy; who cares?" If as many girls
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| went to the bad, and went from the same homes and by means of the same temptations as do the boys, how long would we endure? Not one hour. No political combination, no ring nor clique, however compact and solid, no commercial interests nor so-called personal rights, could stand against the whirlwind of popular fury longer than a clapboard cabin in a cyclone. We are gravely told by those who would make excuse for the wholesale poisoning of souls that it requires temptations to develop moral strength. Therefore we set our youth at the high and noble contest with appetite armed with law and fortified by polite custom, and lust and covetousness clad in the armor of public toleration and reenforced by high example. This makes strong, forsooth! Look at the havoc of it. As well set the grizzled and war-scarred heroes of Port Arthur fighting kennels of bulldogs to prove their valor. The Master was tempted, but not as we tempt. He fought his battle in the higher regions of manhood. There will always remain a battleground hard and fierce enough to test the mettle of the best, after the ground has been cleared of all baser foes. Do we want to make our boys strong and develop the fine fiber of the spiritual | went to the bad, and went from the same homes and by means of the same temptations as do the boys, how long would we endure? Not one hour. No political combination, no ring nor clique, however compact and solid, no commercial interests nor so-called personal rights, could stand against the whirlwind of popular fury longer than a clapboard cabin in a cyclone. We are gravely told by those who would make excuse for the wholesale poisoning of souls that it requires temptations to develop moral strength. Therefore we set our youth at the high and noble contest with appetite armed with law and fortified by polite custom, and lust and covetousness clad in the armor of public toleration and reenforced by high example. This makes strong, forsooth! Look at the havoc of it. As well set the grizzled and war-scarred heroes of Port Arthur fighting kennels of bulldogs to prove their valor. The Master was tempted, but not as we tempt. He fought his battle in the higher regions of manhood. There will always remain a battleground hard and fierce enough to test the mettle of the best, after the ground has been cleared of all baser foes. Do we want to make our boys strong and develop the fine fiber of the spiritual |
hero? Then sweep the field clear of gross and vulgar temptations, and set them to do battle for clean hearts, for generosity, for truth and honor and the unsullied ideals, against selfishness, covetousness, pride, and ambition. That is the battle royal, and its victories set the bells of heaven ringing.

It is the business of the Church to nourish a high moral ideal. There is no greater human force than this. The curse of youth is a low ideal. The first thing to which a boy awakes is that not much is expected of him. He finds himself set apart as a sower of wild oats. Society hedges the life of a girl with the safeguards of strict public opinion. She must keep to the narrow way of propriety, or the penalty is heavy. Not so the boy. The large allowance made for him amounts almost to license to do as he will. The common charity with which his acts are treated degenerates into approval of certain vices, and sometimes the scapegrace is almost a hero. This is one of the most dangerous influences a boy must face, for it lowers his ideal and removes one of the chief stimuli to right living.

Another danger to high ideals is vicious example. The boy takes things in the concrete.
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He learns by example more than by precept. When a boy was asked which he liked most, the Old or New Testament, he said: "The Old." When asked why, he replied: "Because in the Old Testament there is always somethin' doin'." The wise teacher knows he must embody his teaching in heroes and "somethin' doin'," else it will not keep a boy awake. Boys learn with their eyes open. You can kill the force of the whole Ten Commandments by one example. The boy's hero, whoever he is—and he is somewhere in the neighborhood—is doing more to shape his character than the Sunday school library, perhaps. What he sees in Christians does more to determine what he thinks of Christianity than all the sermons he ever heard. He is an imitator. Alas for the example so often set him! A youth with the artist's susceptibilities stood before a painting of a master, and with flashing eyes and glowing cheeks cried: "I too will be a painter." He was moved not by a treatise on art, but by art itself. So the boy needs such a splendid example of the Christian life that he will be thrilled with the ideal it inspires and cry: "I too will be a Christian." Are we not dwarfing the ideals of our boys often by the men we honor in the
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State? When we elevate an unclean man to the mayoralty of the city, we damage every boy in it. When we vote for and honor with office men of known immorality, we put a premium on vice and destroy the precepts we teach our boys on Sunday. The greatest evil of corrupt politics is not high taxes nor injury to commerce nor miscarriage of law, but the corruption of public morals by example. To honor bad men is to dishonor good morals. The elevation of the boss is the degradation of the boy.

Is the Church clear of this stigma? Do the men we put in the lead stand always for the best type? Do we not often put men in official position who could not be held up as examples? A man once said to me: “The business career of two men has set the Church back fifty years in this community.” The effect of this is not so great on the adult as on the youth. Every Church owes it to the keen-eyed and impressionable boys to set and maintain a high standard of life for those whom it honors. No man should be able to find a place in the official ranks of any Church whose life is not stainless and honorable, though he be worth a million.

But we thwart our teaching by personal exam-
ple. The cigar fights for the cigarette, and wins against the precepts of tobacco-stained lips. The social wine glass and punch bowl champion the saloon decanter against the temperance homily of a wine-cursed home, and win. If a mother lies to her child to frighten him into obedience or to avoid the sterner path of authority, she cannot complain if later he lies to her, for he will. If a father uses coarse language before his boy, he may expect his boy to improve its coarseness into proli
dity. I tremble for the falsehood, the sharp practice, the fraud in business and politics that the youth of our land must witness, and sometimes, alas! practiced by so-called Christians. It needs for the hero-worshiping spirit of the boys a great, white, brave, straight army of heroes to march before them, to kindle their aspirations and clarify their ideals. To this the Church must look that would win and hold the boys alert, clear-sighted, eager, deeply wise.

TURNING ON THE POWER.
A switch board is a complicated affair to the mind of a novice. The current knows what to do, but the novice does not know which button to touch. He is much more apt to touch the wrong
one than the right one, because there are so many more wrong ones. There is a way to reach the boy if we only knew it. But there was never a switchboard as complex, as intricate, and bewildering as the soul of a boy. You seek his good will; turn on the current, and his contempt starts into action. You aim at his conscience, and start the dangerous buzz saw of his humor.

This strange being of moods and mysteries, this instrument of many keys, with his contradictions and surprises, who can understand? Indeed, who tries? Who thinks it worth while? I bring no railing accusation. I am under indictment, and have pleaded guilty. But how many pastors in our Church have made a desperate effort to find out the real cause of our failure in dealing with boys? How many of us have faithfully studied the avenues of approach to the boy's nature? Have we not been guilty of turning on the power haphazard, letting the machinery cut such capers as it may? Religious pedagogy has had little emphasis in the Church. Our colleges and seminaries have no chair of the sort. They teach homiletics, exegetics, and the like, and their graduates know a great deal about the fathers of distant centuries, but almost nothing about
Jack and Tom, with whom they are to deal. I am delighted to learn since preparing this talk that our Vanderbilt University has taken steps to provide a chair of religious pedagogy. The Church is to be congratulated, and so are those who will receive this training for their best and most important line of work.

I went into a medical college. The lecture was on diseases of the throat. I got a lesson. The students were told the nature, symptoms, progress, complications of such diseases, the best remedies, and how to apply them. Then the lecturer told of the involvement of the lymphatics, and how the lymphatic structure in children is sensitive and tender, and the treatment must accordingly differ from that of adults. He was teaching men how to deal with the body. They must not only know what is in the drug store, but also what the patient needs. We need likewise to know not only our remedies, but our patients; so we will not go into our theological drug store and reach for whatever is handy and dose our patients indiscriminately, without reference to whether they have headache or heart failure, solacing ourselves with the thought that the medicine is good and old.
A cotton mill man said to me: "We have just thrown away our old looms and put in twenty thousand dollars' worth of new ones. Not that the old ones were not good, but the new ones were better. There had been improvements made, and in order to keep pace with competition we must change our looms." If it is worth while to invest twenty thousand dollars in a new improvement for making cotton into cloth, it is surely worth while to change our machinery in order to make this raw material of boyhood into Christian manhood. Some of us have not added a new improvement to our machinery in ten years.

The whole science—if we may call it such—of religious pedagogy is in its infancy. It began, it is true, when Jesus set the child in the midst. But it is only in the last few years that a literature has sprung up on the subject. We have made a beginning, and the whole subject is being sifted, but the end is not yet. The child is being re-discovered. "We are just awaking to the problem of the boy in the Church, and forgetting he was so recently a nuisance." The pity of it is it did not come sooner, for some of us. The preacher of the future will give more attention to the young. He will know more how to lead
and inspire those who teach the young; how to preach to the boys and win them to Christ; how to organize and lead them in simple service, and nurture them in the Christian life; how to find their natural sympathies and interests, and make them the servants of the truth. This is not showy nor ambitious work. It will not win the praise of the superficial, but it will stand the test of the long run, and win the applause of two worlds. The boyhood of America, in whose bosom sleep the great deeds and reforms of the future, in whose brain are locked the potentialities of literature, and whose lips are consecrated to the service of eloquence, presents a field worthy the efforts of an angel. Into this field he who will may enter, for the call is clear and loud and the Master stands at the gate; but let none dare enter without strong hands and a brave, loving heart, and let him not dare the task but with much study, prayer, and faith.
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