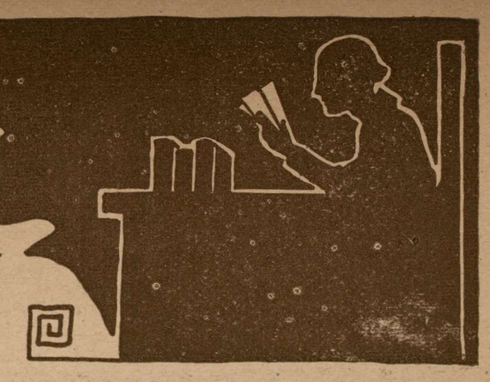
A BETTER DAY FOR THE WAYWARD GIRL



A mother would be amazed if told that she was contributing to her daughter's downfall, but the mother who learned after six months that the "Julia" her daughter said she was visiting from time to time was a myth, was "of the class of improper guardians for youth who should be deprived of their guardianship." And there are many of her type. When daughter goes out for an evening, "I urge upon parents that they themselves go along and see that she is in a right environment; they need not stay all of an evening, but they should see that the girl is where they expect her to be." These are not the words of a theorist or idealist, but are written by Miss Alice C. Smith, the "Angel Policewoman," of New York City, who speaks from many years of eperience in dealing with wayward girls, both in the work of prevention and of rescue. In the latter field she assures us that now three-fourths of those under the age of twenty-five can be saved. Miss Smith, whose service to erring women has earned her the above title, by which she is known to the demimonde, tells us in The Police Magazine, published in New York under the auspices of the International Police Conference, that striking evidence of the success of this salvaging is to be found in the fact that in many thousands of homes in New York women who have strayed are now living as companions and helpers. From not one of these homes, she adds, has come the report of any advantage being taken of such a girl's record. One of the most potent means of saving the discouraged delinquent, she writes, is to provide a home background. One of the sects has a system of what are called "Opportunity Homes," which are listed by the Florence Crittenton Home. The unfortunate is cared for by the institution until a place is found for her in one of these "Opportunity Homes," where she can work out her destiny under favoring circumstances. Wayward minors and incorrigible girls are no longer sent to the workhouse. They go, instead, to the Florence Crittenton Home and to a reformatory, or, in certain instances, sentence is suspended. Another important—and a more modern—means of saving these women is furnished through the Neurological Institute. A woman or girl who appears defective is sent to this institution for a mental test, thoroughly conducted. When the report arrives the magistrate passes sentence in the light of science.

A social scientist herself, Miss Smith has given nearly a quarter of a century to the work of salvaging the souls of unfortunate women. Her volunteer social services so commended her to John D. Rockefeller, we are told, that for three years he paid her salary for her work in the courts. New York then took over her services and placed her name on its pay-roll, where it has remained. She is now chief probation officer of the Day Court for Women. Ten years ago, she continues, the complaint that "it is hard for a girl to be good" was truer than it is today. Then she agreed, in measure, with the statement. It was not impossible, but it was hard. At that time she found three great reasons for feminine delinquency:

"Fifty per cent. of the cases were due to poor and inadequately managed homes. Thirty per cent. of the girls who needed my services could not live on their wages. The remaining twenty per cent. were the result of what I termed 'unschooled emotions..'

"It is most inspiring to look back over the ten years and visualize the radical change that has taken place for the better. Homes have improved. They are most intelligently and humanly managed. They have been made pleasanter for the girl who returns from her work in a store or a factory or an office. The settlement workers and the mothers' clubs and the wider information that foreign-born parents now have concerning our standards of living have brought this about. Today I am not overestimating the home conditions when I say that onlytwenty per cent. of delinquents are the victims of bad home environment.

"Twenty per cent., one-fifth, is too great a number. But that is

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