"MOTHER" OF DISILLUSIONED GIRLS IN AMERICA'S "BIG CITY" IS POLICEWOMAN

Runaway Boys Have A Hard-Enough Time Of It In Many Instances, But Real Cases Of Misfortune And Misery Is Found Among Runaway Girls.

(By Nancy Hanks)

Runaways of all sorts turn naturally to the big cities, and that is one reason why Mrs. Mary Hamilton, assistant to Police Commissioner Enright of New York City, has such a busy job. Her particular line of runaways is young girls. People call her, both in the Police Department and out, "the mother of New York's disillusioned runaways." The runaway boys have a hard enough time of it, in many instances, but the real cases of misfortune and misery are to be found among the runaway girls, and it is such cases that fall into Mrs. Hamilton's special province. She has dealt with thousands of them in her career as a practising police woman.

She has other jobs, also, it appears, such as being supervisor of all the girls' homes in Greater New York, champion of the negro girl for a place on the telephone exchange, censor of New York stage productions and advocate of a police-woman's course in the colleges throughout the country. Five years ago Mrs. Hamilton told me she was the only police woman in New York. Today there are one hundred and ten police and patrolwomen. And more are being trained as fast as they can be procured. So far most of the volunteers have been women over thirty-five or forty—mothers of growing families, women who understand the needs of the younger generation. But Mrs. Hamilton is hoping and praying that this won't be the case much longer. What she needs, she says, is young women. Girls who will go out among other girls, gaining their confidence and helping them to find their own. Girls who can better understand the point of view of other girls are better fitted to give real aid. And she's perfectly confident that it won't be a great while before she will be able to show New York and the world what a policewoman really can do.

There is too much restraint without intelligence in the home, says Mrs. Hamilton, and almost every case that comes to our attention bears out this fact. A noted psychologist has said that crimes are often committed when a sex complex exists, that instead of normal self-expression a person will sometimes resort to an extreme activity even though realizing that the act violates a law of society. I find this true in nine out of every ten cases I handle.

New York is full of girls, well educated, and of fair social standing in their home towns, who are simply down and out and too proud to write home and admit it. And, again, it is also full of foolish young things out for a thrill—mad to do something different, cause a sensation, make up for the colorlessness and uninterestingness of their lives—even though it lands them in jail for their pains.

None of them are vicious. They all just want to live. They come here with about five hundred dollars and a fair showing of clothes—according to home-town standards. They are going to enter college, work their way through. Or they are going into the movies. Or they are going to dance on the stage. Or they are going to make their mark in Grand Opera. Fine!—until they see New York styles. Their wardrobe seems somehow inadequate. Just a few new things will freshen it up a bit. And before they know it, between books and tuition at the colleges, or tramping about from one agency to another for the coveted front-row position in the newest musical comedy, or the lunches in the long waits for a voice trial before Gatti-Casazza, the small hoard is gone. They are absolutely broke. There is no one to turn to. No way of hoping for better things ahead. And write home, admitting defeat, they will not. They're just plain up against it. That's where police women come in.

We found two girls not long ago at one of the big department stores' sample counter. For days they had been appearing around lunch time and trying all the samples. Nice girls they were. Well dressed and of Southern extraction. They were so sweet and well mannered that the demonstrator hadn't the heart to turn them away. She fed them every day until the store detective "wised" to what was going on. He called us in, and we took charge.

They were refined, well-educated girls with unusually winning personalities. They had come from the South—the one to make her mark in the opera, since she was the best soloist in her home chruch, and the other to keep her company and rise high in the business field. Both were absolutely broke. For two weeks neither had had a thing to eat except the salvage from the demonstrator. As I talked with them, the thinner of the two "crashed." Had to be rushed off to the hospital at once. Malnutrition, the doctors said. And she was a very sick girl. That's the one kind of case.

For the other: three girls were arrested recently for shoplifting—college girls with plenty of money in their purses to pay for the pretty articles they had stolen. And they were not victims of kleptomania, either, They had only taken the things for fun. Just for the thrill and excitement of doing something devilish and forbidden.

They had run away from their homes in Chicago because they were bored with a life of idleness and parental restraint. They had been educated, but not trained to do anything useful. So life at home was not particularly interesting. Having exhausted the usual round of social pleasudes, they had set forth to land new thrills. And their crusade landed them in jail.

When these girls stole the cheap bottles of perfume, a mediocre purse and a few inexpensive pieces of novelty jewelry they knew perfectly well that they were in danger of being caught. But they were willing to run the risk for the sake of breaking down a barrier. Barriers had hemmed them in all their lives.

They were foolish virgins, yes. But the folly was not so much theirs as the mistake of antiquated, overindulgent, unscientific parents.

Mrs. Hamilton leaned forward and "beat a clenched fist on the desk in her earnestness, and went on:

It's so hard to do anywhere near all that's to be done with so few helpers. We want more "community mothers." We want typing and stneography taught in the public schools. We want "school advisers" in all the high schools, women to whom the girls may go with their psychological and sex problems. We want negro girls allowed in the telephone exchanges as the negro men are allowed on the police force. We want to teach hygienics to the poor. And I, personally, would like to see every rowdy, every bum in New York photographed, checked and put in bonds. Babies, I am positive, should be fingerprinted at birth. It's the only right way.

But how can we bring about such radical reforms without a suitable backing—without the understanding of the multitude?

The problem of the prevention of crime is like a tin can tied to a dog's tail. And the police women are to the social problem what the nurse is to the medical problem. Youve got to have us!

The champion of right relaxed and smiled at her own vehemence.

Oh well, she deprecated, you know how you get when you're terribly interested in anything. And I'm just living and eating and breathing this business. It makes me wild at the opposition we encounter. And each of us can do so very little. I'm doing all I can. But it isn't much. I bring home as many girls as I can accommodate every night, give them warm baths and good food, have their clothes washed and pressed, and make them as comfortable as I can. Then I find them jobs and start in on a fresh bunch.

Mrs. Hamilton waved a hand about the cheerful room.

Some of them are simply starved—for beauty as well as food. They just feast on the place! It's pitiful.

I looked about. And I couldn't blame the girls for feasting. Soft, colorful curtains, gay splashes of color for pillows, a corner cabinet filled with Indian and Egyptian relics, a wide table with a hammered bronze coffee set—and in the center of it all, Mrs. Hamilton with her modish brown dress, quick hands, keen eyes and understanding manner. No wonder they feast! What a change from a barren hallroom, or a bench in a park, or a temporary resting-place in one of the city's many comfort stations.

The war, finished the enthusiastic benefactor, changed a great many things. The police force was one. Now you will find men, formerly crooks, making ideal policemen. In the Italian districts you will find Italian cops. In the negro section, negro cops. And everywhere you will see gangsters keeping order among gangs, proud of their responsibility and ready to beat up the first man in their district to get out of bounds.

But that doesn't help the women any. Only women can help women. Do you know that we're the only country in the world that makes a record against women? And do you know that 97 per cent. of the women tried are convicted without redress and there is no appeal from the woman's court? It's an outrage, and something has got to be done about it. Isn't it time something drastic should be done?

Mrs. Hamilton sighed. But I suppose I am too impatient. I want everything to be remedied at once. And the world isn't made that way. But it's bound to come eventually. And then the world will sit up and notice the police woman. That day can't come too soon for me!

SUGGESTIONS FOR HOT SANDWICHES.

Chipped beef frizzled in butter and served between slices of buttered toast with horseradish sauce and tomato catsup.

Different kinds of cold meat chopped and mixed together, moistened with mayonnaise dressing and horseradish sauce, and served with crisp, whole-wheat toast.

Left-over corned beef, tabasco sauce and minced onion heated in butter and served on buttered bread with French dressing and cucumbers.

Fried or creamed oysters with toast.

Baked beans and Worcestershire sauce on slices of hot brown bread.

Creamed fish and peas on slices of whole-wheat toast, with minced olives and celery garnish.

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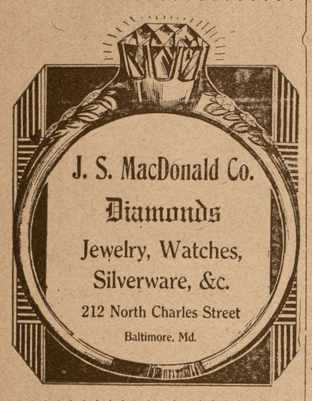
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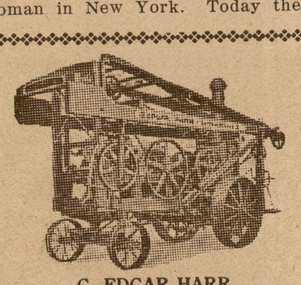
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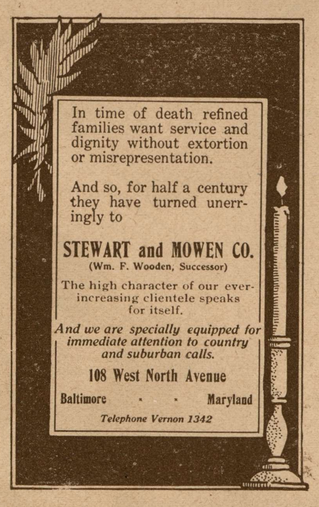
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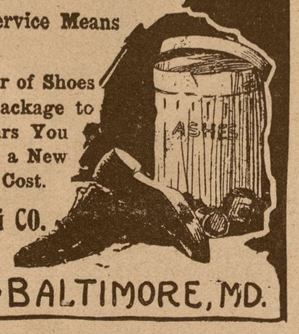

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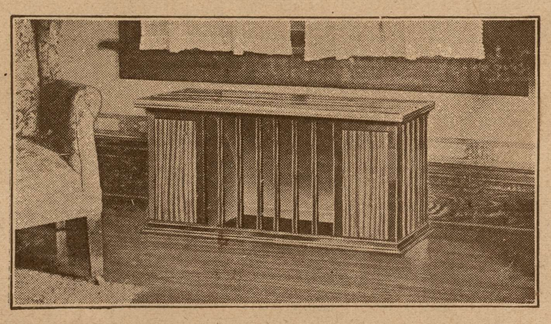
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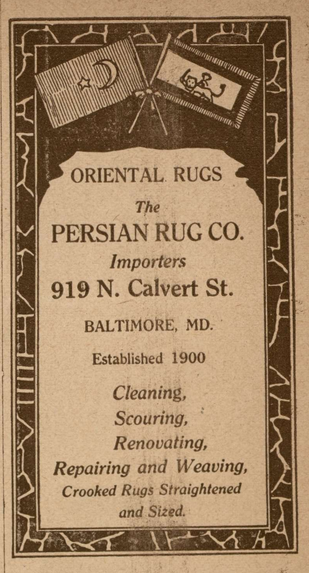
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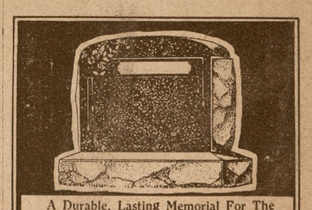
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