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Editorials

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CONTENTS

EDITORIALS—

Heredity as a Factor in Producing the Criminal—Juvenile Delinquents and Mental Tests—Relation of Woman's Wage to the Social Evil.....	321
---	-----

CONTRIBUTED ARTICLES—

1. A Protest Against Laws Authorizing the Sterilization of Criminals and Imbeciles..... Charles A. Boston	326
2. A New System of Criminal Procedure..... Maurice Parmelee	359
3. The New York State Bar Association Questionnaire— Some Comments..... Smith Ely Jelliffe	368
4. Control of Crime in India..... Charles Richmond Henderson	378
5. A Plan of Rational Treatment for Women Offenders.. Katharine Bement Davis	402
6. Reform Not Revolution.... D. Gina Lombroso-Ferrero	409

JUDICIAL DECISIONS ON CRIMINAL LAW AND PRO- CEDURE	412
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NOTES ON CURRENT AND RECENT EVENTS.. ..	420
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REVIEWS AND CRITICISMS	458
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Managing Editor, ROBERT H. GAULT

Associate Professor of Psychology, Northwestern University.

Managing Director, FREDERIC B. CROSSLEY

Librarian of the Elbert H. Gary Collection of Criminal Law and Criminology, Northwestern University.

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Victor von Borosini, Sociologist, Chicago.

Orrin N. Carter, Justice of the Supreme Court of Illinois, President of the Institute.

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Elmer A. Wilcox, Professor of Law, University of Iowa.

Communications relating to contributions and books for review should be addressed to the Managing Editor, Evanston, Ill.

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EDITORIALS

HEREDITY AS A FACTOR IN PRODUCING THE CRIMINAL.

Elsewhere in this issue there appears the list of subjects that were discussed in a remarkable symposium on the Bases of Crime at the thirty-eighth annual meeting of the American Academy of Medicine in Minneapolis last June. Each paper was of unusual interest and value. With no desire to disparage any feature of the program it may be asserted that the report on "Heredity as a Factor in Criminality, A Study of the Findings in About a Thousand Cases," reached the high water mark. It was presented by Dr. Edith R. Spaulding, Resident Physician at the Reformatory for Women, South Framingham, Mass., and Dr. William Healy, Director of the Psychopathic Institute, Chicago. It represented intensive research and the results reported are of far-reaching value for a theory of the criminal. Up to date it is the most extensive and intensive study of its kind. This report, together with all others that enter into the symposium, will be published in the *Bulletin* of the American Academy of Medicine, and some of them also in the *Medical Review of Reviews*.

The problem of heredity in criminality as in other connections, cannot be investigated until other causative factors, such as developmental and environmental conditions, have been eliminated. This has been accomplished in the work of Drs. Spaulding and Healy, and the outcome of the investigation is that it is yet to be proven that there is a direct inheritance of criminality *per se*. There is, however, inheritance of predispositions which are responsible for delinquency and crime in succeeding generations. These predispositions are mental or physical, or both. Feeble-mindedness, psychoses, hysteria, epileptic states and temperament, general physical characteristics, results of specific diseases, etc., may be inherited, and through them inheritance may be an indirect factor in the making of the criminal. Some of these points are demonstrated in the family charts of twelve juvenile delinquents. The charts were presented in connection with the discussion of the report.

The general conclusions that follow from this investigation are interesting in connection with Mr. Boston's paper in the present issue of this JOURNAL.

Acknowledgment is due to the American Academy of Medicine for having arranged such a comprehensive symposium for their annual

JUVENILE DELINQUENTS AND MENTAL TESTS

meeting. Each effort at co-operation in thought and act among physicians and others who deal with the problems that the criminal presents represents a step forward.

ROBERT H. GAULT.

JUVENILE DELINQUENTS AND MENTAL TESTS.

The earnest discussion of mental tests for juvenile delinquents by members of the National Conference of Charities and Correction, who recently met in Seattle, suggests what seems to the writer to be an important point. There are certain fields of observation in which the phenomena are of such a nature—or the connections among them are apparently so variable—that they are not readily reducible to formulæ. This is true of sociological and psychological phenomena whether normal or pathological. It is different in the case of the exact sciences in which phenomena occur in connections that are, to a high degree, invariable, and that may be expressed by formulæ. At the best, no doubt, many a day will come and go before human motives and their expression in psychological and sociological phenomena can be stated in the form of an equation. Standardized tests involve practically such a statement. Until they are available the tyro who has had little experience in dealing with individual cases cannot, at a single trial, supply a reliable report upon the place of an individual on the scale of intelligence. In order that reports of high merit may be secured we must go to men or women of wide experience. The dissatisfaction with mental tests as means of diagnosis is traceable to the fact that what the lay mind recognizes as palpable errors are often made by half-trained “investigators,” “research directors,” and even by men and women whose only qualification is that they have been “trained” for six weeks in a psychological clinic. If we accept this statement and agree upon the desirability of obtaining thorough mental diagnoses (and who disagrees?) we are ready to welcome the establishment, under competent guidance, of each new psychological clinic in our universities and municipalities where observers may enjoy *extended* opportunities under experts to acquire familiarity with all types of mental defect. This point, furthermore, is repeatedly borne in upon the writer through his experience with students: that the efficient practitioner in the field of mental tests must have considerably more than a mere smattering of knowledge concerning the psychology of normal individuals.

ROBERT H. GAULT.

RELATION OF WOMAN'S WAGE TO THE SOCIAL EVIL.

Owing to the great emphasis which had recently been given to the relation of the wage scale of women in industry to the social evil, popularly termed the "White Slave" problem, it was made the special subject for consideration at an informal conference of social workers and others who have dealt directly with the subject, at the Metropolitan Building, in New York, April 18, 1913. The consensus of opinion on the part of that voluntary group of persons was that a certain amount of injustice was being done to self-supporting women through that agitation and that there should be given to the public a statement refuting the charges made after securing the signatures of others whose experience would enable them to speak with authority. The following committee was appointed to formulate a tentative draft:

Professor Jeremiah W. Jenks, of New York University,

James Bronson Reynolds, Esq., Counsel, American Vigilance Association,

Miss Katharine Bement Davis, Supt. N. Y. State Reformatory for Women,

Henry W. Herbert, City Magistrate, Women's Night Court, New York City,

Miss Rose Sommerfeld, Supt. Clara De Hirsch Home for Working Girls, New York City,

Frederick H. Whitin, General Secretary, Committee of Fourteen, New York City,

Miss Florence M. Marshall, Principal Manhattan Trade School for Girls, New York City.

The circulation of the document resulting from their joint efforts brought helpful suggestions which were incorporated in it and the following statement was finally adopted.

"The comments made in the newspapers of late concerning vice among working girls, especially in department stores, indicate clearly that there has been a wide misconception on the part of many regarding the subject. The undersigned are of the opinion that these comments, in many cases, through lack of experience of the writers, have been grossly unjust to the working girls, and that from the widespread publicity given these mistaken views grave evils are likely to result. In fact, we believe evils have in many cases already resulted therefrom to society and even to the working girls themselves.

"The undersigned do not wish in these comments in any way to express an opinion regarding the wages paid to working girls, certainly

WOMAN'S WAGE AND THE SOCIAL EVIL

not to intimate that they are too high or even sufficient. That is a question to be considered on different grounds, and our sympathy is strongly with the working girls.

"In order, however, to aid at least a little in minimizing this evil of mistaken opinion regarding working girls and to indicate in part the line that should be followed in investigations of such a question, we venture to suggest that in recent accounts in the newspapers many vital points have been ignored. Clearly any thorough investigation of the subject should include questions regarding their age, school training, mental development, heredity, occupation, hours of work, whether apprentices or regular workers; source of support, if apprentices, or if not working; whether living at home or contributing to support of the home; the use made of their wages; previous depraving influences; views regarding sex relationship of the common intimate associates of the girl; the forms of her social recreation, and it is particularly important to ascertain how money received, if at all, as the price of a girl's fall and subsequent immoral practices, was spent—whether for necessities, luxuries, or for her family.

"If such matters were covered, we should be more certain regarding the conclusions reached. Our own observation and experience would indicate that the most important contributing causes of immorality of girls are: Weakness of mind and will; individual temperament; immoral associates; lack of religious or ethical training; injurious home influences; cramped living accommodations, rendering privacy difficult; lack of industrial efficiency; idleness; unwillingness to accept available employment; love of finery and pleasure; unwholesome amusement; and inexperience, and ignorance of social temptations.

"We therefore hold that it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that low wages are a direct cause of the loss of virtue of working girls, though our experience and observation would lead us to the opinion that low wages are at times an indirect contributing cause, but it is usually the low wage of the parent or person supporting the family, resulting in low standard of living, which includes inability to give proper training to children, as well as insufficient living accommodations and the evil social influences arising therefrom. It is our general belief that low wages of working girls are scarcely ever a direct cause of their loss of chastity."

Among the signers of this report in addition to the members of the committee named above are: Professor C. R. Henderson, of the University of Chicago; George J. Kneeland, Director of Investigation for

WOMAN'S WAGE AND THE SOCIAL EVIL

the Vice Commission of Chicago, and Graham Taylor, President of the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy.

Certainly the signers of the document quoted above are aiming in the right direction. The social problem of vice, furthermore, is beset by such conditions that its successful investigation may more appropriately be entrusted to independent, patient, trained students who have time at their disposal, than to members of state legislatures, however honest their purposes.

ROBERT H. GAULT.
