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## Editorial

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# Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology

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## EDITORIALS

### NEWS FROM DR. VICTOR VON BOROSINI.

The editorial staff of this Journal for several months has been painfully conscious that a strong portion of its force is away from the desk. Dr. Victor von Borosini, who for several years has been an especially active and energetic associate editor and contributor, went to Europe early in the past summer, and, at the outbreak of the European war, entered the Austrian army. From October 25 to December 4 he had not been heard from and his friends were consequently filled with anxiety. News has reached us, however, that he is safe, but that he is a prisoner of war. This is occasion for mixed feelings on our part. At the same time that we congratulate Dr. von Borosini and his anxious family on his personal safety, we deeply sympathize with him in the enforced idleness and hardships of a prison camp. He will rob a portion of the days of their tedium by reviewing books and journals for our pages.

Those who may wish to communicate with him should send mail in care of Director of Bureau of Prisoners of War, 49 Wellington St., London, W. C. From that office mail will be forwarded to the prison camp near Tipperary, Ireland. ROBERT H. GAULT.

### "SOCIAL HYGIENE."

The first number of "Social Hygiene" appeared in December. This issue contains 164 pages. The journal is published quarterly by The American Social Hygiene Association, Inc., and is under the editorial care of James Bronson Reynolds Esq., general counsel of the American Social Hygiene Association and Dr. William F. Snow of New York City. The workmanship on this first number justifies the term "artistic," and the titles and names of contributors promise good things. The table of contents follows:

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In addition to the above contributed articles there are notes and reviews of books and periodicals.

Correspondence for the new journal should be addressed to 105 W. 40th St., New York City.

ROBERT H. GAULT.

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## PREVENTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CRIMINALS.

There is much in our methods of dealing with criminals to suggest an old woman with a broom sweeping back the rising tide of the ocean. In the Chicago House of Correction there are approximately 1,200 prisoners who have been committed to that institution, or to others of its kind, four or more times. During the year 1913 there were 2,171 different repeaters in that institution who had been there four or more times before.

In his review of the statistics of recidivism in Germany Gustav Aschaffenburg says: "Probably with the first, certainly with the third or fourth conviction, the hope is destroyed of ever reclaiming the criminal from his unfortunate career; finally they (statistics) teach that the fall into the abyss usually takes place in a very short time, and that our penal system is unable to check the growing depravity." (See *Crime and its Repression*, p. 223.) Dr. Paul Bowers' study of 100 recidivists who had served four or more terms of commitment in the Michigan City, Indiana, prison, would indicate that they were all in very bad mental and physical condition. (See this *Journal*, Vol. V, No. 3.) The Chicago Council Committee on Crime is in possession of similar data relating to juvenile and adult delinquents in Chicago.

There is sufficient data at hand to establish the conviction that oft-repeated offenders are on the whole equipped with such unstable organizations that they cannot react normally to the conditions of everyday life that place upon us all the heavy burden of competition for a livelihood—and more. If this is the case the corollary seems to be obvious that we are not preventing crime by merely locking such repeaters up and letting them out again. They require prolonged attention and this seems to suggest giving

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authority to medical staffs, or to courts on the recommendation of medical staffs, to commit to farm colonies or to hospitals those who are found to be in such unstable condition that they cannot at once adapt themselves to the conditions of normal social life, and to keep them in such places of benevolent confinement until cured. When we adopt such a policy as this toward the youth of the land we will take a real step in the direction of the prevention of the development of criminals—and that should carry a distinct appeal to the imagination of our age. Why, at any rate, should any youthful delinquent, and therefore, criminal in the making, while he is neurotic, or mentally subnormal, or the victim of destructive infections be admitted to the freedom of probation, or be placed on parole from an institution, in which state he will, in all probability, have placed upon him burdens too heavy for him to bear? Why should not the state or the city protect its own resources by assuming responsibility for doing all that can be done toward giving such youths an equal start in life as far as physical and mental equipment are concerned, even if that responsibility must be expressed in keeping these youths in suitable institutions, where they can have, during whatever term may be needful, such medical and educational treatment as may be best suited to individual cases? This would be a strictly logical procedure, once we agree that the state and the municipality have an educational function to perform, for the educational process involves, among other things, the arrangement of conditions in which adjustment may be effected; and among these conditions is a reasonable degree of health; at any rate freedom from such infections and neurotic conditions as render normal behavior-responses to the social environment improbable.

We publish elsewhere in this issue an article by Dr. V. C. Vaughan in which he sets forth the relationship between crime and disease. The remedy he prescribes may be interpreted as an attempt at the prevention of the development of criminals; as a recognition of what we have tried to express above; viz., that the responsibility of the state is for the education of its members, and therefore for assisting to establish the conditions that make education possible.

Some such arrangement as that proposed by Dr. Vaughan, together with an adequate support by states, cities and towns, of departments of investigation, or child study bureaus, in connection with the educational system, should go far toward pointing out

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those persons in whom delinquency is most likely to develop, and to enable us therefore to apply prophylactic measures at the most opportune times and places.

The prevention of the development of criminals is the purpose of a movement that has been inaugurated in the New York City Police Department by Police Commissioner Arthur Woods. The policemen on their beats are to make notes relating to a variety of circumstances that they observe among the people, men, women and children, on their respective beats. Data on the employment or unemployment; the habits of life; the health of the people and the nature of the homes and the surroundings in the midst of which they live, and other data which comes incidentally within the ken of every observing policeman, will be placed in the hands of a bureau at police headquarters where it will be reduced to scientific order.

Such an arrangement as this should be of infinite service to organized charities, affording, as it would, a source—and it could be made a reliable source—of information regarding conditions which it is their function to alleviate. If such a system of collecting sociological data were made efficient it would wholly remove the difficulty that we experience in our American cities of discovering at once where the points of need are, and assist us materially, therefore, to prevent many delinquent acts that are prompted by desperate circumstances. Thus we would prevent many a first step in the development of the criminal.

When we combine public measures for protecting health and correcting deep seated disorders of the nervous organization which make unreliable conduct almost if not quite inevitable, with the activity of such organizations as the police in our large cities, to place needed sociological data in the hands of proper authorities, we shall take a long step in the direction of preventing the development of criminals.

ROBERT H. GAULT.