

Why Women are Wild by a Society Policewoman

BY EDNA LIEBER.

ONCE knew a man who was considered such an able speaker that he was often called upon to make an address. This gentleman was a believer in socialism, and no matter what subject he was asked to discuss, no matter how remote from politics, economics or the brotherhood of men, he invariably closed with a plea for socialism. I do not think this man was differently constituted from the rest of us who have hobbies. I have often noticed that we are inclined to build up our arguments so that our conclusions may be in perfect harmony with our preconceived theories—my pet theory is character-building in the child.

For many years I have given a great deal of time to social service, especially that phase of social service which deals with the delinquency of juveniles. When at our recent change of city administration the mayor-elect had decided that policewomen were an unnecessary expense upon the taxpayer and calmly and coolly arranged to disband our women's police department, which under the splendid leadership of Miss Clara Burnside had gained a national reputation, I felt very much perturbed. Having been a close observer of the work of our police women and having learned that their method of preventive work had done much to eliminate delinquency, especially among young girls, I naturally became very much disturbed over the conclusion at which our mayor-elect had arrived.

I took it upon myself to call upon Mr. Shank and explain to him in a dispassionate manner the work that had been done by our women's police department. Advisedly I say "in a dispassionate manner," as I had no selfish motive in mind. I was neither looking for an office nor for a job. My work as a social worker had always been volunteer service. I admit that Mr. Shank was not very much impressed with my visit, nor, for that matter, with the arguments that I used in urging him to reconsider his plan of destroying an agency that I claimed had been of such vital benefit to the citizens of our fair city. However, after a number of talks with the mayor-elect I had made such headway that he asked me to consider an appointment. Perhaps for this reason he appointed me and another clubwoman as observers or investigators in the police department, saying that if I could, after two or three months' service, prove to him that women on the police force were an asset to the city, he would be willing to reorganize this department.

My partner and I were formally appointed January 1, 1922, to serve on the Indianapolis police force until we could work out a plan for women police that seemed feasible and desirable to the mayor and the board of safety. We were to give seven hours' service a day, to divide our time as we saw fit. We were given police power, but were asked not to make arrests. We were told to divide our time between the jail and courthouse, visiting the different courts and especially observing methods that were used in handling prisoners. We were to keep our eyes open but our mouths closed and report directly to the mayor.

The first thing I did was to acquaint myself with the details of the system of our police department. I asked the chief of police to assign me one officer who could show me through the police station and could explain the method of work of the officers.

Indianapolis has about 430 patrolmen on the force at the present time. These patrol the 58 districts. There are 55 detectives, six of whom are women. Besides this, Indianapolis has 31 women in different departments in the police force. There are two inspectors with the same pay as captains, five captains, seven lieutenants, 16 sergeants and, of course, the chief of police. We pay \$1600 salary to a patrolman the first year and \$1700 the second year; \$2000 is the pay of a sergeant and \$2200 is paid the lieutenants and so up to \$4000, the salary the chief draws. These salaries certainly are no adequate compensation if compared with the demands made by the public upon our police officers. We expect the public servants to come from a class of our citizens who have had the advantage of good schooling. They are supposed to be well groomed, courteous, brave, honest, and, above all, to possess good judgment. They must be in excellent health, be able to keep their uniforms in good condition; in short, these men must have had good home rearing so as to meet the requirements of the people and have their confidence, their respect, for naturally they are the public's servants.

It was astonishing to me to find so many men among these 500 or more who measured up to the required standard when the remuneration is so small. At least three-fourths of the men in our police department are able men who conscientiously try to perform their duty as it is outlined to them.

As in all fields of endeavor, Indianapolis has some poor officers, officers who, no doubt, owe their appointment solely to their political "pull." There are offi-

cers who commit misdemeanors as bad as, if not worse than, those of the men and women they arrest. I believe one of the greatest shocks to me was when an officer brought in a prisoner guilty of an offense he had himself committed at some time or another. I am now referring chiefly to such misdemeanors as being under the influence of liquor, making liquor, fighting, prostitution, etc. Then there are the many traffic laws broken by officers of the law as often as by other citizens. And so there are other cases of delinquency or contributing to delinquency which are committed by officers, who are not censured at any time and yet who arrest some poor fellow for the same offense.

A police officer should possess discretion; unfortunately, it is not always present. To be a wise officer it is not necessary to have had a college education; good common sense, a fair knowledge of human nature and a sense of discretion, however, are necessary. Many cases could be handled out of court by officers were they to judge a case with reason.

The Bertillon system interested me very much, in spite of the fact that the very able officer in charge of this office could give no definite answer to my question whether his 20 years' experience in the department did not make of him a very good psychologist. I thought measuring and photographing so many criminals would have shown him how to detect a dangerous criminal on sight.

The filing system concerning the prisoners in this department is wonderfully efficient. Ever so many aliases can be used by any prisoner once measured and photographed under the Bertillon system. If his record is ever wanted after once being filed it can be readily found by means of the numbering method. Finger prints and bone measurements are filed with names of prisoners. The prisoner may change his name, the bone structure may change—if measurements were taken before maturity—but the finger prints are the same in early youth as in old age in every individual. When one looks at a baby's small thumb and pictures that baby grown to full manhood it scarcely seems possible that while the lines in his little thumb grow deeper and longer, their relation never changes from the day of his birth to the day of his death.

One thing that was gratifying to me in my investigation was the fact that the so-called "third degree" grilling appeared more vicious when read in some sensational novel than when applied in actual life. In fact, I heard nothing in the questioning of prisoners nor saw anything in the means used in questioning a prisoner that in any way deserved criticism. Criticism is just, however, when young girls who have been abused by older men relate their story to male officers. For instance, an 11-year-old child who had been abused by a foster father had to tell her story first to one of the officers, then she had to repeat her story to the men on the grand jury (as the charge of rape had been placed against the offender) and then to the juvenile court judge. The judge of criminal court, where the man was tried, passed judgment without hearing the case, as the man pleaded guilty. A number of similar cases were called



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to my attention while serving as an investigator, and convinced me more strongly than ever that women officers and women judges ought to hear and try these cases. My experience with the juvenile court brought me to this conclusion many years ago. Cases like the one I just cited do not belong in the same classes with cases of prostitution, for such children have generally quite innocently become the victims of perverts or other degenerates.

Often insane patients are left in jail before they are taken care of and thus treated like criminals instead of patients, a condition which, by the way, prevails in many institutions of correction and is most inhuman.

The sick, the degenerate, the criminal and the innocent victims are all treated alike when arrested; it is taken for granted that they are guilty. The bunks in the jail are made of iron. Neither a blanket nor a pillow is given the occupants. The food must be eaten with their fingers. Soap and towels are not supplied. This is not only inhuman, but highly insanitary even if these prisoners are kept in jail but a day or two.

We have just opened a new jail which will be used for women prisoners only. This is a big step forward, as the prisoners will be allowed to congregate in a large living room during the daytime and when not occupied in the laundry. The matron told me that they shall permit the women prisoners such privileges as reading and sewing and is hoping that a piano will be furnished for the prisoners' living room. May the time come when we shall have a detention home with a hospital ward. There the ill or injured prisoners awaiting trial could receive medical attention. The feeble-minded and the insane could be kept in this detention home until placed elsewhere. Also persons who are held as witnesses and who are now confined in the county jails, often for weeks, could there await trial. In my opinion a differentiation should be made when prisoners are slated and a detention home seems desirable for



Edna Lieber, the former Indianapolis policewoman, who is the author of this unusual article.

placement of such that need not be kept behind bars.

Many complaints are made against public dance halls. One of our duties was to visit these places. Halls that were supposedly frequented by our so-called "better class," especially those attended by high school boys and girls, were often found less well conducted than the dance halls frequented by those of our young people of the lower strata of life. Managers told me that after many high school sorority or fraternity dances they found discarded corsets, bloomers, camisoles and empty whisky flasks in the girls' dressing rooms and empty bottles in the boys' rest room. Boys and girls, so they said, would often leave a dance for a drive in a machine, returning to the dance. This occurred even at dances which apparently were well chaperoned.

I saw so many bootleggers tried each day in police court that I wondered whether anyone really believed that the country is "dry." Today we have more law-breakers than ever before. Men who before never dreamed of disobeying the law are doing so at this time. Even many a good housewife is brewing wine or beer who, if accused of the fact that she is breaking a federal statute, would resent the accusation most bitterly. Thus our boys of 15, 16 and 17 years, who never would have been able to buy liquor from a saloonkeeper with regularity, are now buying "white mule" from any of the many bootleggers. The girls are often persuaded by their boy companions to take a "nip" of this vile stuff, not for a moment realizing the consequences.

I do not wish to be classed as an old fogey or a gloomy reformer, nor do I believe that the youth of this generation is so very much worse than the youth of generations past, but I do believe that the temptations which the youth of today must resist, because of easier and greater opportunities, tax their physical and moral strength almost beyond measure. The opportunity that the buggy offered young people of yesterday was much less tempting than the automobile of today. Consider only the comparatively few owners of buggies with the many who own or have access to automobiles. One may also compare the reading of the trashy dime novels to the cheap form of amusements in our day, or the kissing games of yore with the dance craze of today, but—and here I make a great halt—compare the discipline, the closer family ties of a generation or two ago with those of today. Here one feels that somehow, somewhere, one is treading on dangerous ground; that a change must come if a state of chaos will not result.

It is nothing unusual to have young girls brought to jail who are practicing abnormal relations. Formerly these types were women of mature years. One need not be an alarmist to see that there is something vitally wrong. And now I shall soon have to touch upon my own theories of how I believe some phases of our social life may be remedied. As stated before, I do not wish to be classed as a reformer, for often the reformer has nothing to offer but prohibition—prohibition by law. We must certainly realize that we already have more prohibition laws than we need. It almost appears to me that the more laws we enact the more lawbreakers we create. Very often the very thing we prohibit becomes most desired.



and other inanimate articles that were instrumental in killing men; the latter generally tried in law under the title of "Deadend." Previous to 1848 the instrument was forfeited to the crown, to be given to God. The second period was the recognition of the insane as mentally sick and not beset with devils, and the abolition of the burning and hanging of witches as such, and third, the present era, with the recognition of the irresponsibility of the criminal and the direct correlation between the mental attitude of the people and authorities to the first two situations which are closely analogous to the third, admonishes us to approach the third in a more scientific and open-minded manner, that we, too, a few years hence, may not likewise be held up to ridicule and condemnation for our blindness.

"At present the criminal is assumed to be sane unless proved insane. The time may not be far distant when the law will read that the criminal is presumed to be insane until proved sane. There is a marked change coming into the law, a very insistent movement to make it scientific."

This conclusion of Dr. Hickson's may appear rather extreme at first glance, but no doubt great changes will have to be made in the handling of those of all our criminals.

Our hope lies in using preventive and protective measures for the elimination of crime. What are some of the causes that lead to the making of criminals, and what are some of the causes that lead to delinquency? To the first I must answer the privilege of propagation which we permit in the ranks of our feeble-minded. Feeble-mindedness is hereditary and generally incurable.

To the second, the development of delinquency is the problem of poor and inadequate housing. Poor housing is directly responsible for the immorality of our very young subjected to its painful influences. How many families of six, eight and ten are living in three to four rooms? Mother and father and their children ranging between the ages of 2 to 12 occupy the same sleeping apartment, the rest of the children separated only by a thin partition wall.

A home in which disorder reigns brings disorder to the minds of the occupants. A sense of "mine and thine" cannot be taught where no one has his own closet, his own set of drawers, not even his own bed. Everything is claimed by anyone who grabs the object first, the germ of crime is planted, the soil is ready for it to sprout, the conditions ripe for it to flourish and grow. At an early age the children gain a knowledge of the physical aspect of life, which can only be detrimental to their physical and spiritual well-being. How often this wrong impression of the marvel of propagation brings disaster to the young is scarcely realized. Poisonous germs of all kinds are wont to breed in such homes, where ventilation is poor. Ill health is bound to get a foothold. Happiness, joy and contentment take wings in such quarters and the children at a tender age seek amusement outside of their squalid homes. Parental care is entirely lost sight of and soon these youngsters will become delinquents and it is only a matter of luck



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if they are not caught and brought into the juvenile court.

Economic conditions, of course, are largely responsible for poor housing, though not entirely. The lack of any knowledge of thrift, of system, of order, of good housekeeping, the lack of shouldering responsibilities, are likewise the cause. The only ways I can clearly see of bringing about a change are, first, by regaining an almost lost art—cherishing ideals, and second, by education—education in the fullest sense, which does not merely mean reading and writing and arithmetic. Then, perhaps, we can hope to uproot the causes of crime.

Laws did no more in making people do right than the rod used upon a child's back makes of him a man.

Both have only a seemingly good effect because they are used as threats and are feared. I do not wish to suggest that we do not need laws. To be sure we do—but the man-made laws should not conflict in too great measure with natural laws, the mala per se. Laws should be the mala prohibita made for the mentally fit, so that they can easily abide by them. Educating the public in thoroughly understanding this great and grave problem will take time and can be accomplished only gradually. In the meantime let us proceed to use such preventive measures as are at hand.

I was much strengthened in my firm belief during the short time I was on the police force that the lack of sex education is one of the greatest causes of delinquency. Many wayward girls to whom I spoke told me that their first knowledge of sex came to them either through some older child or some man who had abused them. The physical details were always stressed. This knowledge was generally secretly imparted and this secretly acquired knowledge leads boys and girls away from parental observation. Once the confidence is broken between parent and child the ties gradually loosen in every direction.

Our aim must be to teach our young

people to select their mates more carefully and to teach them to accept more willingly their responsibilities when children come and better to discipline themselves and these.

It seems to me that one of the most important improvements that should be made in our jails is that every prisoner who is brought in on any charge greater than breaking a city ordinance ought to have the benefit of an examination by a psychiatrist before he is tried, so that the judge may know the physical and mental condition of the offender on whom he passes judgment. Especially should an intensive examination of repeating offenders be made to determine how these offenders who cannot be reformed can be restrained and the public protection instead of individual punishment should be given.

Dire poverty is often the cause of crime; economic depression is always accompanied by a crime wave. We know that bad luck is not the only cause of poverty, but also ill health, shiftlessness, lack of thrift, lack of vocational and domestic training and inability to adjust the appetite to the contents of the purse are contributing causes.

At the beginning of this article I stated that I called upon Mayor Shank for the purpose of inducing him to retain women on the Indianapolis police force, explaining to him the protective and preventive work they have done. I was able after a few months' investigation to bring to his attention many cases which had been handled by policewomen and which had not at any time been brought into court. These cases were adjusted in the women's police department.

In conclusion I am most happy to say that Mayor Shank accepted the report and the recommendation, which read as follows:

"Indianapolis, Ind., March 1, 1922.—

Hon. Samuel Lewis Shank, Mayor of the City of Indianapolis—Dear Sir: We beg to submit the following recommendations relating to women members of the Indianapolis police department:

"From our observation since January 1, 1922, we have come to the conclusion that women should be retained on the Indianapolis police force. Besides three matrons at the city jail, two women at the market house and four women in the detective bureau, sufficient women should be appointed to establish a department to be known as the juvenile division of the Indianapolis police department. The department shall be under the supervision of Miss Burnside, who to be responsible to Chief Rikhoff for all these women, and to report to him at such times as he shall designate.

"The duties of this division shall be the supervision, when necessary, of all dance halls (including the issuance of permits); theaters, parks, stations, all public amusements and the market; and the investigation of all complaints of juveniles and of adults neglecting minor children and contributing to the delinquency of minor children. All cases investigated by this division shall be adjusted, when possible, and kept under probation, and affidavits filed when necessary, in any court which can adequately deal with such cases.

"The very greatest care should be taken in selecting these officers, who in turn are the guardians of public safety and order. It is manifestly impossible to expect results exclusively by way of experience when native alertness and keenness of mind on the part of an officer are lacking. This selection should include such phases as the passing of an intelligence test, which should also be used as a basis for further promotion.

"By your request, Mrs. Lieber visited Cincinnati and Chicago officials and juvenile court judges and secured their views on the need of policewomen in juvenile protective work. They have all agreed as to the demand for juvenile protection work and to the advisability of and advantage of women in police departments supplying this demand. We have discussed with Chief Rikhoff the present condition and future plans, and as a result have formulated the aforementioned plan, which we ask you to favorably consider. Respectfully submitted,

"EDITH M. ANTHONY,

(Mrs. Otto Anthony),

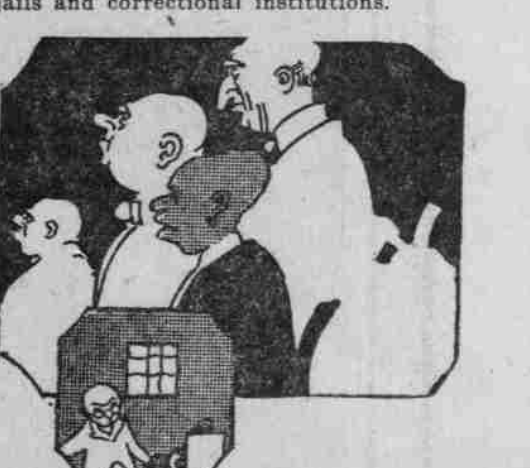
"EMMA LIEBER

(Mrs. Richard Lieber)."

I firmly believe that proper direction of the delinquent child will eventually remove the need of many of the state institutions that are now filled with criminals. Character building produces strong men and women and character building begins in the home—in the real home—where parents realize that, though human nature cannot be changed, temperate desires, by means of correct teachings, can be suppressed and controlled.

Education, not repression, is what is needed to reform mankind, and laws to effect prevention, not punishment, should be sought.

Though I spent many weary hours during my short service on the police force, I shall always feel grateful to Mayor Shank and the kindly officers of the police department for the help they extended me in getting a better insight into the lives of these of our unfortunates who come in contact with the courts, the jails and correctional institutions.



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