

# A Tribute to Maud Ballington Booth

By JAMES V. BENNETT

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NO one who is familiar with the problems of the prison can gloss over the startling fact that 56 percent of the 180,000 men and women in prisons and reformatories today have previously been in some kind of a correctional institution. Why do so many return to prison? Partially it is because our prisons are handicapped by overcrowding, inadequate staff, and failure to meet the economic and emotional needs of the prisoner. But the more important reason why so many men return to prison is because society itself forces the ex-prisoner to return to crime by making it impossible for him to earn an honest living or associate with honest people. The ex-prisoner is shunned on every hand, discriminated against, and exploited by those seeking cheap labor. One of the prisoners who recently came back into one of our institutions explained it this way: "Sure, I was free. Free to be a bum, free to walk the streets cold and hungry and to sleep in alleyways, free to go from one employment office to another, free—indeed—but in a cruel, friendless world. *You should ask why I'm back.*"

I am confident that at least 85 percent of the men leaving the prison gates do so with the firm determination not to come back, and yet over half of them do return to prison within five years and sacrifice the freedom they have longed for through many bitter days and sleepless nights spent behind the prison bars. What these men need is kind, intelligent help and guidance in the community.

FORTY-FIVE YEARS AGO OCCURRED AN event which was destined to have great influence on the prison program of the world. In that year the prison officials of the California prison at San Quentin invited Maud Ballington Booth to visit the prison. From that time she dedicated her life to prison work. In May 1896, the warden of Sing Sing Prison also invited Mrs. Booth to speak to the assembled prisoners in the chapel. This was the beginning of the Volunteer Prison League, a division of the Volunteers of America.

The progress which grew up around the Volunteer Prison League brought together all those essentials which the early Quakers, and Dwight, Wines, Mullins, and Butler had urged but for which it always has been difficult to secure official recognition.

First came the prison visiting and the moral instruction. Groups of devoted



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Mrs. Booth's seventy-fifth birthday was marked by many warm tributes to her years of service, this among them.

men and women were sent into the jails and prisons of America by Mrs. Booth with the message that somebody cared what happened to the prisoners. They brought the gospel of repentance and forgiveness, of rebirth and new life to men who had abandoned all hope of a future. They sought out the families of prisoners who were in need and helped them tide over the difficulties inevitable when the breadwinner is removed. Realizing that one of the greatest needs of social outcasts is to belong to somebody or to something with a social meaning, they drew them into the league to which even the most desperate character could belong and find a helping hand. Later, recognizing that the first need of a discharged prisoner is shelter, food, and a job, Mrs. Booth set up her great experiment in "Hope Halls," the first of which was opened in New York City. Before the days when parole supervision helped prisoners find homes and jobs, thousands of ex-prisoners found sanctuary in these halls—rest, food, shelter, and helpful advice while seeking a job and a more permanent place to live. To many a man these simple aids, given without question to anyone who asked, meant the difference between a return to crime as a way of life and a chance to make good. In other words, Mrs. Booth and her workers carried on the very fundamentals of good prison service when public officials could give little more than custodial care.

Nor has this work ceased with the organization of effective state parole pro-

grams. Today the Volunteer Prison League carries on its work in such important centers as Los Angeles, Kansas City, Columbus, and elsewhere. It is estimated that 200,000 ex-prisoners and half a million relatives of the imprisoned have been helped by these efforts and as many as a thousand prisoners have been paroled to the league at one time.

For nearly a half century Maud Ballington Booth not only has directed and organized a many-sided program for the improvement of the American prison system but has herself gone into the jails and prisons of America ceaselessly preaching the word of hope, talking with individual prisoners, strengthening the weak, and encouraging both inmates and officials who are attempting to promote a better understanding between the prisoner and society. Mrs. Booth has always done this with the utmost tact and good feeling. Never has she insisted upon her right to enter a public institution where she was not invited. She has, indeed, been the more welcome because we have come to realize that her sincerity and practical understanding can help make over the emotional life of those with whom the warden must deal. As at San Quentin and Sing Sing, so later she was invited to aid in the work at Joliet and Leavenworth. Governors and legislatures have sought her advice. Said my friend Warden Johnston of Alcatraz, "She is the one woman who is admitted without question into every prison in the United States."

WE ALL KNOW THAT REFORMATION TO BE lasting and to be effective must come from within. True reformation is essentially a change of mental and emotional processes, a realization and strengthening of the intangibles of the mind and soul. Mrs. Booth has stimulated the thought and feeling of more prisoners toward sincere reformation than any other single individual who has been engaged in prison work during the last half century. She has been able to do this because she speaks more than the language of the criminologist. She speaks not only of classification of prisoners, of psychiatry, of legal rights, but also the more vibrant words of essential justice.

Recognition of her great work has come to Mrs. Booth from the humble and the great. But more precious to her, I know, than all the commendation from those in high places is the knowledge that thousands of unfortunates have come to her for help and never in vain.

# Treating Youth Crime

By CHARLES L. CHUTE

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A NEW legislative program for the treatment of youthful offenders over the juvenile court age has been advanced by one of our leading associations of lawyers, the American Law Institute. One model bill, the so-called Youth Correction Authority Act, has been approved by the institute. Another, the Youth Court Act, has been published but is still in the proposal stage, not yet approved by the institute. Judge Curtis Bok, a member of the committee which drafted the bills, says that they represent the institute's "first excursion into crime." [See "Youth Justice" by Curtis Bok, *Survey Graphic*, June 1940.] Hitherto this body of lawyers has concerned itself, as "big" lawyers usually do, with the intricate problems of civil law, rather than with criminal law and crime treatment which involve social quite as much as legal problems.

The committee that worked on the bills for about two years includes lawyers, criminal court judges, criminologists, penologists and one prominent psychiatrist. Their proposals were put forward in a well-planned publicity campaign including a series of effective nationwide radio broadcasts. In various stages the bills were sent to a number of consultants whose participation, however, was limited to submitting written comment and suggestions. Finally the members of the committee presented the program at various conferences of penologists, social workers, and other groups.

Any program so sponsored and launched calls for careful critical evaluation and forthright discussion by social workers in the light of their experience and in relation to the foundations already established for the treatment of youthful offenders.

The basic purpose of both the institute bills is to set up new and more effective agencies for treating youth charged with and convicted of crime. The need for more scientific and uniformly efficient agencies is assumed. While no statistical evidence of increasing crime in the youth ages is presented, it is pointed out that our largest and most important group of offenders occurs between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one, a group which comprises only one eighth of our population over fourteen years old, but accounts for one fifth of our serious criminals. "More criminals are made than unmade by our present system of handling youthful offenders," the committee asserts. Reformatory and prison records show that neither the threat nor the experience of punishment stops youths from committing crimes. The repeaters start as youths and continue their crime careers on into adulthood.

There can be no doubt of the seriousness of this problem. Many agencies, public and private, fully aware of its seriousness, have been at work for many years developing more effective systems of probation and parole especially for youth, establishing new and better types of reformative institutions promoting the extension of clinical service in the courts. Efforts, partially realized in a few cities, to establish separate adolescent courts or to extend further the more scientific, social processes of the juvenile court, represent further developments in the same direction. Un-

deniably progress has been made toward the solution of the problem.

The issue raised by the American Law Institute in its model bills is not, as stated by the committee, whether or not we shall substitute individual, reformative methods of treatment for old penal methods. That issue has been joined and progressive workers in this field are practically unanimous in their advocacy of methods of social treatment designed to adjust or reform the individual, rather than the use of punishment *per se*. Our criminal laws and procedures have been greatly modified by the introduction of probation, the indeterminate sentence, reformatories and work camps, and finally parole—all methods founded on the principle of corrective treatment. The issue raised by the committee is whether the establishment of a new type of treatment board and a separate youth court is practicable, and whether it will advance the methods of individual, social treatment more rapidly than the continued extension and improvement of present instrumentalities.

THE major new proposal of the Youth Correction Authority Act is the establishment in each state of a statewide treatment board, to be known as the Youth Correction Authority, made up of three persons appointed by the governor for nine-year overlapping terms. No qualifications for the members are specified in the bill, but legal, administrative, educational or correctional experience is suggested as a requirement.

Youths above the juvenile court age and up to twenty-one, convicted in any criminal court, must be committed to this board. The only exceptions are offenders who may be sentenced to death or life imprisonment and lesser offenders who, under the law, may be fined or sentenced to short jail terms—a limit of thirty days is suggested. Juvenile courts may commit youths of sixteen or over, but it is not made mandatory upon the board to accept them.

The board is given complete control over the youths committed to it. It is required to investigate and examine them periodically; it controls their detention after commitment, *but not before*. It is given the power which courts now have to commit to existing institutions, and it may release the offender "under supervision," (amounting to a system of probation, but not so called). It may discharge cases at any time. All power to grant probation, or even to suspend sentence in these cases, is removed from the judges. In the words of Judge Bok, it is desired to "clip the wings of the judges," to limit their work in these cases strictly to judicial determinations.

After a youth has been committed to the board, its control over him may continue up to the age of twenty-five or even longer, with the right of periodic review by the court. Appeals are provided for in all cases.

The authority is empowered "to the extent that necessary funds are available" to establish and operate places of detention, examination, and confinement, and "other correctional or segregative facilities, institutions or agencies," also to employ its own staff for investigation,