

GENERAL.

Great efforts are being made to prevent young boys or girls who may have, without any really criminal intent, committed some breach of the law from becoming associated with confirmed wrongdoers; and the movement appears worldwide to protect the child from the effects of bad surroundings, to take care of its physical and mental health, and watch over its growth until able to fight its own battles in the world; and the results are truly marvellous, showing very clearly that environment and proper training counteract in many cases the tendencies which may have been inherited or acquired in infancy.

It is essential that power be given to Magistrates to commit children—

- First, to reformatory institutions until they are capable of standing alone; and
 Second, if it is found in certain cases that they are still likely to be a source of contamination to others, and incapable of self-control, they should be removed from the reformatories to other institutions, to be detained as long as may be necessary.

One of the most important efforts must be considered the Children's Courts, which aim at preventing a child from commencing a career of crime, and, if necessary, consign it to the care of an institution where it will be taught some means of obtaining a livelihood and becoming a useful citizen. The most notable of the Children's Courts is that presided over by Judge Lindsey, of Detroit, who says on the subject, "The State is making magnificent efforts to provide for the intellectual welfare of its children, but it can never hope to get the best results from its labour unless this be supplemented by equal efforts for their moral welfare. The church and the school have a tremendous work; but when these and the home fail, the State is called in—and, after all, the State is above the parent. It is its duty to see that the child is well cared for. It can and does send the child to school or keep it from work, whether the parent consents or not. It does not ask the consent of the parent. The parent merely has the consent of the State to the custody of the child so long as it is to the child's best interest; and, because of natural affection, it is simply assumed that it is till the contrary be shown. The State respects and encourages these natural ties, but parents have not owned their children since the days of Roman slavery, and when the parents shirk or fail and their influence degrades the child, their right to its care and custody may be forfeited to the State. Then the State must compel the parents to do their duty: in many cases it must assist; and, purely in the interests of the child, it must often properly and necessarily assume (not usurp) these functions. In doing this let it discharge its duty as nearly as possible as a wise and loving parent should—with patience, with justice, with charity, with love, and yet with firmness and with strength."

I am aware that New Zealand is following a forward policy both in its Children's Courts and Probation Act; but I think that in both cases the ideas might be carried still further than at present obtains. The Children's Court might be held right away from the Police Court and its associations, under the presidency of some person specially appointed to deal with such cases, and no publicity be given to the proceedings. With regard to the Probation Act, some of the ideas conveyed in the following article might apply:

FIRST OFFENDERS.

(By Frederick Kohler, Chief of Police of the City of Cleveland, Ohio.)

"For many years I have given considerable study and observation to numerous arrests made for minor offences. I cannot see that these wholesale arrests did any good. The number of them did not diminish; it increased. And I found that the arrests not only did not produce good results: they did harm. They brought disgrace, humiliation, and suffering to countless innocent persons in no way responsible for the acts of a thoughtless, careless, mischievous, or even, if you will, a malicious first offender. Think a moment, and you will see out of your own experience how true this is. Certainly it was borne upon me that something was wrong.

"I found daily at the stations relatives and friends in tears seeking the release of some prisoner, who, when I inquired, proved to be not so very, very bad. In Police Court the next day I saw old and feeble parents, weeping wives with crying babies in their arms and very often other children clinging at their sides—all there to witness the degradation of those they loved. And what was the result? A hasty trial, and, since the offence was usually trivial, the prisoner was discharged. Good! But all that suffering was in vain. Sometimes a friend interceded in the prisoner's behalf, and he was released. Perhaps a lesson in 'pull.' Perhaps the prisoner and his friends perjured themselves—you know how often that happens—and a greater crime was committed. Again, sometimes the offender was fined. That was a "result"; but who paid? The weeping mother and children—they were robbed of the necessities of life; and the only gain was a few paltry dollars paid into the City Treasury. Was there one particle of real good accomplished by this process? Watching it all, as I did, day after day, I answer, No; and I say now emphatically, No.

"Now, questioning these unfortunates, it struck me that most of them did what they did through thoughtlessness, natural passion, or in a spirit of frolic or mischief. It seemed to me that this should be understood. It didn't seem at first to be the policeman's duty to study the cases and to use discretion. That was the Judge's part. But, following the cases from the time the persons were thrown into prison to their arraignment before a Police Magistrate, I noticed that