

The WOMAN'S COURT

By EMILY F. MURPHY

(JANEY CANUCK)

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The WOMAN'S COURT

By EMILY F. MURPHY

(JANEY CANUCK)

The establishment of courts for the hearing of women is a reform that all Canada should adopt. That it will ultimately come to pass that all Canadian cities will have women's courts seems certain. Consequently Mrs. Murphy's story of the establishment of the first court of the kind has an historic as well as practical interest.

How strange
And inexplicable a thing is law;
How curious its whys and why-nots.

—Wilcox.

A while ago, I said my experience had taught me that the older women who were convicted of offences in the Police Court, or Court of Summary Jurisdiction, were found to be difficult of reclamation. This applies only to women charged under causes relating to prostitution.

It must be remembered that numerous highly respectable women are summoned to court for breaches of the Motor Vehicle Act; refusal to pay their dog tax, or for keeping their children out of school. As a usual thing, these ladies are highly indignant and take a long time to get over what they consider a personal and unpardonable affront.

Sudermann was not wholly correct when he said, "The losing side always philosophizes."

There are others summoned for assault who ordinarily are quite law-abiding citizens. When a duologue occurs between neighbors in a Berserker mood, and they get to calling each other "a Hun," or a "putty-faced Galician"—both claiming to be pure-bred Polish—it is only to be expected that a hair-pulling

encounter will ensue and that, ultimately, an array of legal talent will be engaged to set the matter right in the eyes of all the world.

Surely, the fact that these women refuse to lie under odious titles is proof positive of their respectability.

It might be said in passing, that it is from their experiences in Court that these foreign women usually deduct their ideas of the Canadian Government. They come in contact with officialdom at no other place, except the post office and the customs. Although obliged to penalize them, the woman magistrate does well, therefore, to send them away with their self-respect intact and no root of bitterness in their hearts. This result cannot be achieved when cases are hurried through, and I am one who is fully persuaded the result is worth achieving, and that there is no valid reason anyway why the cases pertaining to foreigners should be hurried through, or heard with impatience.

Or it occasionally occurs that accidental intoxication happens in the best-regulated circles, and she would be an inconsiderate and inexperienced Courthouse keeper who failed to take cognizance of this fact. The question put by Horace the Roman poet about two thousand years ago, still remains pertinent: "Whom have not plentiful cups made eloquent?"

It was only the other day that a vivacious old Frenchwoman, whose name does not matter, told in court how she was playing the piano for a dance and to relieve her thirst drank plentifully of the lemonade. "Ah-h, Madame! I tak' onlee t'ree small glasses—mabbe four—I dunno. Eet ees so sweet, so delicious, so cool! But, ma foi! by'n-by, I am ver' hot—so ver', ver' hot an' my eye'hes, dey so bad, teel key'ses of de pee-ah-no, dey stand up like teeth an' would not hold on a min'te.

"What happen more? I weel spick right out and tell, Madame.

"I leave de pee-ah-na ver' queeck, an' run home hard, but dese teeth follow aftaire me like ten t'ousand crazee devils, till I have bad think in all my head.

"More I cannot tell to you, onlee de poleece have bring me here. Mabbe, Madame, you mak' arrange for me to go to my ol' man dees aftairenoon. I make de bet I nevaire come back once more."

And Madame lets her go, for it is quite evident no punishment or rehabilitation is needed in such a case.

With prostitution, however, the work of rehabilitation presents many difficulties, and is discouraging in the extreme. This is largely due to the fact



Emily Murphy

that women who lead immoral lives almost invariably become addicted to the use of habit-forming drugs.

Drug Deterioration

Some of these, with a twist of pain about their mouths, have told me they would be wholly unequal to the physical strain without taking opium or cocaine.

Maybe this is the reason, or maybe these women are the dupes of the “cadets” or panderers, who prey upon them, and persuade them that drugs are necessary in order that the women may be kept steadily to their evil practices.



A group of prominent Western women, including Mrs. Murphy (left foreground), and Mrs. McClung (extreme right).

Be this as it may, it is undoubtedly true that fallen women are largely influenced in their mental outlook by those blackguardly persons who are responsible for the white slave traffic. Almost every girl has been persuaded into the belief that she is an outcast and irretrievably lost, and that no respectable occupation is open to her. This is one of the hardest impressions to root from her mind. But this is not to be wondered at when many of the most excellent Christian women have been hypnotized into thinking the same thing about erring girls. It seems to be an inherited idea that is hard to shake off.

Adelaide Proctor gave it the lie direct when she said:

“No star is ever lost we once have seen,
We always may be what we might have been.”

As day by day, in the Woman's Court, one listens to the soft voices and looks into the flower-like faces of young girls who have fallen into wrong-doing, and who are variously charged as "inmates," or "night-walkers," one must perforce recall to mind Charles Lamb's description of the tutelar genius of childhood, the half earth-born one, who in heaven went lame and lonely.

In studying the causes which underlie this evil, the magistrate will often find it heart-breaking to learn how small a cause has brought about a girl's downfall. Such a tragedy occurred lately through a mistress locking the nursemaid out all night because the girl returned home late. Apart from the callousness of such a proceeding, the lack of imagination displayed by this mistress amounts almost to a crime. Statistics from the United States show that domestic service is the most dangerous form of employment for girls, 80 per cent. of the downfalls coming from this form of employment.

Or, maybe, it has just happened that the girl "hadn't the price" for her lodgings and so, for a few cents, has been drawn into a life of infamy and disease. There are some of us who think—and may it happen that you do also—that it is an odious scandal for huge sums to be expended on town halls or other municipal buildings, where, in many towns, there is no place in which a homeless girl can sleep in safety. It is a matter of gratification that at the present time, a woman from the city of Edmonton has been employed by the Dominion Government to investigate the conditions relating to the housing of girls in Canadian cities and to report on the same.

In working for their rehabilitation, the friends of the court aim to keep present in mind the fact that the great majority of these girls entered into the life of vice before the age of eighteen, without the realization of what was before them, and that in consequence every effort should be made to have the age of consent raised. In every country the age of consent marks the standard of its morality.

The Work of Rehabilitation

At this juncture, the reader is probably saying that the work of rehabilitation is not the magistrate's work at all. Strictly speaking, it is not, but it must be borne in mind that we speak of women's courts, and that no ordinarily decent woman could sit, day after day, coldly passing judgment upon persons of her own sex, without making some attempt, however slight, to sting them awake; to pull them out of the slough and to generally back them up in any attempt at repairing their broken lives.

Besides, it may happen that the Magistrate who has no time for the reading of romance, or the seeing of plays, may find the thrill of the drama in watching these struggles for betterment; the unfolding of a girl's potentialities; or the happy ending of a tragic episode.

It is plain, too, that a girl is more amenable to advice on these occasions than at any other moment of her life, and more inclined to take advantage of a fresh start in life with work suitable to her qualifications. Perhaps, in all the world, there is nothing so desolate and forlorn—or, indeed, more desperate—as a girl who for the first time stands alone in the prisoner’s dock as a convicted criminal. She may resent advice, or what in her “gay” moments she might call interference or patronage, but at this moment it seems like a look into clear open skies for some woman to put an arm around her and ask if she wants another chance to make good in a fair field.

This offer may come from the courthouse keeper, or from one of the other housekeepers who has been listening intently to the story while she only appeared to be knitting a khaki-colored sock, but who was actually thinking a way out for the girl, with herself in the rôle of a bigger sister.

More than one so-called “society” woman has slipped into the *Black Maria* beside a prisoner, or into the cells, where they might talk the matter over and come to a conclusion. This has been the beginning of better things for many girls, but it is not well to be easily discouraged in that quite a few of the girls, prefer things which are ugly and obscene and, like Madame de Warens, the mistress of Rousseau, regard virtue as a mere social prejudice. Vain, vulgar and intemperate, and bearing the physical stigmata of their type, they are willing to sacrifice the future—even length of days—for the flare and flutter of the swallow-pit described as the underworld.

In Cases of Doubt

A while ago, I spoke of the girl convict standing in the prisoner’s dock. Give me leave to correct myself. In the women’s court we have no dock. The prisoner sits in an arm chair in front of the magistrate, standing to be sworn and to hear the minute of adjudication.

He or she is to be held innocent until the case is disposed of, and is afforded the consideration due to innocent persons. But even if people have committed an offence, and have been apprehended for the same, there does not seem to be any valid reason why they should be coarsely “hustled,” or dealt with unkindly.

A year ago, while in Toronto, I copied a letter in Osgoode Hall, in an office there, which bears out this idea, and have the copy close by my desk. It was written to the Honorable William N. Ferguson, Judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Ontario, by a well-known poet-barrister, on the occasion of Mr. Ferguson’s elevation to the Bench. It reads thus:—

“My dear Pat:

I helped to make you a Bencher. I unwittingly assisted in elevating you to the Bench; now let me speak from a safe position.

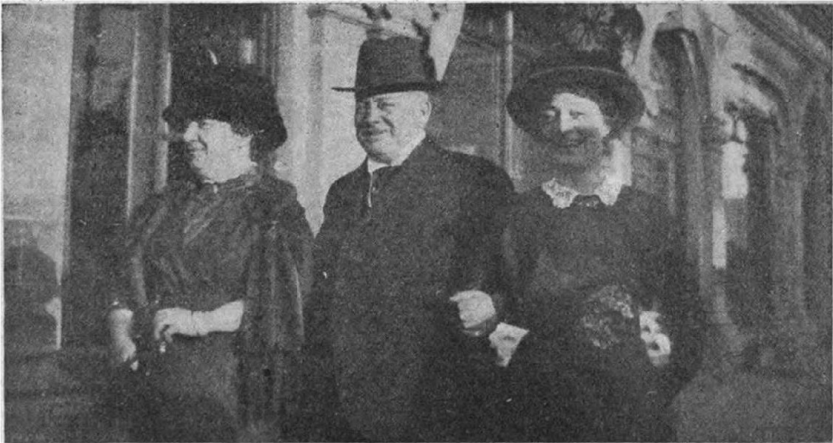
“You are the President of a wicked Tory club. You are evidently the member of a Church containing a large percentage of wicked men, and you know you are the friend and protector of the wicked. I, therefore, ask you not to forget your old friends when you come into your kingdom.

“On the Bench be fair, but in cases of doubt lean somewhat to the wicked; they are grateful and human people and will appreciate your efforts.

“With genuine congratulations, believe me,

Yours truly,
JAS. HAVERSON.”

Give me leave also, to go back to the knitting of the khaki-colored sock in order that I may explain the “atmosphere” which prevails, for I know of no other court where a similar one may be sensed. Almost every woman brings a piece of needlework with her, so that any female who comes here to be tried, feels that, at least, she is among her peers and free from the leering, lecherous “rounders” who frequent these places to satisfy their odious curiosity, or to lay plans of luring them back to their old haunts.



A snapshot taken on Christmas Day, 1914, on Joseph Avenue, Edmonton—Mrs. Murphy, T. R. Ferguson, K.C., Toronto, and Mrs. Ferguson-Barke, Toronto.

Unless she is a very old offender, the name of the woman is seldom mentioned in the newspaper, so that her “pals” do not know where she has been sent, or how long she is to remain. When she does come out of her place of incarceration, it is a trusted woman who meets her at the railway station and

takes her to a home, or to a place of work that has been pre-arranged between them.

Then, too, by saving her from publicity, the woman offender is not forever marked as “fair game” for the convenience of scampish, industrious sinners of either sex.

Maybe, some day, we will think it baneful and shameworthy that the name of any offender against the criminal laws should be given to the public. Where the convict pays the full penalty to the State, nothing further is owing to anyone, except that the convict reform. This can best be achieved by a merciful shielding of the offender from all curious, critical, or calculating eyes.

Where Are the Mothers?

The question will be probably asked here, “Where are the mothers of the girls who appear in court?”

Anyone who has read novels knows the answer. The heroine seldom has a mother. She could not have, for, otherwise, there could be no adventures, or what reviewers call “history.” Browning calls attention to this fact in the line, “I was so young. I loved him so. *I had no mother.* God forgot me, and I fell.”

Or if the mother should happen to exist, you may know in these cases, that she is a shilly-shally person either utterly ignorant or utterly indifferent to the life led by her own daughter.

While the police officers tell in court of their taking a raw, unthinking girl out of vile surroundings, one is amazed to observe how her thickly-stupid mother will sit by and listen, apparently unmoved and uninterested. She seems to be all marrow and no bone. Indeed, one longs greatly to affront the woman because of her inanity and apparent uselessness—and one sometimes does affront her.

Some of the mothers do not even know what wages their daughters are receiving or where they work. This is especially true of those women who bring their daughters to the city, drop them at the market place, and bid them find a situation.

It has been estimated in the United States, and is probably true in Canada, that more than 50 per cent. of the girls who enter places of prostitution come from the farms and villages to find work in the city.

“Better Baby Contests” are all very well in their way, but quite a few of us would like to see a “Better Parents’ movement.”

Speaking of farmers’ daughters, it might be well to note here that, in all ages, these rural girls have been the prey of young “bloods” from the city, and it is

high time the farmers woke up and put trespass notices and scarecrows on their homes instead of in their fields.

Should Women Be Fined?

One of the most vexatious questions in the Woman's Court is the fining of misdemeanants. If a girl be fined as a vagrant, or night-walker, and pays the amount, the State virtually becomes a sharer in the traffic. Her fine becomes a license fee until she is again apprehended, when another fine is paid. I know a woman who has paid eight such fees into court.

Moreover, this fee or fine is usually borrowed by her from the reprobate male persons with whom she is best acquainted, so that the girl-woman steps out of court with the entangling noose tied more tightly about her neck. This debt, therefore, is one which is paid, re-paid and sur-paid. It must be borne in mind, too, that the amount she borrows frequently includes her counsel's fee, as well as the cost of subsequent appeal proceedings, and that sometimes this amount runs into several hundred dollars.

Yet, on the other hand, until we have a system of industrial schools and farms, it is doubtful whether a term in jail is preferable to a fine, in that the woman only seems to brush up her technique in the guard-room, and to make a new circle of still more graceless acquaintances.

Or it may be what we need is a better adult probation system, and a more intensive study of the problems which criminals present. Our present method is as if we sent a small-pox case, a fractured limb, and a maternity case to a hospital and gave all the same treatment, making them stay for an allotted time, without any consideration as to whether they have recovered or not.

Our curious callousness towards evils which have been long entrenched is the only explanation one can offer for this strange and faulty practice.

Still, the situation is not entirely hopeless in that a clearing-house for males has lately been provided at Sing Sing Prison where, after a man has been subjected to a mental and physical examination, and his life-history intensively studied, efforts are made to rehabilitate him in the light of his disabilities, capabilities and adaptabilities.

Sometime, we may catch this idea in Canada and apply it, not only to our prisoners, but to all insane persons. Not only would this method be a saving of our human material and the establishment of our social security but, because of the vast expense of criminality, a matter of good business. It has been conservatively estimated that the cost of the average felon for apprehension, indictment, detention or other disposal, amounts to one thousand dollars. To say anything further about our foolish policy would be to merely elaborate the obvious.

God's Foolish Ones

Without a doubt, the most painful cases which come to the Court of Summary Jurisdiction, are those which have to do with insanity. The treatment of these is a melancholy task, like wiping rouge off a dead face. In our court no "Information and Complaint" is read but the patient is told, if she be sane enough to understand, that she has come here that we might hear what the doctors and her friends say on oath about her mental health, and that she has no cause to be afraid.

Recently, an aged foreigner who was brought in, crouched in a corner, trembling with fear, and refused to be placed in a chair. When I had taken her hand and called her "*Mutter*," she came with me and was seated.

The evidence showed that she had reared ten sons and one daughter, and had spent eighteen years working on a Canadian steading. Through a foolish investment in city real-estate—or shall we say un-real estate?—her husband was obliged to mortgage the farm heavily, and it was this fact which preyed upon the woman's mind until she became demented.

Presently, she began to wander through the courtroom singing a song of her childhood, and fingering things like a curious child. "Thou art a fragrant flower" (this is what she sang) "so beautiful, so sweet."

Forgetting the evidence, I could not but follow the song, for had I not learned these very words myself, as a little girl, from Fraulein Ana, in the old Wykeham Hall at Toronto, that is close by the Sea of Ontario?

Perhaps, this was why I was not visibly shocked like the clerk, interpreter, orderly, Herr Pastor, and the weeping daughter when "the defendant," stealing up by the big official chair, quietly kissed me on the cheek.

Pouf! she might kiss "the court" if she wanted to, which may only go to show that a woman magistrate is incapable of upholding the time-honored dignity of the Bench in the generally approved manner of the male occupants thereof.

Another woman, who went insane this summer because of financial worries, moved us all to tears and caused the most case-hardened counsel to come secretly and separately with requests that I would draw on them for whatever money I needed to set things right.

She was only twenty-three, this woe-fated girl, and had a four-year-old child whom she idolized, and for whom she labored almost unceasingly. Unfortunately she had purchased a cow and some poultry for which she went into debt, and which were kept at her little tar-paper shack.

I came first to know the woman because she couldn't pay her dog tax, and because she refused to give up the dog, it being her baby's playmate.

Together, she and I successfully withstood the license inspector of the city and the stiffish policemen on the beat without paying them so much as a single cent, and successfully we withstood the cow and poultry creditors with a few dollars, now and then, to assuage their wrath but, somehow or other, I was found napping when the supreme tragedy fell on the faithful young mother.

I had not seen her for a couple of months when, one morning, she appeared in court charged with attempting to murder her child. She told us how she had been unable to supply herself or her child with food, how the child's father, a young bachelor, offered her a way out by becoming his mistress and how, at last in fear and raw despair, she had placed the child on the railway track and, hiding herself behind a curtain in the shack, waited to see the little one crushed by the wheels of the engine.

"The train came nearer and nearer," she said in a voice that had been sharpened on the hardest edges of life, "and I kept watching every move when, all of a sudden if the little Rip didn't rise up and step clear of the whole thing."

It was here the sorely distraught mother burst into shrieks of demoniac laughter that caused one's blood to run cold. "That's what she did; she stepped clear of the train—the little Rip."

If one had time, one might write many pages on the brain-crazed women who come to the courts; things one has learned about them; of visiting them in the asylum, and of the changes that seem urgent in their treatment and care, but, as I said, it would take time and many pages. "God's children," we name these women, for so "the poor have called the mad."

Domestic Difficulties

While strictly speaking, it is not the work of the magistrate, yet much of one's time is taken up in adjusting domestic difficulties out of court.

When a man, either in a high or low position, gives his wife a beating; that is to say when her "natural protector" proceeds to break her protected head, she comes to the office of the women's magistrate and tells on him. She wants to have him arrested immediately and given severe punishment. Knowing she will be a greater sufferer through the consequent publicity, and through her husband losing his position, we talk the matter over as coolly as the circumstances permit, and in the end apply some other remedy equally effective, but less public. In truth, I have never officially taken such a case for, where a settlement has failed, the matter is turned over to my experienced and very able coadjutor, Mr. P. C. H. Primrose, the Magistrate in the Men's Police Court, who is the

positive terror of all husbands falling into the error of one-sided or rancorous reasoning.

There is a tendency in this northern country, where the foreigner beats his wife about once a week, to look lightly upon these officers, but old Carlyle, over in England, was absolutely right when he said, "There is not a red Indian hunting by Lake Winnipeg can quarrel with his squaw, but the whole world must smart for it; will not the price of beaver rise?"

During the war, and at the conclusion thereof, nearly all magistrates have had many domestic difficulties to settle, especially in the reconciliation of husbands and wives, the data of those wandering affections would strain even the pen of the Recording Angel.

Sometimes, in less responsible moment, one is inclined to think the trouble with certain marriages is that light-headed, fickle folk are permitted to live together as a matter-of-course, instead of meeting clandestinely. Men were always queer anyway.

In bringing about these reconciliations, a magistrate might discuss at great length the application of the different arguments, and how each had been found to operate. The subject presents so many aspects, and is of such vital human interest, that the ink of one's pen fairly bubbles to spread itself thereon.

Ah, well! as I said a while ago, it is not wise to tell all one knows.

Magistrate of the Future

It may be that in the future the work of magistrates will relate more to the family and its problems, and how to keep it together as a unit, instead of putting the miscreant through a hideous mill, which runs into dollars and days, they will receive a more individualized treatment. The magistrate will be a specialist who will study cases, group them, make deductions, and intelligently apply the remedy. Or to put it more plainly, the so-called "police court" will be a C.C.S.; that is a Casualty Clearing Station; a kind of hospital where the X-ray is turned on, looking towards a cure. The success of a magistrate will gradually come to be considered as to the fewness of his or her cases, and not as to their multiplicity. Judges of Superior Courts receive white gloves when they have no docket; the same should apply to magistrates, though speaking for myself, I would prefer a white lace collar or a Maltese lace handkerchief. Who ever saw a magistrate have the time to wear white gloves anyway?

In taking her place as a magistrate, a woman need not fret unduly about her ignorance of procedure. If she be studious, and have a teachable spirit she will find that the clerk of the court, the crown prosecutors, the Deputy Attorney-General, his solicitors, the librarian at the Law Courts, and nearly all the barristers in the city, ready to help and advise.

As a matter of fact, they will probably get to have a kind of paternal interest in her work and, on occasion, will even take abuse from her right in the courtroom. At least, they will if they are like the fine-fibred fellows of Alberta.

The Juvenile Court

The term “Juvenile” Court is a misnomer in that many adults are tried therein for contributing to the delinquency of a child under the Provisions of the Juvenile Delinquent Act of the Dominion; or to its neglect under the provisions of the Children’s Protection Act of the Province.

The Dominion Act, in providing for the establishment of Juvenile Courts, defines a delinquent as “any child that violates the provisions of the Criminal Code, or any Dominion or Provincial Statute, or any by-law or ordinance of any municipality, for which violation punishment by fine or imprisonment is awarded; or who is liable by reason of any other act to be committed to any industrial school or juvenile reformatory.” All children under sixteen are to be tried in a juvenile court.

A “neglected child” under the Provincial Act does not necessarily mean one who is unprovided for from a material standpoint but who by reason of the neglect, drunkenness or other vice of its parents is growing up without salutary control or in circumstances exposing such child to an idle or dissolute life.

All children under eighteen are amenable under this act. Adult persons who, by their acts, contribute to the delinquency or neglect of a child are liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding \$500.00 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year, or to both fine and imprisonment.

The Criminal Code states that *“the care and custody and discipline of a juvenile delinquent shall approximate as nearly as may be that which should be given by its parents, and that as far as practicable, every juvenile delinquent shall be treated, not as a criminal, but as a mis-directed child, and one needing aid, encouragement, help, and assistance.”*

This Act was passed in 1908, but as far as I know, there has been no public tribute paid to the framers of this Act. This is a belated acknowledgment but my hat is at their feet—Western sombrero to be sure, but perhaps the more comely ones from the East will cover it.

State, the Ultimate Parent

While the primary right of the custody of the child is in its parents, the State claims to be its ultimate parent, and may deprive the parents of the custody when they have forfeited their right by some act of omission or commission under the law.

If at all possible, forfeiture is to be avoided and if the child, after being in court, is permitted to return home it must be under the guidance of a probation officer who is the representative of the court.

Probation is really a “trying out” of the child under judicial guardianship and is only applied to delinquent children. In the case of neglected children they are the parents who are being tried out. Neglected children are spoken of as being “under supervision.”

In dealing with delinquent children, everything that would suggest custody is studiously avoided, and the patrol wagon is never used. The officers who deal with them wear no uniforms. The Remand Home is called “The Shelter,” and here kindness is the keynote.

In the Juvenile Court all persons are for the child. Strictly speaking, there is no prosecution; only a hearing.

White Flag Over Court

The Counsel who has been engaged by misguided parents to conduct their case, finds out presently that the court is under a white flag, and that the court officials are really more interested in the child’s well-being than he, himself.

A delinquent child may be discharged; may be placed on probation; may be sent to the country or placed in an institution, or if it be shown that its parents contributed to its delinquency, it can be taken from them entirely and placed in a foster home.

The Feeble-Minded

Much of the delinquency comes from feeble-mindedness, in which cases to endeavor to make anything out of the children by probation seems like threshing out mere straw. There are passive wrong-doers, or the “born-tired.” It may be said of them as of Jacob’s son, Reuben, “Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.”

On the other hand, I have found delinquency to result from acute mental activity, arising from an ambition to attract attention, and to “make a mark” in the world.

Sometimes, a boy does wrong wilfully for fear of being thought “a sissy.” The average boy has no desire to be a horrible example of the virtues. He prefers to be irreligiously comfortable. Or a little girl who ought to be playing with dolls will be desirous, above all else, of showing that she too, is “a good scout.” It was only the other day that I declared such a scout, aged sixteen, to be a neglected child, and a ward of the Department. At the same time a similar finding was made in the matter of her daughter, aged five months.

Property-Sense Lacking

Other children do wrong and steal because they lack the property-sense. This “swiping,” as they call it, is largely due to their living in flats and other places as tenants.

In order to deal with delinquents effectually, it is necessary to consider their cases individually and, to this end, careful studies are made by the officials before being presented to the judge of the children’s court, special attention being given to family history and environment. It is quite true what the Hindoos say, that ten children have eleven dispositions.

One of the most difficult things in a juvenile court is to secure the entire confidence of the child so that she may talk freely. This takes time. You must retie her hair ribbon; admire her new shoes, discuss the stitches in her sweater, and find out her standard at school. Even then, she may remain afraid and withhold the light of her countenance from you.

Flushing the Game

Last winter, two little girls were left alone for some months on a bush homestead, forty miles from a railroad, and with no near neighbors. Their brother was overseas with the fighting forces; their mother was dead; their father was serving a term in jail. Hearing of their plight, two probation officers were sent from the city to bring them in. There was no motor trail to the farm, and the officers were obliged to walk a mile through the forest. Being strangers, they unintentionally flushed the game, so that for two hours the scared children dodged around the trees before being captured. The girls wore overalls that were not entirely overalls, and their little hands were hard as horse’s hoofs.

It took a long time for us to establish relations in court but, ultimately, we came to a perfect understanding through my expressing a curiosity concerning their horses: whether or not these were “single-footers,” and whether they balked on their front or their hind legs. You would never credit the freshet of talk that issued forth in the ten rapturous minutes following.

One would like to say much regarding the work of the juvenile court, which is, after all, the most interesting, and to my thinking, the most important of all courts, but it must suffice to say that it aims:

- (1) To preserve the home as a unit.
- (2) To provide good homes for children who are without them.
- (3) To be a real parent to the neglected or delinquent child.
- (4) By reformatory work outside the prisons, to prevent these being filled.
- (5) To punish those beasts in the human jungle who destroy children.
- (6) To make the Canada of to-morrow an ideal state.

Oh, yes! there is another benefit in the juvenile court: it helps to wipe from the heart of the magistrate, hardness and suspicion. From restraining fierce folk and wild, there is the likelihood of becoming fierce yourself. This is why, in China, they call the magistrate "the old tiger."

Women Police Officials

In the Women's Police Court at Edmonton, the orderly is a woman who has had many years of experience as matron at the Headquarters, in Alberta, in the Royal North-West Mounted Police. She accompanies and cares for all insane women who come to the court; serves summons, and frequently makes arrests.

Two women were recently appointed constables on the City Police Force with full powers. Their work is to be of a preventative and protective nature. Their special "beats" are in the cabarets, dance-halls, and on the streets after theatre hours of night. There is no doubt, too, that they will upon occasion assist the morality squad of the Force in special detective work.

The women probation officers of the city and for the Province, who are attached to the Department of Neglected Children, have also full constabulary powers. When not preparing cases for the court, their time is spent in supervising the wards of the Department who are under probation; are out at service; or who have been adopted into foster homes. The tribulations of the old woman who lived in her shoe fades out of remembrance when one considers the difficulties with children, encountered daily, by these fine and faithful women.

Recently, the Local Council of Women requested that I be appointed a police Commissioner for the City and Province but for several reasons, I declined to accept the nomination. This is mentioned to show that the equal status of women in police affairs is rapidly becoming established in Alberta.

The indirect benefits accruing from the court are many. One of these consists in the fact that the women, hearing the cases without embarrassment, get knowledge of the provisions of the Criminal Code, the Provincial Statutes, and the City By-Laws. They also find out what is happening in the cabarets, bars, dance-halls, places of resort, opium dens, improperly conducted lodging-houses, and in the streets, and are accordingly able to take definite action wherever required. The results have been highly gratifying.

Courts as a Spiritual Force

It is true, there were times in the last three years when I have thought the women of the city were not interested in the work of the court as its urgency seemed to demand: times when I have felt alone and over-worked.

But, one day, I was startled to find how much the women valued their court, not as an exemplification of women's rights, but as a spiritual force in the scheme of things. I found out that at their weekly services in the churches, they were offering prayers that all things which were pure, lovely, and of good report, might be demonstrated in my life, and that I might have the requisite strength to carry on the work. Than this, nothing more beautiful has ever happened me.

My own petition? Do you care to know? It is from *Gitanjali* by Tagore; "that I may never lose the bliss of the touch of the one in the play of the many."

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Some photographs have been enhanced to be more legible.

Illustrations have been relocated due to using a non-page layout.

A cover was created for this ebook which is placed in the public domain.

[The end of *The Woman's Court* by Emily Murphy]