

TO THE
NATIONAL PRISON CONGRESS

HELD AT

Baltimore, Md., December 3--7, 1892.

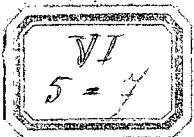
A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE WORK OF

THE HENRY WATSON CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY

AND THE

SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN
FROM CRUELTY AND IMMORALITY.

BALTIMORE:
PRESS OF JOHN W. KENNEDY CO.
No. 405 Water Street,
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*To the National Prison Congress, held at Baltimore,
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Prior to the year Eighteen Hundred and Sixty, there existed in our city, very few institutions for homeless and friendless children.

It was in that year that some philanthropists of our city, while visiting the jail and penitentiary, saw that many small children were committed to those institutions, by the courts and magistrates for petty offences. This course was found to exercise a very demoralizing effect upon their tender minds.

In order to prevent such young delinquents from becoming hardened criminals, Messrs. Goldsborough S. Griffith, the late Richard M. Janney and others, met for consultation in regard to devising some better provision for this unfortunate class.

It was seen that among those incarcerated, were very small children, just beginning a course of crime; apt scholars, if left under the instruction of the habitues of these institutions, but with, it was believed, enough of the germ of good remaining in them to produce beneficial results, could they be removed to some place where their surroundings would be of a better character.

This subject weighed heavily upon the hearts of the above named gentlemen, who after careful thought, called a meeting at the Central Presbyterian Church, on the eighteenth day of September, Eighteen Hundred and Sixty, when this matter was duly considered and a society proposed to be organized to care for such delinquents and the poor, the neglected, the orphan, and such as have no proper guardians or homes or means of support.

An officer of the Md. Prisoners Aid Association gave a very interesting description of "The Children's Aid Society," of New York, which he had visited a short time previous.

The New York Society, he said, was annually sending many

destitute children to comfortable homes in the far west. A large proportion of these children when removed from the degrading influences surrounding them, turn out well, and become good boys and girls.

In Baltimore there were multitudes of neglected children growing up in vice and crime, who should be reclaimed by providing them with Christian homes and proper care and protection. In conclusion the speaker urged the formation of a "Children's Aid Society" in Baltimore, as the means of saving thousands of helpless children from ruin and degradation. Such was the beginning of the present "Henry Watson Children's Aid Society," of Baltimore, having for its object the reception of destitute and homeless children, ranging in age from six to fifteen years, upon their legal committal by the courts, magistrates and parents, and procuring for such Christian homes in the country, under the protection of said Society.

Since its organization this Society has received under its fostering care in

"THE CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT,"

two thousand five hundred and eighteen children, for whom two thousand one hundred and forty-seven country homes have been secured, for whose protection therein. We in the infancy of our Society, found it advisable to establish "Local Committees" within the various counties of our state, which proved a decided advantage in the securing of suitable homes. Such as were not sent to country homes, were in time either returned to their parents or relatives.

In this connection it affords us extreme pleasure to express our belief, that ninety-five per cent. of the children placed out by this Society in the country homes turn out well, and of all received only two cases of arrest and incarceration coming within our knowledge, and these for minor offences; one of whom remained in prison but one day.

"The Children's Aid Society" was incorporated February 14th, 1862. This act was subsequently amended and confirmed by an Act passed February 12th, 1872, which changed the name of the Society to that of "The Henry Watson Children's Aid Society." This change of name was made in consideration of the Society's endowment by Mr. Henry Watson, with the munificent gift of one hundred thousand dollars. Previous to said endowment the Society was supported by voluntary contributions and donations, and by state and city appropriations.

The Society removed to its present "Home" on North Calvert Street February 1st, 1866, a large and commodious building affording better facilities for the prosecution of this work. The "Home" has been the temporary asylum for the numerous destitute children passing through its hands for country homes, wherein they are never lost sight of, but where it continues to guard and protect them through visits and correspondence, experienced teaching that the supervision of the children is a very important feature of the work.

In many cases the children, after rendering faithful service to their foster parents, marry and settle down as farmers or mechanics in the neighborhood of the homes of their adoption. In a word, nearly ninety per cent. of those attaining the age of eighteen years, when they are "free" from this Society, remain in the country.

The only desirable home for a child, is that in which its comfort and happiness are considered, and where it is received in Christian love and sympathy, with an earnest desire upon the part of its foster parents for its advancement spiritually, intellectually and physically, and not for cheap labor only.

In the selection of suitable homes, the utmost care and precaution are exercised; no applicant being furnished with a child until after the most searching inquiries. The requirements being as follows: Kind and respectful treatment, genteel and comfortable clothing, proper medical attendance and careful

nursing, three months schooling annually until sixteen years of age, with encouragement to study at home when not otherwise employed until eighteen years of age, religious and moral training and regular attendance upon church and Sunday-school of the parent's choice, with "freedom dues" to the amount of fifty dollars.

The other four departments of the Society are as follows:

THE GIRLS' HOME DEPARTMENT

was organized twenty years ago, October 1st, 1872, as a "Home" for respectable working girls, apprentices and others, unable to pay more than fifty cents to two dollars per week towards their board.

The above rates include medical attendance and medicine. This department, like all the departments of the Society, is entirely non-sectarian, and free from unnecessary restraints, enabling the inmates to learn by experience, as well as precept, what should constitute the practice and habit of daily life. The average of inmates accommodated by this department is twenty, under the motherly care of the excellent matron, Mrs. Charlotte Cornelius, whose discipline, mild but firm, is well adapted to the proper management of "The Home."

There is likewise under its care

"THE SEWING MACHINE DEPARTMENT"

which was organized February 13th, 1871, and is designed for the instruction of needy girls in the use of the various sewing machines now used in factories, and private families; thus fitting them, by the aid of our "Cutting and Fitting Department," for positions as operators, seamstress, and dressmakers. There are now upon the roll in this department, 107, with an average daily attendance of 73.

"THE CUTTING AND FITTING DEPARTMENT,"

above referred to, was organized June 1st, 1874, to supplement "The Sewing Machine Department." In this the above named

class of scholars, are, by the aid of charts, thoroughly instructed in all descriptions of dressmaking and seamstresses work. There are at present upon roll in this department 53 with an average daily attendance of 38.

In addition to the four departments above referred to, the work of which has been so briefly summarized, must be added another supplemental department for

THE TEMPORARY RELIEF AFFORDED TO TRANSIENT BOARDERS, homeless women, young girls and children, who are provided with a temporary Asylum; fed and lodged until they can secure situations, or reach their friends.

The Agent states that ninety per cent. of the children received by this Society, through its "Childrens Department," may trace their misfortunes to the intemperance of one, or both of their parents.

Mr. John Curlett has been the zealous, and efficient President of this Society since September 30th, 1882; and has devoted much time and attention to its interest, to which he has been very closely identified from the date of its incorporation.

Mr. William C. Palmer, whose appointment as the general Agent of the Society, was made at the time of its organization, has proven an efficient officer to the present day. Home located at 326 and 328 N. Calvert Street.

THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION
OF
Children from Cruelty and Immorality.

In addition to the benificent and extended child saving work prosecuted by the Henry Watson Children Aid Society, the Maryland Prisoner's Aid Association felt the importance of establishing another philanthropic enterprise, viz: to rescue children from the abodes of wickedness, crime, and the inhuman treatment of cruel parents, and prevent them from habitual begging or peddling on the streets or attending low variety theaters, dance houses, or places of immoral amusements.

The President of the Association had his mind greatly exercised about this matter and after mature thought decided to call a meeting, appointing a committee composed of Dr. John Morris, Rev. H. E. Johnson, D. D., Joseph Merrefield, Robert A. Taylor, Rev. J. B. Shoutz and G. S. Griffith, to consider the matter and after two preliminary meetings a permanent organization was effected on June 10th, 1878, to be known under the name of the "Society for the Protection of Children from Cruelty and Immorality," with Mr. Andrew Reid as President. The Board of Managers being composed principally of members of the Prisoner's Aid Association, Hon. C. Ridgely Goodwin has served as an efficient President for the past six years.

Subsequently a Bill was prepared and presented to the Legislature. The provisions of the Bill so commended themselves to the judgment of the members of the Legislature that it passed both Houses without any amendment and we feel assured that with the cooperation of our police officials that this law has and will continue to save our City and State the disgrace of having scores of children, both white and colored, ruined and inducted into lives of degradation and crime.

Since it was incorporated September 1878, its records show that its Agents have investigated 2556 cases, affecting 5563 children,

and they have rescued 1774 children, white and colored, from abodes of debauchery, crime, cruelty and immorality, and placed them where they may have a chance in the battle of life.

It is difficult to estimate the good resulting from this work. Outside of the recorded cases, from general knowledge, we have a right to infer, that there are hundreds of cases where cruelty and neglect are *prevented* by the action of the Society. If one child is rescued from a brothel, or taken from the custody of parents who have abused and neglected it, every family in the neighborhood is thereby warned, and will not render itself liable to prosecution, when the *power of the law* has been so clearly demonstrated. Prevention from cruelty is secured also by the enactment of laws, the penalty of which, if violated, is likely to be visited on the offenders, and not the least part of the work accomplished by the Society consists in procuring legislation in the interest of minors. It is generally conceded by persons familiar with such matters, that the State of Maryland occupies the most advanced position in the matter of this kind of legislation, and this is owing entirely to the efforts of the Society. The various statutory regulations, drafted and presented at different times to the Legislature by the Society, and afterwards enacted, will be briefly noted.

1. The *habeas corpus* law. The effect of this statute is to enable judges in all cases involving the custody of children to proceed with *sole regard* to the interest of the child and to do everything that a humane regard for the child's welfare requires, absolutely ignoring every other consideration. The entire subject is placed upon a strictly humanitarian basis.

2. The destitute and suffering minors' law. Under this act a child that is neglected or ill-treated can be immediately removed from its parent or other custodian, without any of those delays or formalities that are incident to ordinary legal proceedings.

3. A statute, exceedingly comprehensive in its terms, prohibiting the use of children for begging or the like.

4. A statute, exempting from vexations, suits or prosecutions, persons who "harbor" children, when there is reason to believe that they have been ill-treated by their parents.

5. A statute, prohibiting the selling or giving of cigars, cigarettes or tobacco to minors under fifteen years.

6. A statute, recently passed and very stringent, prohibiting the employment of children under sixteen years for more than ten hours a day.

7. A recent statute, authorizing courts to sentence minors to juvenile institutions instead of ordinary prisons.

8. An "adoption" law passed by the Legislature of 1892. A good work accomplished by the Society was the suppression of a notorious dance-house, that had been conducted for years in the most shameless and indecent manner in the very heart of the city. The Society's agent caused the proprietors of this place to be arraigned in the Criminal Court, where they were fined \$250 each, and sentenced to a term of six months in jail. In January, 1889, the agent was sent to Chesapeake Bay on a tug-boat, in company with a Deputy U. S. Marshal and a number of representatives of a New York paper, to arrest if possible a number of captains of oyster dredging vessels, who had for a long time defied the U. S. laws, and by their cruelty outraged humanity. There were many minors, as well as adults, who were illegally detained on board such vessels, and these the agent determined to rescue. The expedition was eminently successful. Most of the offending captains, for whom warrants were held by the U. S. Marshal were arrested, tried and convicted. A number of minors who had been brutally treated were released and brought to Baltimore. The success of the expedition struck terror to that class of offenders, and for a long time afterwards there was little complaint of such inhuman cruelty to men and boys employed on oyster boats on the Chesapeake Bay.

It will not be out of place to give a brief sketch from life of the first child received and cared for by the Society. A little

girl, nine years old, had been taken from an orphan asylum in Germany by a man who claimed to be her father. She was brought to Baltimore and treated in the most cruel manner. On one occasion she was kicked down a long flight of steps, which almost caused her death. She was compelled to sell oranges and apples on the street and in drinking saloons. Finally, the girl ran away and hid in the house of a neighbor, and then the matter was brought to the attention of the Society. The case was fully investigated by the agent, and was then taken before a magistrate, and at the trial the brutality of the child's custodian was fully shown. The little girl was removed from the man's control and committed to the Henry Watson Children's Aid Society, and by it placed in a Christian family. Her good conduct and truthfulness won the respect of all who knew her. At the age of 15 she became a consistent member of the church, to which her foster parents belonged. At the age of 18 she received from her foster parents \$50 which, with another \$50, that she had managed to save during her service, was placed in bank, so that she then had \$100 to her credit. She has since shown herself industrious and capable, and sometime ago wrote from her home in Chicago thanking the Society for having, as she expressed it, saved her life, for she declared that she had fully resolved, in her childish despair, to commit suicide rather than be forced back to those who had treated her so cruelly. She is now worth between ten and twelve thousand dollars, and is a student in a medical college at Los Angeles, California.

Special efforts have been made to break up the practice of children begging and peddling, and the child mendicant in Baltimore has almost disappeared. It is well known that a girl who is accustomed to solicit alms or peddle small articles on the streets, in stores or offices, is on the direct road to ruin, and the boy who commences by peddling and begging, in an incredibly short time becomes a vagabond, ready for the lowest grades of crime.



In conducting the work, no attempt at proselyting is tolerated, and no pains are spared to place Catholic children under Catholic influence, Protestant children under Protestant influence, and the children of Hebrews in homes or asylums where they will receive instructions in that faith.

The Society's Agent exercises the greatest care, to warn parents again and again when complaint has been made that their children are neglected or cruelly treated, and it is only after every effort in that direction has been exhausted, and his warnings are unheeded, that he resorts to the measure of removing the children by process of law. When it is evident, that such action must be taken, it is the Society's custom to *rescue* the children and leave the *prosecution* of the parents or guardians, in cases, where there has been criminal misconduct, to the State's Attorney. It takes care of the children and as a rule, only takes part in prosecuting when especially requested by the State's officers. The Society is supported altogether by voluntary contributions, and has never asked nor received a dollar either from city or state. It has found no difficulty in obtaining sufficient means from generous and sympathizing individuals, to carry on its work.

The Agent, Captain Geo. W. Parker, who for the last ten years has given his whole attention to protecting and saving children, states that, after a careful examination of the Society's records, he is convinced that intemperance has been the cause of the misery and suffering in at least nine-tenths of the cases where children have been protected or rescued by the Society.

The headquarters, 408 Courtland Street, is a building owned by the Society, which is a temporary home, giving immediate shelter to children needing it, while other arrangements are pending, or until they can be committed to an asylum, or placed with a family. It is also the residence of the Agent and his family.

Respectfully Submitted,

G. S. GRIFFITH,

Delegate to the National Prison Congress.

Baltimore, Dec., 2nd, 1892.