

DEFECTS OF CHARACTER AND THEIR CURE

There are three other characteristics common to most delinquents, whether they finally end up in a school or not. Firstly, a lack of moral courage: they are prepared to be unprincipled rather than unpopular, and generally go the easy way. 'I am easily led' is the pathetic answer of most of them when they are questioned as to why they have committed some offence. The tragedy is that when they have said that, they feel that there is nothing more to be said or done. Then, secondly, there is a lack of aim: they drift, with very little idea about anything beyond the immediate present. The third characteristic is a complete lack of thought for others: 'I want, and I'll do what I feel like doing; I don't care two hoots about anyone else. Why should I? Nobody cares about me.'

What is the cure? It would be wrong to over-simplify the problem, and of course there are many methods of approach to each individual. However, above all other considerations the supreme answer and cure is a Christian one. St. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians v. 14 and 15, 'The love of Christ constraineth us . . . that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.' If boys are truly converted, and their anti-social energies turned in the right direction, they will have an aim in life — to live for Christ who died for them; they will find the power of the risen Christ in times of temptation, and strength for their moral courage, and they will learn to realize their responsibility to others. This, in turn, will develop in them a sense of being 'wanted' as they become more conscious of the constraining love of our Lord. The Christian sense of confidence will follow, and in the years to come they will be guided aright in the building up of their own homes and in bringing up their own children.

THE WORK OF BOYS' CLUBS

with some reference to young offenders

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ALREADY it is growing dark. A few shops have shut, but most are still doing a brisk trade; light streams from the windows of the cut-price grocers, it flares from an acetylene lamp above the oranges on the coster's barrow. School is long finished; the children are back in the streets; you can see them on every side, busy, noisy, hurrying groups, chasing each other across the roadway, fighting on the bomb-site, lounging at the entrance to 'The Dwellings'. Their older brothers and sisters have had time to get home from work, wash and have tea. Comfortable and relaxed, they are already feeling the urge to get out and do something. Home, for the rest of the evening, is going to be women bustling about, or television, or babies, or just plain dull. Soon they too will be out again to enjoy the rest of the day — the only part that is really their own. Where will they go?

Many of them will not go anywhere much. They will look up a friend in the flats nearby, or fall in with one or two mates and stroll about the district. Some will meet their girls; others will go 'up West' or 'to the High Street', in search of cinemas, cafés, and pin-tables. A number have got Evening Classes, a handful are going dancing, one is planning to help strip a motor-bike in a back-yard shed. A very few may be 'doing a job', carrying out a little quiet shop-lifting, or joining a gang excursion out of

their district. Some, at least, will be making their way to a youth organization — probably a boys' club.

Boys come to the club for a number of reasons. Alf, because it's a matter of habit now; club is the place where he goes of an evening; Joe and Ken are going because they are mates, and the club is where they meet, together with the rest of their circle. Bill has been thinking all day of an extra little twist to manoeuvre in the football hall, and plans to try it out; Ginger has a date with the club leader in the workshop, where they are getting started on a canoe. Ask a bunch of three or four why they are going to the club tonight, and they will probably tell you, 'There isn't anywhere else', or, 'I'm spent up till Friday'. Ask them whether they think the club is a good one: 'Course it's a good 'un', they will probably tell you, 'We're in it, ain't we? It's not as good as it used to be, though. When we first joined there were some real toughs among the seniors — you remember Larry Stringer, Tom — none of these little kids they're letting in now. I reckon they ought to do something about getting us a better canteen, too, and a few other things I could mention.'

THE WORK DONE BY THE CLUB

What is the 'work of the club' for these boys, and their friends? No short answer can be given, for it probably plays a different part in the life of each of them, and meets a slightly different need. It will certainly help them to keep out of trouble, but that is not its real work. 'Boys' and girls' clubs were founded', writes J. B. Mays, 'not so much to combat delinquency as to offer working-class children opportunities for further education and recreative hobbies in their leisure time.'¹ In fact, in areas with a high delinquency rate, the following of this aim is certainly the most constructive, and probably the surest way to combat delinquency. Consider these statements taken from the case-histories which Mr. Mays has added to his book:²

'He valued the games above everything else, particularly football, and made some good friends . . . he thought that the chief value of the club was that it helped to keep him out of mischief.' 'The club saved him from idleness and bad companions and secured him the best job he ever had . . . he is a good athlete and fine swimmer and the club gave him every advantage to develop these interests.'

They could be duplicated many times over in the experience of almost every club leader in any similar district.

Mere membership of a club is not, of course, in itself an effective preventative of delinquency. 'The regularity of attendance, the facilities available at the club, and above all the quality of the leadership: these are the factors that matter.'³ Even here, clubs must not be thought of primarily as instruments for social stability or social salvage. They exist in their own right, to do their own job. It requires a very special type of club to attract and hold the most delinquency-prone youngsters; for the club is, inevitably, a higher form of society-grouping than the gang. M. Lloyd Turner, who was 'the Worker' in the Bargeboys experiment for unclubbable boys (an old sailing barge was bought and fitted out to remain berthed as a floating club in Wapping to receive only boys the Worker felt to be 'unclubbable') describes from his observations how gangs grow up, and how, lacking any adult guiding, they easily become anti-social: 'The gang is a natural response to society, for when society fails to meet the needs of its members or deliberately ostracises them, as often happens with problem members, those members gravitate towards each other and in their grouping seek to find an answer to the insecurity and frustration in their own life. Such grouping is a phenomenon of adolescence, and it reflects the efforts

of boys to create their own society because they are dissatisfied with that into which they have been born once the group finds that it has enemies it becomes a gang opposition gives the gang a new strength the next step is to take war into the enemies' camp.⁴

This is, of course, widely recognized by all boys' club workers. E. F. Piercy, a former General Secretary of the National Association of Boys' Clubs, wrote in 1952: 'There is a fairly high proportion of boys and girls who do not become members or, if they do join, do not stay long. Many observers believe that these boys and girls are the less intelligent and the emotionally unstable; they are those most likely to appear in a Juvenile Court the oft-repeated statement that a member of a youth club seldom appears in a Juvenile Court may mean that the clubs unconsciously select their members from the law-abiding.'⁵ An American writer comments on organizations 'which "are very successful and do a lot of good, but don't seem to get the children who need them most". The reason is that here, as in school, it is almost impossible to reward one kind of behaviour without at the same time, by implication or quite openly, punishing its absence or its opposite. The [street] corner boy retreats to the street or to his "clubhouse" in a cellar where facilities are meagre but human relations more satisfying.'⁶

But there is no doubt, in practical experience, that membership of a youth organization is a decisive factor in saving boys from serious trouble. 'To enter a club containing a number of neat, self-respecting, clean and happy boys generally calls forth the remark that the club is not getting the "worst" boys. Such a suggestion is generally completely wrong. The reason for this unexpected spectacle is nearly always due to the same fact, that boys have been taken into the club before they have had time to become the "worst" boys.'⁷ '*He believes that but for the club he would have become a real criminal*', and '*But for the Probation Officer and the Club he would have developed into a complete rogue*', are two more quotes from Mr. Mays' case-histories.

The fact that not all delinquent children can be helped by normal clubs should not blind our eyes to the immense part played by club leaders both in the prevention of juvenile crime and in the rehabilitation of those who, in a moment's weakness or thoughtlessness, have become 'offenders'. If there are some 'unclubbable' delinquents whom a boys' club cannot help, there are very many more who pass through boyhood in ever-present danger of delinquency, and who can best be helped — often, can only be helped — by a good club. A leading Juvenile Court chairman pays generous tribute to the part played by clubs in this way: 'Men and women who devote themselves to work of this kind, not merely in towns but in many country places also, are, or should be, the Magistrate's staunchest allies.'⁸

Much depends of course on the club and on the district.⁹ Some districts have clubs where half the members are on probation, or ought to be. I remember, however, attending a conference organized by the London Federation of Boys' Clubs on *The Difficult Boy* and discovering to my surprise how few club leaders present seemed to be dealing with any delinquent or near-delinquent boys. This may mean nothing more, though, than that their clubs had done their job; or that those with the more responsible club members are better able to attend conferences!

THE PURPOSE OF THE CLUB

If, then, most boys' clubs are not run primarily to combat delinquency, why are they run? What is their aim? Soon after the war, the Youth Tutor of Westhill Training College organized staff and students in a city-wide survey of Birmingham. Among their exhaustive researches, they asked

Club Leaders the aims of their organizations. Here are some of the replies:

- To keep young people off the streets and to give them a good time.
- To provide opportunities for useful employment in leisure.
- To make members more Co-op conscious.
- To attract young people to the Church.
- To cater for and promote cultural and recreational activities on a strictly Catholic (*sic*) basis.
- To promote Christian citizenship.
- To meet the social needs of members, excluding politics and religion.
- To promote the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of members.¹⁰

'Off the streets' is an old favourite, and an easy Aunt Sally to throw stones at, especially for those who do not know the streets in question. As a job to be done it may be vitally important, though as an aim it is quite inadequate — even the cinema does that. 'Co-op conscious' and 'attract young people to the Church' should give us pause. They smack of what the Rev. David Sheppard has been known to refer to as 'Preachers' Bait' — the sugar that makes possible the pill. The last aim listed is quoted from the Royal Charter of the National Association of Boys' Clubs, and is noteworthy because it is couched in terms of the *interests of the boys*. Bertrand Russell once unkindly defined education as 'a change effected in the organism to satisfy the desires of the operator', and the desire to manipulate another human being is one of the dangers against which all youth workers must be on their guard. Our aim is the highest *welfare* of our boys, physically, mentally and spiritually. Somewhere in this comprehensive definition is included their social needs — implicit in the very word 'club' — and since 'one of the chief tasks of an adolescent is to stop being one' this means a social background that will help boys on towards maturity. 'A Club is a Club not so much for boys as of boys, who are willing to be led by an adult but so that they may develop qualities of leadership for themselves.'¹¹

If the welfare of the boys committed to him is the primary work of the Boys' Club Leader, it is plain that no Christian can consider clubs apart from faith in Jesus Christ. We believe that the primary welfare of any individual boy or girl, man or woman, can only be found in relationship to Him. This is, not suprisingly, the official view: 'We state our conviction quite clearly: spiritual well-being involves a religious faith . . . the following of God's Will means for us the discipleship of Jesus Christ His Son.'¹² But this is far from suggesting that the club should be a Mission Hall. The primary qualification of a Christian club is that it should be a good *club*: and its Christian teaching will then be the natural expression of its care for the spiritual well-being of its members. Boys have a well-founded suspicion of the club that claims to care for their invisible souls, but obviously cares rather less for the things that matter *to them*. The true club is the club *of* boys, who allow their leader slowly but surely to introduce them to a Christ whom they can see is real and vital to him; not a club which is run *for boys willing to submit* to compulsory instruction. In actual practice, there may often be little obvious difference: but between the two viewpoints there is a great gulf fixed.

In fact, one of the glories of Christian club work is the chance it gives to demonstrate the gospel in action — concern and compassion and love finding expression in friendship and leadership — at the same time as it is taught. Mr. Mays quotes one of his boys as saying that the churches were not much use, and that clubs did a better job for the youngsters; among boys in big cities there must be very few who would disagree. Preaching or talking, to the boy, is easy stuff; he has learned to distrust it. He knows the poli-

ticians are trying to influence him for their own ends, not his: and so, he thinks, are the parsons. Concern and friendship (without their hearts on their sleeve) are what he is hungry for. The club may teach him many skills; may open his eyes to wide horizons and new experiences; may give him fellowship and responsibility. But for those who need club most, the real work is in terms of heart and home. Michael Burn describes a boy arriving at Finchden Manor, near Tenterden, where Mr. Lyward runs a school for boys in difficulties. 'What do you most want?' Mr. Lyward asked the boy: 'A home', he said, 'And I'd have had one if my mum hadn't run off with the bloody lodger.' 'What would you think of a place where you would be given stern love?', Mr. Lyward asked. 'I've never heard of that kind', the boy answered. 'Sounds as if it might be all right.'¹³

Pre-eminently, our Christian message is one of 'stern love'. To us, more than to others, belongs the knowledge of just who is our neighbour and of what is his deepest need. Yet clubs are still closing for lack of adult helpers and leaders; Priests and Levites, clergy and laymen (hurrying to Jerusalem for a prayer meeting or a committee on Social Welfare) still pass by on the other side.

Dick Sheppard used to tell the story of a working boy whose mates laughed at him for trying to be a Christian. 'If God is so concerned with you', they asked him, 'why doesn't He tell somebody to see you get a decent home, and a bed to yourself, and enough to eat?' 'I reckon He does tell somebody,' the boy answered, 'only somebody always forgets.'

The Boys' Club movement is not insignificant in size. In the age group of 14 and over it has by far the largest national membership of any youth organization — bigger than the Boys' Brigade and the Boy Scouts combined.¹⁴ It is not insignificant, either, in the strategy of our evangelism, for, far more than the churches, it is the key to the workers of tomorrow, the great mass of our population. '*Making Men*', the title of its history, could be a summary of the N.A.B.C.'s aim: and in its true meaning it is one that we all share.

Whether your concern is with the gloomy picture revealed by criminal statistics, with evangelism in industry, with the training of Christian leaders or with 'the state of the nation', if it is to bear fruit in action, here is a place to start.

¹ *Growing up in the City*, J. B. Mays, Warden of the Liverpool University Settlement (University Press of Liverpool), 1954, p. 212.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 189 ff.

³ *Juvenile Delinquency in an English Middletown* (Cambridge), Herbert Mannheim (Kegan Paul), 1948, p. 50.

⁴ *Ship without Sails*, M. Lloyd Turner (University of London Press), 1953, pp. 62 ff.

⁵ 'Boys' Clubs and their Social Patterns', E. F. Piercy, in *British Journal of Delinquency*, Vol. II, No. 3, January 1952, p. 229.

⁶ *Delinquent Boys*, A. K. Cohen (Routledge and Kegan Paul), 1956, pp. 116 ff.

⁷ *Club Leadership*, B. L. Q. Henriques (Oxford), 1933 ed., p. 233.

⁸ *The Child and the Magistrate*, John Watson (Jonathan Cape), 1950, p. 156.

⁹ Juvenile delinquency rates per 1,000 of the juvenile population have been calculated by Max Grunhut for all police districts of England and Wales, based on the three year period 1948-50. These reveal wide local differences. As against a national average rating of 25, Cambridgeshire has a rate of only 9.9; with Middlesbrough, Birkenhead, Liverpool and Grimsby standing at 55, and Bootle at 61.8. *Juvenile Offenders before the Courts*, Max Grunhut (Oxford), 1956, pp. 17 ff.

¹⁰ *Eighty Thousand Adolescents*, Bryan H. Reed (Allen and Unwin), 1950, p. 112.

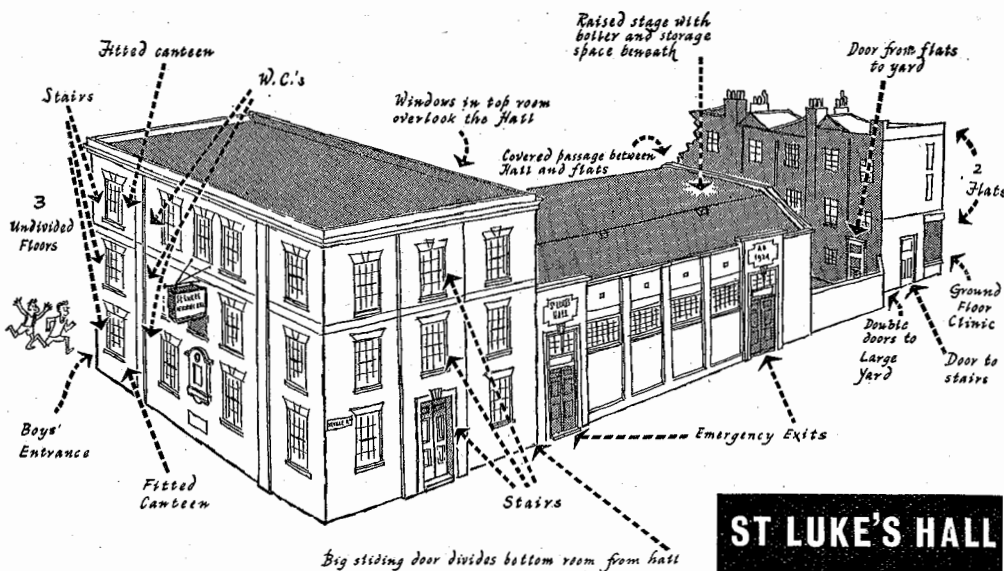
¹¹ *Making Men*, The History of Boys' Clubs and related movements in Great Britain, W. McG. Eager (University of London Press), 1953, p. 418, summarizing 'Principles and Aims of the Boys' Club Movement'.

¹² *Religion in Boys' Clubs*. The Report of a Commission set up by the National Association of Boys' Clubs in 1943. N.A.B.C., p. 5.

¹³ *Mr. Lyward's Answer*, Michael Burn (Hamish Hamilton), 1956, p. 276.

¹⁴ 1958 figures for the U.K. give 2,118 Clubs affiliated to the N.A.B.C., with over 114,000 members of 14 or over. Comparable figures for Boy Scouts are under 66,000; and for Boys' Brigade under 48,000.

THE OXFORD BOYS' CLUB TRUST



ST LUKE'S HALL

THIS drawing shows the spacious hall, in the Kilburn area of London, which by the end of the year will be in the hands of the Oxford Boys' Club Trust. By that time it is hoped that a resident Warden will have been appointed, and the first boys will be admitted soon afterwards.

How did the project begin? There is an urgent need today (as other parts of this issue make clear) for Christian Youth Clubs; and among the members of the Oxford Inter-Collegiate Christian Union are many who would value the chance to share in, and learn about, such work. An informal committee, called into being by a young Oxford graduate three years ago, has therefore been working to found a new Boys' Club in some needy part of London, to be linked directly with the O.I.C.C.U. The committee has been encouraged in undertaking and continuing this scheme by the existence for over fifty years of a similar and highly successful partnership between the Cambridge University Mission in Bermondsey and the C.I.C.C.U.

What has been achieved? The Committee of the O.I.C.C.U. and its senior advisers pledged their support from the beginning, undertaking to make the Club a definite missionary responsibility of the O.I.C.C.U. Kilburn was suggested as an area particularly needing more Clubs, and it is conveniently close to Paddington, the railway terminus for Oxford. The premises which have been found are really excellent. Trustees have been appointed, and some generous grants and the response to an appeal sent to all friends of the O.I.C.C.U. have given enough money to go ahead.

What is still needed? The greatest need is for a Warden, who will be responsible for starting Club activities from scratch, and applications for the post (accommodation provided) are invited. We also need more subscribers and prayer partners, and although the project is primarily an Oxford responsibility, we hope that many from a much wider circle will support us.

Please write for details and an illustrated brochure to the Secretary, 21 Parliament Hill, N.W.3.

'TIMES OUT OF JOINT'

A REVIEW BY MISS M. SUGDEN OF 'GOD'S RIVER IN SPATE'

'THE moral state of the country at that time called out for some such work of God and, if I do not misjudge it, I believe that the great interest which many have shown in this project . . . would seem to indicate a belief that our times are similarly out of joint and that they call again for divine intervention in grace and power.'

In this way John T. Carson explains the reasons behind his history of the 1859 revival in Northern Ireland. A study of the great theme which he treats will, he claims, shed light for us on the fundamental cure for the ills of our own period. A vision of God's working at that time should reveal our own efforts as a mere scratching of the surface in the age-long struggle to bring Christ's redemption to the sinful heart of man.

The author's aim is to bring vividly to the eye and mind of the reader a picture of the country and the people to whom revival came, and a quick portrait of the men of God through whom it came. The writer delights in his native land and the course of the spread of the revival movement gives him an excuse to take his readers on a lightning tour of the territories concerned, with the aid of a good clear map reproduced for our convenience on the inside of the book's cover. That we may visualize the scenes the better, the work is illustrated further by photographs of the settings of the meetings, and of the most important personalities involved. The rapid itinerary, following the revival's spread, is followed by critical analyses of the characteristics and results of the revival movement, an account of the reception given to it by the churches and leaders of the time, and a consideration of the lessons learnt, in the hope that we who need the Lord's intervention in our own ills may profit from the lessons of fellow-Christians of an earlier age. The writer is an enthusiast, thrilled with his subject and longing to get the atmosphere of the period across to his reader. His style often runs away with him, and his sub-titles (snippets of Scripture between inverted commas) can be distracting to the point of infuriation, but the

¹ *God's River in Spate*, John T. Carson, Presbyterian Church of Ireland, 1958, 9s. 6d.