

QUICKSANDS OF YOUTH

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FRANKLIN CHASE HOYT

**QUICKSANDS
OF YOUTH**

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By

Franklin Chase Hoyt

Presiding Justice of the Children's Court of the City of New York

UNIV OF
CALIFORNIA

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Foreword

This is a book of stories telling of Youth's encounter with the law. It does not pretend to cover any particular phase of child psychology nor is it written with the slightest idea of serving as a manual on juvenile-court work in general. It merely seeks to present, in narrative form, a number of incidents from the records of our Children's Court, and to include only such comments as seem appropriate and necessary to bind these sketches together into one consecutive whole.

If this little volume serves, in some slight measure, to stimulate popular interest in the problems of delinquency and neglect, if it leads to a clearer understanding of what can be done to-day to develop and elevate our citizens of to-morrow, and if it helps to suggest a possible improvement in the methods and spirit of modern justice, it will more than achieve the objects for which it has been written.

All of these stories are true and all are based upon actual facts and occurrences.

Most of them are presented in substantially the same form as they were recorded originally in our testimony or as they were submitted to the court through the investigations of our probation officers. In one or two cases, however, several separate incidents have been woven together into one single episode for the sake of continuity and uniformity of interest.

No attempt whatever has been made in these pages to discuss or even to touch on many of the problems and subjects which are ordinarily associated with the work of a children's court. These questions have been passed over for definite reasons—some because their consideration would call for an exhaustive treatise on the construction and administration of the juvenile-court system as a whole, and thus alter the very character and purpose of this book; some because they would be entirely out of place in a work frankly written to elicit popular interest. Thus little has been said concerning such topics as institutionalism, the placement of children in private homes, the punishment of those contributing toward juvenile delinquency, the future evolution of the children's court and the social conditions of the present day which tend to

handicap and imperil the children of our community. Nor has any but the most superficial reference been made to those two stupendous problems, sex and mental deficiency, which underlie so many of our cases. Subjects such as these deserve the most intensive study and consideration, but they must obviously be treated in technical works designed for the student and specialist rather than in a book of sketches dedicated to the reading public.

Another ground for reproach might be found in the fact that so many of these stories deal with the experiences of boys and that, in comparison, less has been told of the girls who come before the court. The reason for this apparent partiality is easy to explain. Very few girls are arrested for actual delinquency, less, in fact, than five per cent of our total arraignments. Many are brought to us for neglect, many for wandering far astray, but only a trifling number for indulging in those trespasses and offenses which are enumerated specifically in our penal law. In other words, their faults are either very small or very serious and no useful purpose could be served by emphasizing their experiences. Either the stories would fail to interest or else they would

prove out of place in such a book as this. As a matter of fact, the references to boys and girls in these pages bear a rather striking ratio to the percentage of arraignments of both sexes before the court. The comparative quantities are more or less equal and further than that it would be inadvisable to go.

The way these articles came to be written may prove of some interest to the reader. Toward the latter part of December, 1918, after the letters of Harry Samuels had been woven together into the story, "A Recruit for Law and Order," I happened to show the manuscript to Mrs. Douglas Robinson and expressed the wish that I might get the advice of her dearly beloved brother, Theodore Roosevelt, as to its most effective disposition. The Colonel had always been deeply interested in our work in the Children's Court. Mrs. Robinson volunteered to take the story to her brother, who was then in the hospital. He read the manuscript, which must have been one of the very last to pass through his hands, and gave Mrs. Robinson his advice and suggestions for its publication, which she promptly carried out. Through her he also sent me a message with that lovable, personal, and in-

spiriting touch which was always so characteristic of him. It was that message which led in a large measure to the continuance of these stories and their eventual issuance in this form. For his interest and advice I never had the chance to thank him, as there was no possibility of hearing from Mrs. Robinson until after that fatal 6th of January which stunned the world and rent the hearts of all mankind. This, therefore, is the only way left to me of acknowledging my indebtedness to him and of expressing my profound gratitude for his assistance.

To Mrs. Robinson I must also render my deepest thanks, for without her co-operation these stories might never have been written.

