

# **THE BOY PROBLEM**

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The boy problem by William Byron Forbush

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**WILLIAM BYRON FORBUSH**

**THE BOY  
PROBLEM**



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THE  
**BOY PROBLEM**

BY  
WILLIAM BYRON FORBUSH

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*Sixth Edition — Rewritten*

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By WILLIAM BYRON FORBUSH

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## PREFACE

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IN the first edition of this book the author said: "There is a time when a boy emerges from the narrow bounds of a dependent self-life, and from the limits of the school and the home, and seeks the larger social world of the street and the 'gang.' The instinct is legitimate and masterful and full of possibilities of danger or help. Its recognition is recent, and literature upon it is slight."

During the six years since these words were written the recognition of the gang-spirit among boys has rapidly developed, and the literature upon the subject has multiplied. To chronicle the results of this recognition and this literature, the author has been in a quandary whether to write a new book or to revise this one. With the desire still to confine the necessary practical helps upon this subject within the covers of a single small volume, the author has preferred to rewrite the original book, to cast out whatever has come to seem of temporary value, and to add whatever is new that seems also to be good. In the belief that social work with boys has now pretty well crystallized into form, the bibliographies at the close of each chapter are prepared this time with the view of making as few changes as possible necessary in the future.

Naturally, the months since this book was first issued have brought to light much information which has altered the author's opinion upon many supposed facts of boy life and upon some methods of social work. But he is glad to bear testimony that regarding the importance of persistent social endeavor for boys in general his enthusiasm is greater than ever. If this revision bears any change of emphasis, it is in an increased zeal for spirit and personal service rather than for devices.

But the chief distinction between this and earlier editions of this book is that it has been rewritten with the interests of the parent rather than those of the religious and social worker chiefly in mind. This has been done because the author knows

## P R E F A C E

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that many parents, noting the title of the book, have sought in it help which it was not originally intended to give, and because the author is persuaded that it is the parent rather than the sociologist who can solve the problem if he will. With the humility which every father must feel, who knows in his heart that most of the parental responsibility has been borne by his wife, and who has no desire to present his own partly-evolved offspring as samples to the universe, the author has also yielded to many requests by adding a special chapter bearing on the boy in the home. In this, even more than in the rest of the book, the individual boy is recognized, and some suggestions are made as to his nurture.

In many respects, therefore, the book is a new one.

WILLIAM BYRON FORBUSH.



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"His *intimados*, to confess a truth, were in the world's eye a ragged regiment. He never cared greatly for the society of what are called good people. . . . He had a general aversion of being treated like a grave or respectable character. He herded always, while it was possible, with people younger than himself. His manners lagged behind his years. He was too much of the boy-man. The *toxa virilis* never sate gracefully on his shoulders. The impressions of infancy had burnt into him, and he resented the impertinence of manhood. These were weaknesses; but such as they were, they are a key to explicate some of his writings."

— From the preface to *The Last Essays of Elia*.

# THE BOY PROBLEM

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## I

### BOY LIFE

THE period of a boy's life is roughly divided as follows: *Infancy*, from birth to about six; *childhood*, from six to fourteen; *adolescence*, from about fourteen to manhood.

**Infancy** It is not until about six that, with the rise and sensitization of memory, the continent of child-life appears above the sea to vision. Those years of molding and upheaval which we do not remember as to ourselves, and of which it is impossible to secure verbal testimony, though silent, are not unimportant. Physically, infancy is characterized by the most restless, impulsive activity. "The period of greatest physical activity in a man's life ends at about six." The infant is like the wild creatures of the wood, and it is as cruel to confine the physical activities of young children as those of squirrels and swallows. Physically, these activities are struggles for what we call "a constitution." Mentally, they are the outreaching tendrils of instinct to grasp and comprehend the furniture of life. Indeed, the infant boy appears to consist mostly of a bundle of instincts. Of these the simpler ones of grasping, locomotion, curiosity, etc., are means of self-education, but the most marked is imitation. "These instincts are implanted