

THE LAW STUDENT'S HELPER.

AMERICA'S ONLY WOMAN JUDGE

The work that is being accomplished by Miss Mary M. Bartelme, head of Chicago's Court for Delinquent Girls, has been attracting wide attention. This article gives us a peep into her court and a view of this remarkable woman and her methods.

A WOMAN bailiff rapped for order in a small and immaculately spick and span chamber of Chicago's new Court House. About the handle of her gavel a pink ribbon was tied in a neat bow. She brought the little mallet down upon a desk on one corner of which was a potted fern, and on an opposite corner a hand-painted vase full of lilac blossoms.

"Hear ye, hear ye," chanted the bailiff in a rich soprano, "the Court for Delinquent Girls is now in session."

The judge upon the bench was a woman—Miss Mary Margaret Bartelme, the only woman invested with full judiciary powers in the United States. A woman clerk of court sat at her left; a woman court stenographer at her right. Women probation officers sat in the single row of chairs along the wall.

"Call the first case," said Miss Bartelme.

The outer door opened. Into the courtroom strode Katie Carlson, 15 years old, a blonde enfant terrible, head erect, lips set, resentment and defiance smoldering in her blue eyes. Her old Swedish father and mother shuffled in behind her, accompanied by a probation officer.

The probation officer told how Katie stayed out late at night, frequented dance halls, came home sometimes under the influence of liquor, and was beyond parental control. The mother, with tears rolling down her cheeks, corroborated the charges. The father, a red-nosed, bloated person, disreputable looking despite his "Sunday best" clothes, repeated the tale with pompous severity, assuming the role of a kind and indulgent parent duly scandalized by his daughter's conduct.

"Well, Katie," said Miss Bartelme, "you have heard what has been said about you. What have you to say for yourself?"

"It's true," snapped the girl.

"Well, my dear," continued Miss Bartelme, with a touch of motherly sympathy, "why is it true?"

The rebellious little savage shot a glance of surprise at the judge. She plainly had expected swift, severe, machinelike justice. The judge had called her "my dear." It was probably the first time she had been called that in all her hard young life. It visibly softened her.

"I don't know why it's true," she replied. "It just is."

"Is your mother kind to you?" asked Miss Bartelme.

"Yes, she is," returned the girl. "She's a good mother. But my father is no good. He is drunk all the time. I give almost all the money I earn at

the factory to my mother. I keep only a few pennies for myself. But my father, when he works at all, spends all the money he makes in the corner saloon. He does nothing but quarrel with me. I never could please him. I've quit trying. I hate my father."

"Do you think it right for a daughter to hate her father?" said Miss Bartelme.

"No," answered the girl, "but you would hate him, too, if he were your father."

Miss Bartelme asked many intimate questions about the girl's life. The girl answered frankly. She attempted to dodge nothing. In the light of her story, she stood out as a brave, straightforward character, with very human desires and aspirations, in rebellion against her lot in life, and groping blindly and wrongly for some way out.

"Now, Katie," said Miss Bartelme, "we all have our duties and responsibilities. You say your mother has been good to you. Have you been a good daughter to her in return? Have you ever tried to help her and make her road smoother? When you have seen her tired and overworked, have you ever put your arms around her neck and kissed her and comforted her?"

Winning Her Confidence.

These questions were too much for Katie. They touched a chord that perhaps never had been touched before. Her defiance vanished. She bowed her head and wept softly.

"What do you think I ought to do with you, Katie?" asked Miss Bartelme.

"Send me to an institution, I suppose," responded the girl. "It's coming to me."

"What would you like to have me do?"

"It wouldn't do any good for me to tell you. You wouldn't do it."

"I am your friend; child. Tell me."

"I'd like to be sent out of Chicago."

"Why?"

"I want to get away from the boys and girls I have been running with. I want to get away from the people who know I've been bad. I want to begin over again. I want another chance."

Miss Bartelme held a whispered consultation with her clerk.

"Katie, she said, "I'm going to do just what you want me to do. A judge and his wife from a town in this state—good people—were in to see me yesterday and asked me to find them a girl to do housework in their home."

"I am going to send you to them. They will treat you like a daughter. You will have as nice a home as any girl ever had in in the world."

The girl stood speechless for a moment.

"Oh, I'm so glad," she said at last. "I'll be different all the rest of my life. You won't be disappointed in me. I'll make good."

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And the overwrought child threw her arms about her mother's neck, kissed her, patted her on the back and sobbed from a full heart. A moment later she passed out of the courtroom on her way to begin a new life.

The case of Katie Carlson is typical of the cases Miss Bartelme has to hear. Her method of handling it is typical of this woman judge.

One hundred and fifty delinquent girls, on an average, stand before Miss Bartelme every month. She deals with them not as hardened characters but as children who have done wrong through the ignorance of innocence. She makes them realize she is their friend, one who has only their best interests at heart.

She does not attempt to minimize the gravity of their indiscretion, but she makes them understand that their first misstep need not be a life-wrecking tragedy, that they can atone for it by living better lives, that the possibilities of fine womanhood are still before them.

She has little faith in institutions except in exceptional and incorrigible cases. She prefers to give the girls another chance in new homes or in their own homes under care of a probation officer.

She tempers justice with mercy and human kindness. She is less a judge than a big sister.

Chicago's Unique Court.

The Court for Delinquent Girls is a branch of Chicago's Juvenile Court, over which Judge Merritt Pinckney presides. Chicago's Juvenile Court, which was established in 1899, was the first of its kind in the United States. Its pioneer work was directly responsible for a salutary change through the entire Nation in the relation of the law to delinquent children. In Chicago before the Juvenile Court was established boys and girls charged with delinquency were held while awaiting a hearing in court in police stations and the county jail, where they came under the influence of hardened criminals.

The Juvenile Court introduced the system of juvenile parole. A detention home was founded, where children were held pending their appearance in court. Now all boys up to seventeen years of age are tried in the Juvenile Court, and all girls up to eighteen in the Court for Delinquent Girls. The boys who are not paroled are sent to the John Worthy School, an annex of the House of Correction; to Pontiac Reformatory, and to the Illinois School for Boys at St. Charles, which has a farm of a thousand acres.

Incorrigible girls are sent to the Geneva School for Girls, to the Chicago Refuge for Girls, or, if they be of the Catholic faith, to the House of the Good Shepherd.

The Court for Delinquent Girls was established last March. It is strictly a woman's court. Men are rigidly excluded from it unless actually concerned in the case.

Miss Bartelme is its first judge. She is a Chicagoan by birth and was educated in the public schools. She graduated from the Law School of the Northwestern University in 1894 and took up general practice, specializing in probate law. In 1897 she was appointed Public Guardian of Cook County by Gov. Tanner. She resigned this position upon her appointment to her present place.

She is still comparatively young. She has a keenly intellectual face, sensitive, sympathetic, and serious. She is perhaps a trifle old-fashioned in appearance, dresses plainly and neatly, and is certainly old-fashioned in her ideals and her outlook on life.

"Miss Bartelme," said Judge Pinckney recently, "is admirably fitted for her position. She is an acute

and well-trained lawyer, with a distinctly judicial temperament. Her mind is quick and comprehensive. "She has poise, cool judgment, and a fine, discriminating sense of justice. Few men, no matter how wise and good, are capable of passing judgment on girls who have erred, because few men have a clear understanding of woman's nature. Not all women are capable of such work, because their sympathies would be too likely to override their judgment.

"Miss Bartelme is the right woman in the right place. She has a man's intellect and judgment and a woman's heart, sympathies, and intuitive knowledge of feminine character and feminine viewpoint."