



## FOR COLORED CHILDREN

Memphis houses its Juvenile Court in two buildings in different parts of the city—one each for colored and white children. The colored court is in an old house, badly equipped, its sewer connection in the back yard. But Julia Hook, the colored probation officer in charge, keeps it clean as a whistle, with plants in pots here and there. Mrs. Hook has been a paid probation officer for three years. Before that, beginning as far back as 1876, she did volunteer work for children.

## A BURGLAR FOUR YEARS OLD IN THE MEMPHIS JUVENILE COURT—BY FLORENCE KELLEY

AMONG THE STRIKING and suggestive experiences afforded by the city of Memphis, during the National Conference of Charities and Correction, none compared with encountering a burglar four and a half years old, passionately hugging a Teddy bear. His record in the Juvenile Court docket reads:

*May 8, Gainer —, 10 Tin Cup Alley, 4 1/2, burglary, larceny, prowling, 2:50 a. m., police, probation to Sanderlin.*

Being interpreted, this brief entry means that a little boy, four and a half years old, loitering one afternoon in front of a shoe store, saw a pair of shoes which he so coveted that, between two and three o'clock the next morning, he returned, smashed the show window, crawled in through the broken glass, and was taking the little shoes when a policeman arrested him. His name is in the docket of the police court, and any future offense will stand against him as a second offense.

Gainer has no mother, no father, no home, no teacher. He is colored, and the city of Memphis—which gives its white juvenile offenders six teachers, and establishes their Juvenile Court in a beautiful building once a school house—affords no teacher for colored delinquent children. Its colored Juvenile Court is a separate building, physically

dilapidated but kept as clean as hands can make it by the unwearied effort of Mrs. Julia Hook, the probation officer for Negro children.

Gainer is under probation to a man to whom, according to the probation officers for Negro children, nine boys have been assigned. None of them has been received, or cared for by him. Gainer

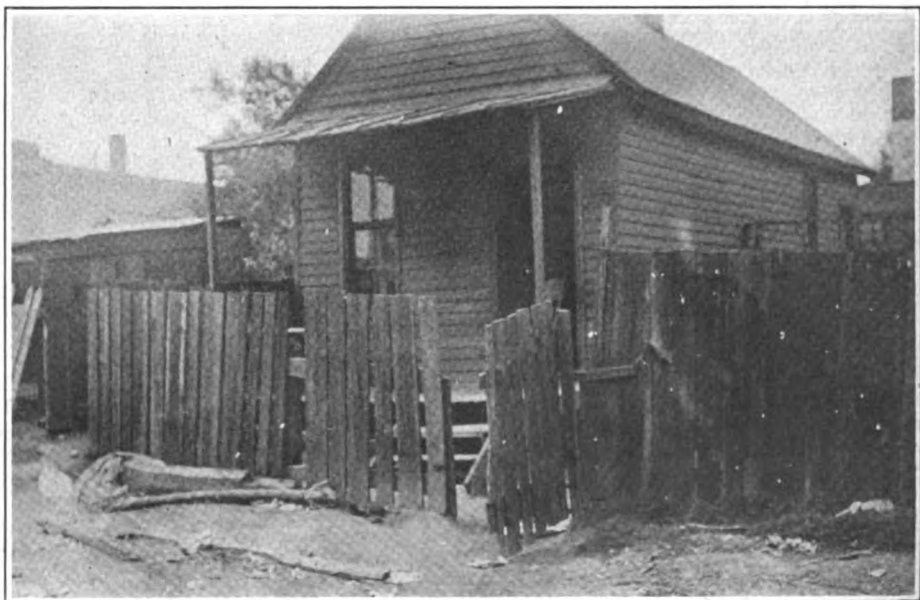
remained at the Juvenile Court, uncalled for on the day I left Memphis. He is strong and active, a heavy burden for the slight little woman in charge. When her duties call her away from the first floor of the shabby six-room wooden cottage which shelters Negro boys and girls pending disposition of their cases, Gainer is perforce under lock and key in the basement room which, with bars and lock, looks painfully like a cell.

In the Juvenile Court for colored children no judge was sitting, but a policeman assigned to service as a probation officer. The juvenile court is a branch of the police court. One judge is in charge of all its work, including that of the white and colored Juvenile Court. It is physically impossible for him to perform all three tasks, and many children are, therefore, dealt with by this substitute for the judge.

Two girls were before the policeman, awaiting disposal. They were left as probationers in the possession of their mothers, whose incapacity for dealing with them was shown by their presence in court and the girls' own statements.

This is a travesty of juvenile court practice. The only probation officers for colored children, paid in their service, are the matron and her husband, whose hands are overfull with the care of the boys and girls detained day and night in the Juvenile Court Building. There is no municipal or county industrial or farm school, or private philanthropic or educational provision for Gainer.

I visited the beautiful place bought many years ago by Negro subscribers, for a home for Negro children and old people. A substantial frame house and a charming little stone church stand at the top of the hill, from which the property stretches away, embracing 25 acres of fields and woods. But it is devoted exclusively to the care of nine aged men



NO. 10 TIN CUP ALLEY

The house where Gainer lived—one of a dilapidated row of shanties on an unpaved street. His mother is dead, his father "unknown."

and women, of whom one appeared to be dying of old age. They are former servants of white families. Several of them, almost or quite blind, were tottering about the piazzas and grounds.

To my puzzled question why all this space, and this lovely country beauty, were kept for nine aged people, while the four-year-old burglar remains unclaimed in the Juvenile Court and other children were given on probation in my presence to the care of dissolute people for want of a suitable institution, I received no intelligible answer.

In the annual report of the Colored Federated Charities—a department of the Associated Charities of Memphis—the institution is described as the Colored Orphans Association and Old Folks Home. The report sets forth that: "The conditions of entrance to the Home have now been fixed; the Home requires that the applicant be past 60 years of age or that she be otherwise handicapped; that the applicant pay an admission fee of twenty-five dollars, and that if they carry a life insurance policy that same be made over to the Home. The charter of the Home permits the maintenance of a shelter for Negro orphan children, but at present the limited finances of the Federation make this impossible."

For the conference visitor, the haunting question will not down: Why does Memphis, why does Tennessee, discriminate thus between its white and colored delinquent children? Why is it left to the Colored Federated Charities to do the work of the city and the state? And the task being so left, why do the Associated Charities of Memphis permit their colored department to leave the work undone?

In sharp contrast with the passive state of the Federated Charities in its failure to carry out the intent of the founders of the Colored Orphans' Home,



#### FOR WHITE CHILDREN

To the white Juvenile Court, the city has just turned over a disused public school building. It houses the court, separate detention rooms for delinquent and dependent children, special school rooms for backward and truant children, a large gymnasium, a model cottage and manual training rooms. Memphis has in this building one of the best equipped juvenile courts and detention homes in the country. Until now the white Juvenile Court has been housed in a dingy and inadequate building.

is the strenuous effort of the Memphis colored women's clubs to buy a suitable building in excellent surroundings for the Negro Juvenile Court. A first payment has been made, the house is in part furnished, frequent meetings are held, and much energy manifest.

But why are these Negro women of very moderate means and many heavy burdens left by the city to buy a court building, while the white children have

recently been moved into admirable quarters provided at the cost of the city?

As I think of the four-year-old burglar deprived by neglect of the community of all education and all prospect of moral guidance, I am filled with apprehension of the future citizen whom the city of Memphis is preparing for our common country. Moreover, the little burglar is only one of a mass of children whose fate is akin to his own.



MANUAL TRAINING AND HOUSEKEEPING

In the basement of the white Juvenile Court, the boys use a well-equipped shop. A small building at the rear has been made into a model cottage where the girls practice cooking and household management. This was established by the chief probation officer, Mrs. Wert, who imported the idea from the model flat at Chicago Commons.