

possessed. And when the pressure of population upon limits of territory and means of subsistence in these new regions becomes great—as is already beginning to be the case—fresh incentives will be felt to push on into the tropics. Probably some relief will come, as formerly, from a diminishing birth-rate;

but doubtless, also, efforts more strenuous and more scientific will be made than has heretofore been the case to overcome the difficulties of residence in hot countries. The final result can hardly be doubtful, though it may be long postponed.

NEW HAVEN, CONN.

TRAMP BOYS.

BY JOSIAH FLYNT.

THERE are about seven thousand boys in the United States who live, from one end of the year to the other, exclusively in tramp life. It is impossible to take an exact census of all—they are too migratory—but I base my estimate on over ten years' acquaintance with American tramp life, and on travels with tramps which have taken me into thirty States. In winter, there are easily five hundred tramp boys in New York city alone. Of course, there are more than this number who have to pick up their living in a more or less tramp fashion, but I refer to the lads who actually belong to the tramp fraternity and are part and parcel of its manifestations. They are called "kids" and "prushuns" in the hobo's vernacular, and when they take tramp names, always have to add the suffix "kid" to the name of the town from which they claim to have come, and by which they are distinguished, but they are known to the general public merely as truants and "incorrigibles." No one acquainted with the tramp world, however, would mistake them for anything but what they are. Stylish clothes and a bath could not change their shambling gait, rounded shoulders, harsh voices and exaggerated "tough" manner. Even upon the youngest the life has had its effect, and a tramp could easily single them out in a miscellaneous collection of boys. Their average age is about fourteen years, but there are some nearly eighteen and others not yet ten.

They are in tramp life, to use a homely expression, because the tramp "needs them in his business." The tramp, as a class, or the hoboes (*hautes beaux*), as I prefer to call them,

came upon the scene not long after the Civil War, and many of them soon discovered that it was much easier for a boy to excite sympathy than for a man, and they began to entice youngsters into the life. It was immaterial to them where they found the boys, or who were their parents, so long as they were quick, intelligent and willing. These are the necessary qualifications for a successful "prushun," and although there are some boys much more willing and active than others, the great majority of them are bright and attractive. Rich and poor alike contribute to their class. A millionaire's son, if a hobo can catch him near a railway watering tank and fascinate him with interesting stories, is as liable to conscription as the young hopeful of a poor workingman. The only thing necessary is that the lad should have a romantic temperament. If he has gone through a course of "dime novels" before the hobo meets him it makes it all the easier for the latter to fire his imagination with accounts of wild Western life, but there are youngsters unable to read that he has influenced.

In New York city it is the boy of the slums that the hobo is most likely to reach. While in the city he spends most of his time in the congested districts, they are the best places for him to find charity, as well as to hide his vagabondage, and he naturally sees a great deal of the local boys. If he is in search of one to take away with him on his travels, he prowls about the streets, acquainting himself with the boys' playgrounds and gathering places. Before long, he is sure to find a collection of lads which he thinks he can

influence, and then he tries to get the boy who seems to him the most promising. Watch him at his preliminary work. He is seated on an ash barrel, a crowd of gamins gazing up at him with admiring eyes. When he tells his stories, each one thinks that he is being talked to just as much as the rest, and yet, somehow, little by little, there is a favorite who is getting more and more than his share of the winks and smiles; soon the most exciting parts of the stories are gradually devoted to him alone, but in such an artful way that he himself fails to notice it at first. It is not long, however, before he feels his importance. He begins to wink, too, but just as slyly as his charmer, and his little mouth curls into a return smile when the others are not looking. "I'm his favorite, I am," he thinks. "He'll take me with him, he will, and show me things."

He is what the hobo calls "petrified," which means as much as anything else, hypnotized. The stories that he has heard amount to very little in themselves, but the way they are told, the happy-go-lucky manner, the subtle partiality, the winning voice, and the sensitiveness of the boy's nature to things of wonder, all combine to turn his head. Then his own parents cannot control him as can this slouching wizard.

In the country the favorite gathering place for boys likely to be attracted by tramp life as well as for the hoboes is the railway watering tank. For over twenty years the hoboes have used the railroads as thoroughfares, beating their way on trains and sleeping at night in box-cars, sand houses and at camp-fires near the track. The watering-tank is their "depot," because they can board freight trains here while the trains are taking water.

In our provincial towns it is well known to the boys that there is generally a collection of interesting wanderers to be found at the watering tank, and during the long summer months, when time often drags heavily on their hands, they like to join the hoboes and listen to their tales of adventure. If one of them appeals to some member of the gang who is looking for a "prushun," the same process of "petrifying" is gone through as in the case of city boys, and it is often possible to get a lad from the country to run

away more quickly than one of the metropolitan training, because he is less suspicious.

Once "on the road," the life of these boys can only be likened to that of slaves. Their duty is to do exactly what their "jockers," the men who have enticed them on to "the road," command, and they are expected, if necessary, to find their "jockers'" meals, clothes and even lodging house money. Some become expert beggars in a few weeks, and are much prized by the men with whom they travel to the end of their "prushun" apprenticeship, and there are others who require a year and more before they are successful even in finding their food. Once trained, however, and if they are carefully exploited, many of them take in as much as \$5 a day, the money going, of course, to their "jockers," and eventually to the saloon-keeper. During the process of getting trained they are kicked, slapped and generally maltreated, and on occasions they are loaned, traded and even sold. It avails them very little to run away from a cruel "jocker," for unless they return home, which most of them are ashamed to do, they are sure to be picked up by some one else before they have gone far. Not all hoboes travel with boys, but there are so many who do that it is useless for a runaway "prushun," who remains in the life, to keep free of them. They are bound to run across him somewhere, on a freight train or at some popular "hang-out," and they either persuade or compel him to take up a "prushun's" burden again.

This burden has to be carried until the boy is able to defend himself and come off victorious in a fisticuff with his "jocker," or until he has reached an age when he is obviously too old to travel any longer as a "kid." The age limit varies in different cases, but it is seldom that one finds a boy in the "prushun" class after he has passed his eighteenth year.

Once emancipated, to use the hobo word, the boy is supposed to go and look for revenge. Some do this and some do not, but all are told that the revenge when they get it will offset all the misery and trouble they have had to put up with as "prushuns." Indeed, this is the one reward held out to them.

From the time they get into tramp life, as boys, until they enter into the joys of the emancipated, they are led to believe that when emancipation comes they can go and "snare" some other boy of romantic temperament, and make him slave for them as they have slaved for others. West of the Mississippi River there is a regular gang of these "ex-kids," as they are called, and the bulk of them are supposed to be looking for revenge. In certain parts of the country, thanks to the intelligence of magistrates and court judges, who have learned what it means when a boy is found in the company of a hobo, it is very dangerous to attempt any "snaring," or to be arrested with a boy "in tow," because very severe sentences are meted out to men who travel with youngsters, and this is one of the reasons why some "ex-kids," as well as a number of the hoboes, have given up "prushun" companionship. Another reason is that some find the business heartless and cruel. There are so many, however, who favor the custom that tramp life in the United States is continually being recruited from the boys of the country, and every year a number of them take the places of those who have finished their apprenticeship. Those who come to New York generally arrive in winter, the time their "jockers" travel to the large cities to get the benefit of lodging house shelter and cheap restaurant living. They also put in an appearance in summer for a day or so, but at this time of year the bulk of them are scattered along the different railroads. They are the most difficult lads in the world to locate and get hold of. Excepting during the coldest months, and even then, if they go South, they are continually on the move, and it is impossible to keep track of them long enough to do them much good. When they have committed a crime and are put in such prisons as the Tombs to await trial, they get the benefit of that very worthy institution, the Tombs School, and

come under the good influence of men and women connected with such reforms, but only a small number commit crimes sufficiently grave to be lodged in jail, and the reform school seems also to have but very little effect on their natures. The great majority of American tramps have spent a part of their boyhood in reformatories, but they went on tramp life again when released. It is exceedingly hard to reform a boy who has once been in tramp life, and I fear that the most of those who are now "prushuns" are destined to develop into full fledged tramps. It is possible, however, to prevent a great many boys from ever becoming "prushuns," or learning much about life among tramps, and my purpose in writing this article is to call attention to the methods which I believe will accomplish this end. I have referred to the fact that some magistrates are acquainted with the position of the boys in Hoboland, and punish their seducers very severely. It seems to me that this is the best remedy that can be applied. The boys themselves have been sinned against more than they have sinned, and punishment for them does not seem fair, and, as has been stated, is in many cases ineffectual. If it were recognized, however, throughout the tramp world that every man caught in company with a boy, who was known to be his "prushun," would receive, say, a year in the penitentiary—such sentences have already been given for this offense—tramp boys would not be so numerous as they are to-day, and Hoboland would be deprived of one of its main resources in keeping up its strength. As yet there is no uniform legislation in all the States by which a severe punishment can be given tramps who travel with boys, but it is at least possible for magistrates to give tramps the full benefit of the law as it applies to vagrancy, and in some communities this is now so severe that special legislation is unnecessary to secure the desired ends.

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