

MOTHER'S SON.

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Harry in a white linen suit, walking to church with his mother, is handsome enough to stir some elderly church-goer to optimistic reflections upon the glorious future of the younger generation. Chasing the hens, or stoning a dog, he is still handsome, and the charitably-minded old gentleman might murmur, "Boys will be boys," until he saw the extravagant delight Harry takes in causing distress. If a traveller from abroad were to spend a day in the same hotel with the boy, he would certainly form his opinion as to the objectionable American child he had heard about. Neighbors who saw him not once, or for a day, but every day at close range, found his behavior intolerable.

It was the perplexing privilege of the Psychological Clinic to be called upon to disentangle the web of hearsay that had gathered about Harry. Was he mentally deficient, or only socially malconformed? Was he being goaded to unlawful acts by the persecutions of envious schoolmates? Was he the product of his mother's neglect, or were he and his mother both victims of spiteful gossip? What was likely to be the effect of an attempt at this eleventh hour to provide him with judicious educational and disciplinary treatment?

In the summer of 1915 Harry, then eleven years old, was referred to the Psychological Clinic by a social worker who had not seen the boy but had heard conflicting testimony about him. His mother said he was a very nervous child. A year before he had been hazed at school by older boys, one of whom tore out a lock of Harry's hair. The parents reported the affair to the police, and ever since then the boys had had it in for Harry. Finally an Italian boy in the neighborhood attacked Harry with a knife, was arrested, and put on probation. The cutting made Harry so nervous that he had not been sent back to school.

The family came to the notice of the Court through the case of a Polish woman, who with her baby had been given shelter by Harry's mother. There were many reasons to believe that the woman was feeble-minded, and her deportation was being considered. This woman had turned upon her benefactors, left their home and gone to live with another family in the neighborhood, from whose house she was uttering complaints of ill treatment by Harry and defiance of the agency that had her under observation.

The community was made up of widely diverse elements. Perhaps the majority of the families were young couples with business interests in the city, rising rapidly in the economic scale, and bent upon the pursuit of pleasure as exemplified in a fashionably furnished house, a motor car, and membership in the local country club. In the diminishing minority were the older village families, who still regarded themselves as the more stable part of the population. Small farmers they were, most of them, with the necessary proportion of artisans, shop-keepers, and members of the learned professions. The farmers ranged all the way from the immigrant who had come in five years ago with a few hundred dollars and invested it to the last penny in a poultry farm, where he and his family were living meagrely while buying more stock and equipment; up to the Quaker families who lived plainly and comfortably upon the lands of their ancestors. Around and about them were many poor Americans who worked in the nearby mills as their fathers had done before them, and a larger number of foreign mill-workers, Americans and foreigners alike raising a few vegetables and sometimes a pig, on a rented acre or half-acre. Various as the members of the minority were in their social affiliations and manner of living, they were held together by a common distrust of the newer standards set up by the commuters.

When Harry moved into the town, he quickly became a cementing force that brought the old and the new to join hands to keep him in order. A social worker sent to investigate the situation found it very complicated indeed. She interviewed a housewife who said that Harry was the terror of the neighborhood. Hearing screams one day, her husband had gone over to Harry's house and found him throwing stones at the Polish girl and beating her baby with a stick. Harry and his mother, she said, had been arrested several times for maltreating the girl and otherwise disturbing the peace. Another neighbor reiterated the statement that Harry was a terror and made it impossible for his mother to keep a servant any length of time. A third reported that she had seen Harry whack the Polish girl with a stick and had had his mother arrested for permitting it.

Lastly the social worker visited Harry's mother, whose view of the matter was that the neighbors were jealous of her because she had the finest house and largest grounds in the village, and did not call upon the townspeople. They also owed her a grudge, she believed, because Harry had been the means of getting their children into difficulties. They called him opprobrious names,—“Loony” and “Crazy-kid.” She told the social worker she would

like to have her son examined, so that she could sue them for slander if they continued to say he is mentally unbalanced.

Harry was examined at the Psychological Clinic in July by Dr. Francis N. Maxfield, who deferred his diagnosis with the comment that probably the boy would prove feeble-minded. At the Clinic the mother explained that she was very nervous and had moved to the suburb because her physician had recommended country life. She did not like her neighbors. They were mostly, she said, immigrant families, uncouth in their way of living and antagonistic to anyone more fortunate than themselves. She considered that Harry was nervous like herself, and had been spoiled because she was too delicate to look after him closely. He had a frank open nature, with strong likes and dislikes. His mechanical ability was great, and he was bright enough, in her opinion, to get on in school if the children had not frightened and worried him. He could dress himself, she said, and could make change. She admitted reluctantly that Harry could not tell time, even though she had given him a new watch that he was wearing.

The mother reported that Harry had been examined by two physicians who pronounced him in perfect health. One of them said his troubles were due to surplus energy. He had had a healthy and uneventful babyhood, and had escaped the usual contagious diseases. At birth he weighed ten pounds and was a satisfactory infant in every particular, much to his mother's amazement, for she had what her physician called walking typhoid during the first four months of her pregnancy, and had been very restless and melancholy.

Harry was the fourth in a family of five sons, the oldest of whom was twenty-six. The youngest had died when a baby. The three older boys had gone as far as the second year of high school, were in business, and had never caused anxiety.

The mental examination bore out in some degree what Harry's mother had said of him. He did fairly well in all tests using concrete material. He replaced the Witmer cylinders very well indeed, and copied patterns readily with the design blocks. When the examiner emptied a box of thirty-six colored cubes upon the table, and said "Give me three red ones, Harry, now four yellow, and three blue," the boy gave the right number of each color. When the examiner added, "Now how many have I all together?" Harry could not tell, though he recalled how many of each color had been given, and counted desperately on his fingers for two minutes. Four green, two blue, and three red, he said equalled ten all together. When the problem was given abstractly, he said "Two plus four plus three

equals six." After handing over three green, one yellow, and four red blocks, he remarked, "I couldn't figure that out."

Harry was nonplussed when shown a second reader that offers no difficulties to an ordinary child of eight. "I can't read," he protested. A simpler book was handed to him, and he was urged to pick out some words that he knew. He found the word *the* four times on one page, repeated "I can't" and burst into tears. When he had recovered his composure, his auditory memory span for digits was tested and found to be limited to four.

In the Binet tests, 1911 revision, his mental age came out as eight years. He knew his birthday came in August, but he didn't know that August was next month. He didn't know what month Christmas came in, or even in what month the Fourth of July came, though he had just celebrated it. He failed to find the absurdities in the three statements, and would not give any words in the three minute test, in spite of many suggestions from the examiner.

With pencil and paper his adding of a column of three digits was a laborious process. At the blackboard he added $5+3+3$, and $6+4+5$, getting the correct results in both cases by counting on his fingers. He added 32 and 45 and read the result correctly as 77, but he added 48 and 33 to make 711, and could not read this result.

He worked over the smaller Healy Construction Puzzle for about two minutes and a half, then lost interest in it and left it unfinished. The larger Healy Construction Puzzle he completed in about one minute. He did the large picture formboard with four errors, two of which he corrected with suggestion and two without suggestion.

When words of three letters were written by the examiner on the board, Harry did not recognize any of them, although he did name one or two of the letters separately.

Dr. Maxfield recommended that Harry be tutored for two hours daily and attend school in the fall on half time, or have three hours tutoring every day with no school.

A fortnight later the tutor called at the Clinic. She lived about a mile away, and Harry frequently came over to play with her little brothers. She thought him intelligent but spoiled and rather reckless. It never occurred to him, she said, to refrain from doing something he wanted to do. If he wanted to take out her horse, for instance, he took it without asking permission. In a way she could not analyze she found something lacking in his behavior.

This same young woman called again at the Clinic two months later. In the meantime Harry had not gone to school, and she had been tutoring him one hour a day, instead of the prescribed two or three hours. Now she was ready to say he was very bright

and had a wonderful memory. He had repeated with much detail a fairy story she had read to him, and defined words very well. Drawing was the best thing he did. It was impossible to hold his attention to one thing for more than ten minutes, and he had no taste whatever for study. The tutor had been making the very natural mistake of bribing him to do his lessons.

Harry had not been getting on well with the brothers of his tutor, though they were obviously of a very different sort from the boys his mother had complained of. They didn't like him because he wouldn't play fair. One afternoon they were playing knuckles. He gave all the other boys their knuckles, but refused to take his. When he came next day for his lesson they were waiting for him, three to one, to give him his knuckles. They beat him up thoroughly before his tutor rescued him wailing from their clutches. She talked with him and tried to make him see what fair play meant, but when he left her house he was still resentful, and kicked over ten bags of leaves that her brothers had raked from the lawn. After he had been fighting, she said, he was unstrung and in no condition to be taught. He was not without his good qualities in her eyes, nevertheless. He was willing to help older people, and sometimes offered to run errands.

His tutor at length persuaded the principal to give Harry another chance in school. He was put into a third grade for spelling, word drill, and part of his arithmetic, into a second grade for history, and a first grade for reading and some arithmetic. With a good effort it was thought he might make the fourth grade. Even if he got into the fourth grade at twelve years, he would still be three years retarded on the education scale. His behavior in school gave perpetual trouble. He pinched the boys, pulled the girls' hair, and was obnoxious generally. His teacher considered him mentally deficient, and though apparently making an effort he was not doing as well as the six-year-old children.

Among the neighbors he still made mischief, ingenious in its variety. He undressed the baby living next door, and its parents had him put under bail. At another house he cut the rubber from a clothes-wringer on the back porch.

The tutor thought Harry was the victim of his parents' neglect, and said that the family was regarded as socially impossible. His father, she said, showed no concern whatever for the boy, and his mother rarely knew where her son was. The tutor's mother approved so little of the way things were going in Harry's family, that she would not permit her daughter to be seen entering their house, although she was willing the boy should come to her home for his lessons.

Dr. Maxfield advised the tutor to punish Harry more severely for refusing to read. On the other hand, he warned her not to interfere between Harry and the boys, and if possible not to betray any sympathy with the attitude of the neighbors toward the family affairs. The report given by the tutor of Harry's behavior and lack of progress in school, confirmed Dr. Maxfield in his opinion that the boy was feeble-minded. While the family life had undoubtedly fostered his tendencies to incorrigibility, it was by no means a sufficient cause to account for his inability to adapt himself to the boys' code of honor, or his failure to respond to teaching. The tutor was advised to continue her work during the rest of the school year, with the object of getting him ready to enter a boarding school. There it would soon appear whether he could get on with other boys in a more wholesome environment.

In the spring Harry's mother brought him to the Clinic for further advice. Her report of his school work was about the same as had been given by the tutor several months before. Harry had gained in height and weight, but had learned almost nothing new. He read words of two and three letters in the first reader. One word of four letters, *nest*, he recognized after spelling it out. One of three letters, *oak*, he failed to recognize. He was told what the other words in the paragraph were, and was immediately asked to read it again, but failed to remember a single one of the words missed on the first reading. As before, his auditory memory span was four digits.

The diagnosis was congenital cerebropathy of uncertain etiology, resulting in feeble-mindedness; grade, low-grade imbecile (Barr classification). Transfer to a training school for feeble-minded children was recommended, and several schools were discussed with the mother.

That she failed to act upon this recommendation was evident about ten days later, when Harry was excluded from the public school as an undesirable pupil. He had been persistently unruly, and the principal found he was learning nothing. His mother reacted in her characteristic manner to what she regarded as a fresh attack upon her boy. She threatened to prosecute the school officials for Harry's exclusion, and was brought to a standstill by a demand from the principal that the boy be examined again at the Clinic, parents and school alike to abide by the result of the examination. She agreed then that a report of the previous examination might be given to the principal. Dr. Maxfield urged her again to send Harry to a training school for backward children. This she refused to do, but was obliged to yield reluctant consent to his transfer to a special class.

Harry has been in the special class for six months. The Clinic has lately received this report from the principal: "I cannot say that Harry has made much progress in learning to read or in his regular school work. However he has surprised us very much with the little things he makes with his hands. He spends a great deal of time in the manual training room, and his progress there is quite remarkable. His deportment is much better, but his attendance is very poor."

Now that Harry's behavior has been noted over a length of time by several competent observers; now that the testimony of the neighbors has been set over against the statements of his mother, and due allowances made for personal bias; now that his accomplishments in clinical tests on two different occasions, and his failure to progress in the branches of the school curriculum are on record, we have in hand abundant material for a mental analysis of the boy. When his performances are analyzed into their psychological elements, and these are rated by the five-point scale upon Dr. Witmer's diagnostic chart, Harry's deficiencies stand out clearly. The first item on the chart, which in a sense qualifies all the other ratings, takes account of the financial position of his family, the care they have given him, and the discipline at home. His parents are not of the wealthiest, but their means are ample and may be rated as four. They have fed and clothed him well, but surely they could have afforded to give Harry better opportunities in the way of schooling. Their care of him may be set down as three, that is, median, but not up to their financial ability. Home discipline could hardly have been worse, and it therefore takes a rating of one on the chart.

The next four items give no concern. Harry is of average height and weight for his age. He is a typical American boy in appearance, and there are no anatomical or physiological anomalies of growth. As he has no markedly feminine traits, he scores five for masculinity. It might seem that his conduct displays a degree of atavism, but this is allowed for in his high rating on the scale of masculinity.

On the culture scales, civilization must be rated five, as the scale of living is luxurious; but education receives only one, because Harry is between four and five years retarded in school progress. His social proficiency is low. He has small efficiency in the operations required to keep a human being above the criterion of sufficiency, and the range of operations is decidedly limited. He is twelve and a half years old, and he cannot read, write, and cipher. For these reasons he has been diagnosed as a low-grade imbecile, which gives him a rating of I^m. Harry's behavior does not by any

means conform to the social requirements for boys. He has not as yet been actually put behind bars as a result of his misconduct, but he has several times been brought into Court and his parents have had to pay for the property he has destroyed. He is ostracized by his schoolmates. We may place him on the borderline of conformity with a rating of two.

The next four items under the heading of vitality are easily disposed of. His energy is excessive and is discharged at a rapid rate. He is tireless in everything not intellectual, and his health is excellent.

Sensibility is adequate. He has good vision and hearing. Taste, smell, touch, and kinesthesia appear to be normal. From his pleasure in giving pain, and his lack of adroitness in escaping pain at the hands of others, we may infer that he has less sensitivity to pain than to other stimuli.

It is in the more particularly psychological qualities that Harry's deficiency is greatest. His analytic concentration is very poor, and persists for a very brief span of time. The distribution of his attention is a little better, and his alertness better still, almost median in fact. His range of interests is below median, although it covers a great variety of mischief.

Harry has good control of movement, good coordination, and plenty of initiative. The complexity of his response is below median, but his vivacity is above median.

Under the general head of imagination we may infer that his imageability is below median. His associability is very poor, as shown in his memory span for four digits and his failure to associate words with their symbols. The complexity of his associations is very limited, and the range of associations is below median.

Among the specific subgroups of imagination, Harry's observation is below median. His understanding of what is expected of him seems adequate; his deficiency is in carrying it out. His planfulness is below median. His intelligence is poor in everything except manual construction and inventing new forms of destructive mischief. In the particular field of memory, Harry's deficiencies are notable. His memory is neither trainable for a short period, nor retentive over a longer period of time.

If any one factor is to be blamed for Harry's long history of insufficiency and misconduct, it must be his handsome appearance and splendid physique. His mother brought him up (or allowed him to bring himself up) by the same system which had made his elder brothers into successful young men. His teachers found it hard to believe that a boy so fine looking, so sturdy, so perfect in health,

HARRY		I	II	III	IV	V	Date, 1-22-1917
		--	-	Median	+	+ +	
Born Aug., 1904.. F. C. D.		D		C	F		
Height				✓			
Weight { for age for height				✓			
Growth.....	Species			✓			
	Age A. P.			✓			
Sex.....	Masculinity					✓	
	Femininity						
Culture.....	Civilization					✓	
	Education	✓					
Competency.... (social)	Proficiency	I.III					
	Efficiency	✓					
	Operations	✓					
	Conformity		✓				
Vitality.....	Energy					✓	
	Rate					✓	
	Endurance					✓	
	Health					✓	
Sensibility.....	Liminal				✓		(Prob. high threshold for pain)
	Discrimination			✓			
Attention.....	Concentration Anal.	✓					
	Concentration Pers.	✓					
	Distribution		✓				
	Alertness			✓			
	Interests R		✓				
Movement.....	Control				✓		
	Coordination				✓		
	Initiative				✓		
Responsiveness..	Complexity		✓				
	Vivacity				✓		
Imagination.... (general)	Imageability		✓				
	Associability (M. S.)	✓					
	Complexity	✓					
Imagination.... (specific)	Observation		✓				
	Understanding			✓			
	Planfulness		✓				
Memory.....	Intelligence		✓				
	Trainability	✓					
	Retentiveness	✓					

could possibly be mentally deficient. With mental deficiency one expects to find certain blemishes of body, certain so-called stigmata of degeneracy, and some degree of ill health. Harry had none of these. The people most interested in him turned from one factor to another, from the school to the family, from the family to the community and to his playmates, in quest of a remediable influence, but for years they never thought of searching the boy's mind for the cause of his unruliness. When they finally brought Harry to the Psychological Clinic, even the examiner was impressed by his beauty and was unwilling to pronounce him mentally deficient upon his first performances in mental tests. But the Clinic went on collecting evidence through its social service department over a period of more than a year, and when all the facts were dovetailed together around the results of two clinical examinations of the boy, his mental status was determined beyond the possibility of doubt.

What is to become of Harry remains to be seen. The longer his mother holds out against the judgment of the school, the community, the psychologist,—even against her own better judgment, and keeps her beautiful and irresponsible boy near her to gratify her maternal feeling, just so much the greater are his chances of committing some act which will place him definitely with the class of criminal imbeciles.