Although the law under which the Juvenile Court of Milwaukee operates is far from perfect, it is still complete enough to enable us to do much towards checking youthful waywardness and reducing the handicaps which fate has placed in the path of many an unfortunate child.

The children, the parents, and the community in general are indeed fortunate to have two such kind-hearted, broad-minded, conscientious men as Hon. N. B. Neelen, judge of Juvenile and District Courts, and Mr. William F. Zuerner, chief probation officer, to apply and carry out the provisions of this law.

Both have trod the thorny path, have come in actual contact, in their own lives, with the difficulties which surround many of the youngsters brought before them today, and are thus able to appreciate a situation when presented to them, and able to advise a course of procedure to overcome such difficulties.

Judge Neelen, who has presided in Juvenile Court since its inception ten years ago, and who has also occupied the bench in District Court for more than fifteen years, has listened to more tales of human misery and depravity in that time, probably, than any other man in the community.

In many instances, when children are brought before him in Juvenile Court, he finds that he has had the parents of these same children before him in District Court at some time in the past, and is thus able to more clearly understand the odds against which the child must contend, and can decide matters more equitably than if he did not know these things.

Many, at least temporary, discouragements are met by the probation officers in the course of a year’s work, but there are most always enough entries on the “joy” side of the ledger when accounts are closed, to leave a tidy balance in favor of all efforts put forth by the officer. This “balance” serves as a convenient reserve fund for the officer to draw from in the future, when he becomes especially discouraged.

Some years ago a woman petitioned to bring her 15 year old son before Juvenile Court. It developed at the trial that she was a widow, had two sons, of whom this one was the eldest, and was herself compelled to work every day to support the family; this boy not only persistently refused to work or go to school, but insisted on roaming the streets, associating with bad company, and abusing and threatening his mother when she attempted to correct him; he was, as a matter of course, placed on probation and ordered to get busy and behave himself. He proved a very elusive subject, requiring a great deal more of the officer’s time than was his due to make him even comply with the formality of reporting; he would not hold a job long, even when one was secured for him. The mother, as is natural, did not wish to prosecute the lad too strongly, for fear that he might be committed to the Industrial School. She was inclined to shield him and would always tell the probation officer that John was much better than before, and that she was satisfied, although it was evident that she was not telling the whole truth.

The law at that time set 16 years as the maximum age for juvenile offenders, and John soon passed his sixteenth birthday and was dismissed by limitation, although he was not yet what he
should have been. Over a year passed and John had become but a mere memory, as the probation officer's time was quite fully occupied with the welfare of many other boys, when a letter came to him from John in Chicago, saying that he was there living with a relative and could get work if he only had a letter of recommendation from somebody who had known him for a time. John wrote that he now fully realized that he had not acted as he should in the past, but was now ready to settle down and be a man. He was willing to leave his fate entirely in the probation officer's hands. Such confidence and faith could not be ignored, old grievances were entirely forgotten and the desired letter was promptly written. Shortly after John wrote to his former probation officer, thanking him for his kindness, stating that he had secured the desired position and would surely make good.

A few months later a confidential letter was received from a big firm in Chicago, stating that John had made application for a position of trust with them and that they wished to know something about him; the accompanying blank was filled out as favorable to John as possible and he got the job, and at last accounts is still there and doing well. That is enough to balance up a whole carload of youthful foolishness. The seed sown on apparently barren soil has taken root and gives promise of a bountiful crop. Many other incidents of like nature might be mentioned. Not all cases, however, have such a happy ending.

A 14 year old boy was brought into court for stealing; a livery stable man testified that the lad, who was very neatly dressed and had the features and manners of an angel, came to his barn some time before and asked permission to exercise some of his horses; he got quite well acquainted with the boy, whose innocent appearance entirely won his confidence. One day he entrusted him with $40 to take to the bank and gave him the use of a pony to ride. Neither boy nor pony came back that night. The pony was found tied to a post on the opposite side of the city from the barn and returned to the owner next morning; the boy was later located in a town in Illinois; he was brought home; the liveryman was reimbursed and the boy placed on probation. Six months later Frank disappeared, also $50 or more from a neighbor's purse; he was later located in a hotel in Minneapolis, where he said he was waiting for his brother, who was coming from Harvard to meet him; Frank was brought home; the $50 paid back by parents and he was given another chance. Once more he left home taking $100 belonging to his parents; this time he borrowed a pony and cart which he drove around for a day and night, and then tried to sell in a neighboring town; he was again brought to court and at the earnest entreaty of his parents that he, be not sent to the Industrial School, he was turned over to a Sectarian Institution. Within three months of his arrival there he entered the private apartments of the priest in charge, stole $50 in cash and other things, and ran away; he was arrested by local detectives, returned to court and finally committed to the Industrial School. This boy is to be greatly pitied. He has an irresistible desire to do these things; he is intelligent enough to know that it is wrong; he seems thoroughly repentant after these escapades, and for some time afterwards his conduct is all that one would ask until suddenly the demon has him again. Such cases are fortunately very rare.

Among the most difficult cases with which the probation officer has to deal are children of parents whose motto is, to use a paraphrase of that popular rag-time song, "Every Movement Has a (Money Value) of Its Own." These are generally parents of easy conscience. Their children are regarded more as revenue producers than otherwise. They are sent to school not a day longer than the law compels, and all spare moments during school years are devoted to making money, or bringing home anything that happens to lay around loose. No questions, apparently, are asked as to where the

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