

ASTROLOGY IN THE COURTS

Not so very long ago it was a rule that an eye must be given for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. If a person committed a crime, no matter what the provocation, no matter what the circumstances, he must suffer a certain punishment and there was no escape from the law once he was discovered. But in recent years a more humane policy has been adopted and we now have probation and suspended sentences whereby first offenders are given another chance and opportunity to redeem themselves in the social polity. Every year sees new applications and a widening scope of this method of dealing with the weak by sympathy instead of by scorn and retaliation.

The Boston City Council has just passed an ordinance which, when properly administered, will be a long step in the right direction; viz., the establishment of a medical department and psychological laboratory in connection with the Police Court. All offenders will be passed through this department before they are brought into court, and it will be the duty of this department to inquire into their mental condition and the hereditary influences which may have been responsible for their present plight. The environment in which they have lived will also be taken into consideration and the report that will go with each to the judge's desk will show whatever mitigating circumstances there may be to be taken into consideration, and thus it will enable him to pass sentence in such a manner that justice is tempered with mercy, and a humanitarian policy adopted toward the offenders. Surely this is legislation of the most altruistic and enlightened kind. The bare, bald fact that a man has stolen, for instance, is not sufficient reason for the retaliatory process of harsh prison treatment. Before we judge him we ought to find out why he did the act, what pressure of circumstances or mental obliquity caused him to appropriate that which belonged to another. The Editor remembers a case, which recently happened in Los Angeles, where the officers went to arrest a man who had stolen some trifling thing and they found both him and his wife together with six children on the point of collapse from starvation. Needless to say that they immediately went out and bought a supply of food worth a number of times as much as the man had stolen, and that employment was found for the man so that he could support his family by honest work. Surely it would have been a shortsighted policy to demand that this man be punished, and under a system such as that now being tried in Boston, we may look for great things when the adoption has become countrywide, as probably it will be soon.

But while a psychological laboratory such as provided for in the ordinance is a long step in the right direction, it does not go far enough. We have said many times before and we now reiterate that there ought to be an astrologer in connection with every Court, for such an official could, by tracing the figure of every offender brought in, see not only the past and the present, but also the future, and he would therefore be able to advise the courts that at such and such a future time the conditions of temptation would again become strong in the person under consideration so that preventive measures could at that time be taken to help him over the critical period. In the cases of juvenile offenders, the services of the astrological bureau would be invaluable, both to the growing youth and the community in which he is to live, and be a factor for good or ill, an asset or a liability, a source of revenue or an item of expense. The world is gradually re-discovering astrology and some day it will again be installed in its rightful place as a science of life and a phase of religion. Let us be thankful for the department of psychology in Boston.

Let us pray that soon every city in the Union, yes, or in the world, may have a similar bureau, for it is a step toward the greater and more efficient astrological bureau, and in the meantime, let us do all we can to spread the knowledge of our sacred science so that it may soon win the respect and confidence of the community.