

The Commoner.

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WHITHER ARE WE DRIFTING ?

McClure's Magazine recently printed a symposium of comments on the prevalence of crime and lawlessness in the United States. It is explained that these comments are taken "almost at random from representative and serious newspapers and from the published statements of judges and citizens." The opinion is expressed that "these statistics confirm the general impression regarding the rapid and alarming increase of lawlessness in our country," and it is pointed out that at present there are four and one-half times as many murders and homicides for each million of people in the United States as there were in 1881.

McClure's has done the public a distinct service by the publication of this symposium and it would be well for all good citizens to seriously consider the situation described.

The Indianapolis News says that there has been something very like civil war in Chicago, shameful negro burning in Georgia, labor riots in New York city, war on law and order in Colorado, a touch of anarchy even in the army. "What does it all mean?" asks the News. "Are our people losing not merely their respect for law, but their very sense of what law means?" Then the News says that corporations, aided and abetted by able lawyers, violate laws or evade them; that the railroads in Indianapolis have hardly made a pretense of complying with the ordinances requiring flag men and safety cuts; that the water company gives sometimes pure and sometimes river water. The News charges that one cause for this deplorable condition is "the total indifference of the people" that they do not insist that the laws be enforced.

The New York World pointed to the fact that a woman in Rochester, N. Y., stabbed another woman to death, was found not guilty and that this woman was lionized by the jurors and "plainly made to feel herself a heroine in the public estimation."

Chief Justice Charles B. Lore, of the Delaware court, addressing the Universal Peace Union, said:

Lawlessness pervades the land, unrest and discontent breed over-apparent prosperity. We have become the money center of the world, but this has bred a feverish appetite for gold, with all its vulgar accompaniments. * * *

We would call a halt upon our captains of industry who have brought our country to its present height of frenzied speculation. Plants worth only thousands of dollars are, by the magic of watered stocks and glittering advertisements, swollen into millions.

Gigantic frauds are palmed upon the people as successful business enterprises. Our greatest financiers are racking their brains to circumvent the law and the people, and by lawlessness achieve wealth, being careful only to keep outside of actual violence and the common jail.

When their cunning evasions of the law are crowned with success all men are tempted to lawlessness. Captains of industry, how much of the unrest, the mob violence, and the labor troubles of the time, have been bred and fostered by your methods? We ask for an answer!

In his charge to the grand jury at Montgomery, Ala., Judge Thomas uttered strong warnings against the increase in crime. He quoted figures to show that the number of homicides in the United States for three years was one-third larger than either the total number of people killed on the railroads in the same period or the total loss in the wars in South Africa.

In a recent publication Justice Brewer of the United States supreme court, said that in consequence of delayed justice criminals become bolder and crime more frequent while in still further consequence the people feel forced now and then to take the law into their own hands.

President Henry Hopkins of Williams College, in a recent address, declared that the prevalence of crime in this country is greater at the present time than ever before and that the foundations of national honor are threatened.

The Chicago Record-Herald replying to the New York criticisms of Chicago, declared "New York herself is gravely concerned over an epidemic of murders, robberies and holdups. Her police seem utterly ineffective and Chicago is looking about to discover the cause and find a remedy."

The Pittsburg Gazette in its issue of November 12 said that since January 1, 1903, twenty-six murders have been committed within the city limits of Pittsburg and that the assassins of twelve of the victims escaped the police. The Gazette charged that in some instances the officers know who the slayers are.

The Chicago Daily News says that robberies are increasing in number in Chicago and that highwaymen are more bold and more desperate than formerly; that there has been a marked and significant change in the character of these crimes during recent years; where formerly a footpad rarely resorted to violence save as a means of avoiding arrest, today the robber's weapon is used to injure, maim and kill. The News places the responsibility for many of the failures to enforce law and administer justice upon the "political pull" that protects the dive keeper, and it adds that the same villainous influence hampers the administration of justice and secures light sentences and Bridewell pardons.

A San Francisco dispatch to the New York Sun says that for a fortnight there has been a robbery in San Francisco for every day and that since October 14, 1898, one hundred and fourteen murders, exclusive of Chinese killings, have been committed in that city, while no one has been sent to the gallows. This dispatch says that there have been forty-seven murders in San Francisco for which no one was arrested.

In its issue of September 21, 1904, the Chicago Record-Herald said that the "sweep of crime over the whole city arouses citizens."

The Louisville, Ky., Herald printed a partial list of crimes committed in Breathitt county in recent years. This "partial list" shows that during the period named there were twenty-eight assassinations or attempted assassinations in that one county and that among the persons killed were three women.

The Charleston, S. C., News and Courier said that the safest crime in South Carolina is the crime of taking human life; that murder and violence are distinguishing marks of our present-day civilization." We do not enforce the law. The News and Courier adds: "We have grown so accustomed to the failure of justice in cases where human life is taken by violence that we excuse one failure and another until it will become a habit and the strong shall prevail over the weak, and the man who slays his brother shall be regarded as the incarnation of power."

The Memphis Commercial Appeal said: "Life in this community is cheap."

The New York Sun pointed to the fact that 222 homicides were committed in South Carolina during the year 1903.

The Chicago Daily News printed the following editorial:

There is less crime in English cities as a rule than in American cities, because of the

more efficient police systems abroad, and the absence of political considerations in the administration of police forces. London, with an area of 688 square miles and a population of 6,500,000, had twenty-four murders last year. There was no "undiscovered crime," as the murderers were all arrested, except in four cases, where they committed suicide. Chicago, with less than one-third of the population and area covered by the London or metropolitan police, had 128 homicides reported. In eighteen cases the murderers were killed at the time of the crime or committed suicide; four other cases were those of officers who did the killing in the performance of their duties, leaving 106 cases for the police to work upon. Out of that number, thirty-four convictions were secured, while in nineteen cases no arrests were made, and in fifty-three cases the arrests did not result in convictions. London has proportionately a larger police force, and the London judges sentenced nine prisoners to be hung and sent four to an insane asylum. Only one man was hung in Chicago. Clearly, the London police and the London judges are much above those of Chicago in the performance of their duty.

The Chicago Journal says:

In Chicago during the past year there were 118 homicides, besides a large number of deadly assaults, in which the victims recovered or partially recovered.

In Paris, according to statistics just completed by the police in that city, only fifteen murders or attempted murders occurred in the same period. In London, three or four times the size of Chicago in population, there were twenty murders.

These figures illustrate the situation in Chicago. More than eight times as many murders in Chicago as in Paris! Six times as many as in London!

The McClure symposium makes a terrific arraignment of political methods in vogue in the United States. It maintains that the enforcement of law can not be expected from officials who are elected generally for reasons other than their special fitness for their tasks and frequently for the definite purposes of robbing the people who elect them. McClure's describes the oligarchy which consists of these three classes:

1st. Saloon keepers, gamblers and others who engage in businesses that degrade.

2d. Contractors, capitalists, bankers and others who can make money by getting franchises and other property of the community cheaper by bribery than by paying the community.

3d. Politicians who are willing to seek and accept office with the aid and endorsement of the classes already mentioned.

According to McClure's the oligarchy gets control of the party machine, nominates and elects men who will agree to help it rob the city or state and who will agree also not to enforce the laws in regard to the various businesses that degrade a community of this description. It is said:

We find under various modifications this criminal oligarchy in control of many communities in the United States. We find representatives of this combination in the United States senate, among governors of states, state legislators, mayors, aldermen, police officials. We find them among men in business life—captains of industry, bankers, street-railway magnates. In short, wherever franchises or contracts of any kind are to be secured from a