

The Alliance Herald

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THE EFFICACY OF JAIL SENTENCES

Again County Judge Tash has been vindicated, if there was ever any doubt that his position was wrong. Some weeks ago, in a talk at a church, he announced his belief that the fear of God and of punishment was a potent factor in doing away with sin and crime. There were some who were inclined to doubt the wisdom of this statement, but it has again been demonstrated.

Judge Tash, some time ago, declared that he intended to do his best to put a stop to the issuing of "no fund" checks. There had been a regular epidemic of this sort of thing, with the result that the county court docket was cluttered up with cases where the man who made the complaint had no intention of prosecuting and desired simply to have the county collect the money. The court decided that it would serve no more as a collection agency and that thereafter any man or woman charged with drawing a check when he or she had no funds in the bank to cover it would be held to district court. Notices to this effect were issued. Since that time there have been but two cases. Other counties are still worrying about the "no fund" check evil, but it has ceased to exist in Box Butte county.

Judge Tash has now turned his attention to the bootleggers and the men who buy and consume their products. Since the first of the year he has had but one standard for fines—the maximum. In only one case has the fine been less than the maximum, and in only one case has any portion of the punishment been suspended.

During the past week or two, the judge has changed his tactics again. The fine of \$50 for intoxication has not proved heavy enough to put a stop to the crime. However, it is within the discretion of the court to impose a jail sentence. Thirty days or sixty days in the county jail, it is believed, will have a better effect than a fine. And so the judge is handing out sentences of this sort where he thinks the effect will be salutary. Those interested in prohibition enforcement are watching the experiment with interest. There is every reason to believe that it will be fully as successful as the handing out of heavy punishment for the men who drew checks without funds to pay them.

The law provides, in cases of intoxication, that the defendant may, if he sees fit, disclose to the proper officials the name of the person from whom the liquor was procured, upon which the judge may remit the punishment. With only a \$50 fine staring the culprit in the face, this provision has seldom been used. The average drunk feels that his honor will not permit him to divulge the source of supply, and he would rather pay the money and take chances of collecting from the bootlegger than violate the confidence reposed in him by the man who makes and sells it. With the understanding that he may get a jail sentence, however, unless he comes through with information, the culprit will think pretty hard before he goes to jail.

What a delicious bit of humor there is in this "honor" talk, as applied to bootleggers and their product. A man will sell a homemade compound that isn't fit to be drunk; he will ask twenty times what it is worth, and take the money without a blush; he may know that it is as deadly as hydrocyanic acid, and yet he can stand back and count his profits secure in the thought that his victim is an honorable man and will not "squeal." One business man told the police officers that he would give \$500 to have the bootlegger convicted who had sold hooch to his son—and yet, two days afterward, when approached by one of that tribe on the street, held that it was a point of honor not to inform the police. It might have been the same man who debauched his son—but honor—God save the mark—stood in the way of justice.

There is needed, to control the white mule traffic, a bunch of vigilantes—substantial business men—who will unite with wholehearted enthusiasm to stamp out the whole race of hounds who will sell poison. It won't be pleasant work; it may mean that they'll have to go on the stand and perhaps lose some trade from friends of the bootleggers. Men with exalted and perverted notions of honor won't approve of their activities, but they'll have the respect of decent people, and that of the others isn't worth having. Add to this recipe a bucket of tar, a sack of feathers and a rough pole for the fellows who will sell white mule to boys, and there's a pretty good start toward law observance. The courts, in giving adequate sentences, and the newspapers, by pitiless publicity, can complete the job. It's worth doing, and it's worth doing well.

TAKING THE KICK FROM THE MOVIES

Just how tame do you want your movies? It appears that every reformer has something that he wants eliminated, and that no two of them are agreed on the same list of things that must be taken out before it will be safe to allow little John or his sister to sit on the front row. This week a group of movie producers and a mess of reformers are meeting in New York City, and under the guidance of Dr. Wilbur Crafts and William A. Brady, have slated for the scrap heap such things as vampires, sex appeals, marathons, crime, nakedness, ridicule of church or state and gambling.

It is something of a question in this editorial mind as to whether a movie would be worth seeing if all these things were eliminated. Some of them could well be spared. We have yet to discover a single person, child or adult, who really likes the vampire stuff, for instance. If you'll stop to think it over, you will realize that there hasn't been a real vampire film for five or six months. The producers found they didn't draw well, and they have been gently but firmly dropped from the list. Even Theda Bara, the queen of all the vamps (but a perfect lady in private life, of course) is temporarily out of work, so a recent article in a coast magazine declares.

If sex appeals are to be left out of plots in the future, a whole lot will have to depend on the definition of the term. Almost all of the catchy love tales are based on sex appeal, and if a strict blue nose censors the films, he'd

rule out productions like "Twenty-three and a Half Hours' Leave," where an army sergeant falls quite shamelessly in love with a general's daughter—or was it a niece—and manages to win her. By marathon kisses, we suppose everything over the eight-foot limit will be barred. Those long movie kisses only make the audience bored, nervous or envious, and therefore they can be dispensed with without adverse comment.

Under the proposed plans, there will be no crime in the movies. Gope forever will be the story of the pretty girl pickpocket or the winsome second-story worker who falls in love with one of her victims and is reformed before our very eyes. If ridicule of church or state is barred, we'll have no more tales of political bosses of the Tammany sort, for this would be lese majesty. No more will the comics poke fun at the police and the Gus Hyers type of booze hound. No more will we see the comic with the Toonerville cops chasing law-violators mile and miles over the roofs of buildings. If there are no gambling scenes, all marriage ceremonies will of necessity be forbidden. With nakedness ruled out, bid farewell to all the bathing beach beauties.

It is possible only to conjecture the terrible change that will come over the silver screen when all of these reforms have been carried out. About the only thing left will be dramatizations of biblical scenes, some of which will have to be expurgated before they will stand the test. Of course, the producers can use the Elsie books, too. There will also be a reel or two of current events, and maybe a travelogue or a Ford educational weekly. However, it will be safe to let the children go to the picture show without fear that their moral resistance will be weakened, and this should compensate the adults for staying at home, for that sort of a program wouldn't draw the average grown person two blocks on any kind of a night.

Sometimes the thought comes to us that it would be well to let the reformers and childless child welfare experts have their own way in regard to the movies, without let, hindrance or interference from the general public. If this were done, it is likely that after one year of censored films, the great American public would rise in its wrath and kill all the censors and massacre the welfare experts and other reformers, after which life would be one sweet dream for at least a generation.

THE WETNESS OF PROHIBITION

One of the strange things about this present-day civilization is the ease with which men—some of them fairly steady in the upper story—attempt to kid themselves along with the idea that simply because it is possible to get around the prohibition laws; prohibition is a failure and that conditions are worse than they were before the country went dry. There is hardly a town or city in the nation where the police and prison records will not show that there has been a diminution of all kinds of crime during the dry and dusty years of prohibition, and that despite the alarming amount of bootlegging, conditions, on the whole, are much better than in the old days when he still could be bought over the mahogany bars. Unfortunately, the fact that bootleggers are willing to take the risk of selling hooch is used as an argument that there isn't any such thing as prohibition.

It's so easy to talk through one's hat. The very fact that the price of a low grade whisky substitute, strong and vile enough to kill a dog at forty rods, can command a price of \$25 a gallon is an indication that only fools will continue their drinking. Wise men wouldn't pay that sum for homemade goods. Those who are chumps of that caliber, and who are willing to insult their stomachs by drinking it, would play the fool in some other way if there were no booze to be had. This sort of stuff that is being sold nowadays will finish the average rum hound in six months or a year, and every one of the old time bar flies who passes on leaves a much better lesson for his cronies in death than his life ever furnished. The booze problem won't be a problem in another five years, at this rate.

The example of the helpful hen may well be studied by followers of the industries these days. Although the price of eggs has fallen 25 cents a dozen in the last two weeks, she goes right on producing just the same—Lawrence (Kan.) Journal-World.

One of life's inconsistencies—a mouse is afraid of a man, a man is afraid of a woman, and a woman is afraid of a mouse.—Wiggins (Colo.) Courier.

One of the country's greatest needs for 1921 is a few first-class funerals of third-class yeggmen.

THE CHANGING SENTIMENT

(Bridgeport News-Blade)
The so-called "wave of crime" will be checked, and a return made to law and order, only through the solidifying of public sentiment for law and order; and the sentiment is undergoing a great change right now. All over the country juries are bringing in convictions upon evidence which would have stood for acquittal under ordinary conditions.

The editor saw many murder trials in Box Butte county during a rather long residence there, and few convictions were had. The man who stole a steer in those days had a poor chance to get away, for public opinion was against cattle stealing, and public sentiment always finds its way into jury rooms; but the protection of life had not found so strong a place in the public mind, and murders and minor crimes against persons and properties went practically unpunished and could be committed almost with impunity.

But at Alliance the other day a woman was convicted of murder—an almost unheard of thing in the state—and was given thirty years in the penitentiary as a punishment. At Gering John Guyton was convicted of rape last Friday, upon evidence that didn't seem particularly strong, yet which probably proved his guilt. And all over the country, judging from newspaper reports, juries are disdaining quibbling defenses and are bringing accused persons straight to justice without delay. This sentiment will in time solve the problem of the "wave of crime" and will make the enforcement of law a thousand fold easier for our public officials.

BEER ON PRESCRIPTION

(Omaha Bee)

The determination at Washington to adhere to the ultimate decision of A. Mitchell Palmer that whisky and beer may be used, and even manufactured, for medicinal purposes promises great relief to a land that is theoretically arid and parched, but really is far from such. It is not yet definitely known just what type of disease will be specifically served by the application of beer as a tonic or remedy as a stimulant, but we may prepare for an epidemic of the same when once a name is put to it. The onward sweep of the "flu" will be snail-like in comparison. Moreover, the officials at Washington, tentatively debating the matter, say it is not reasonable to expect that a bottle or two will do for one who is ordered to take beer as a tonic; he will be permitted to have it brought to his home by the case. This we take it, equally applies to the man who is condemned through physical weakness and necessity to take his "mornin's mornin'" and his night-cap as well in form of a good full three-finger "hooker" of whisky, and he will be allowed to have reasonable supply, say a gallon or two at a time, at home. Looks like we are in for a dreadful lot of sickness during the next few months.

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