

What Makes Men Go Wrong?



First Nebraska state prison

Adam Blamed Eve;
Descendants Blame—?



Warden W. F. Fenton, who stamped out drug traffic at the Nebraska state penitentiary



Administration building, Nebraska penitentiary

By P. C. Powell.
Adam was the first criminal. He stole the apple and broke the first law of the palm leaf days. The reason Adam went wrong is simple.

Eve tempted him. From that day to the present certain of their descendants have inherited the criminal instinct, or phenomena, which defies the laws made by men and built around the 10 "Thou shalt not" statutes.

As the population increased, criminals multiplied in proportion. The doors of the Nebraska penitentiary are closed today to any more inmates. County jails are holding convicted men until space is found for them in the penitentiary.

Scientists and students of criminology have studied and endeavored to find reasons for this criminal phenomena for years.

Reasons advanced are varied. They include:

Hereditary weakness. Environment, faulty social structure, broken homes, laziness, greed, modern Eves, ignorance, jealousy, drugs.

Blames Broken Homes. Warden W. F. Fenton of the Nebraska penitentiary blames broken homes, a desire for easy money and weak minds.

"Probably 50 per cent of the boys in here suffered the loss of a father or mother when young, or their parents were divorced," he said. "Maybe this condition made them lose family pride, envy other boys, made them unruly, threw them among bad associates or left them facing the world with little education. Any of these can start a boy off wrong."

"Many go wrong because it looks like an easy way to get money. Others are weak-minded." State Sheriff Gus Hyers, whose father was a sheriff and later warden of the penitentiary, and who has been chasing criminals himself for years, looks on nearly all criminals as weaklings.

"They may have courage, they may have cunning, they may have fine minds, but they are weak, in



Charley Morley, who shot way through life since he was 15, says society could have reformed him.



John W. Barnhardt, 70, doing time for forgery, was ashamed to work.



Your prison terms to his credit at 46, record of Harry Knight, forger and thief.



Ease of forgery one reason why so many do it, says Robert E. Stone, 'specialist.'



"Love of excitement put me where I am, asserts Izzie Harris, Omaha, suspected of dozen crimes."



Pete Hughes, burglar, likes thrill of getting into house and out again.



"I got so I didn't care," says Billie Bixler, Central High school boy, in trouble for long time.

some way, or they wouldn't take such a chance," Hyers said.

The murderer, officials say, is not an ordinary criminal and he seldom commits more than one crime. Statistics at the Nebraska state penitentiary show that only one murderer who has been released has been returned.

Reasons Apparent.

Excepting the holdup man, the burglar or the bootlegger, who shoot in attempting to escape, the murderer is usually a man crazed with jealousy, an insane man or a man laboring under extraordinary emotion. Reasons for their wrongdoing, generally, are apparent.

The same is true of the man who forges a check while drunk, the man who embezzles funds to get an automobile or pay a mortgage, the man who breaks into a store for food and clothing for his family. They usually go astray once and later become good citizens.

The type that continues to ply the "trade" of forging, "sticking them up," breaking into homes or stealing autos from the days of knee trousers until the end is the phenomena.

Nebraska's penitentiary is full of such men. They also, have reasons for their wrong-doing, and

eight of them chosen by officers as "typical" have told their stories.

Shot Way Through Life.

First comes Charley Morley. Morley is a professional holdup man who has shot his way through life from the time he was 15. He is looked upon as one of the most desperate men in the penitentiary. Morley is sole survivor of the trio, which, headed by "Shorty" Gray, killed Warden Delahunt and two other guards and escaped. Gray was killed and Dowd, the second man, shot himself. Morley is serving life.

At the time of the escape he was serving from 1 to 10 years for holding up a drug store at Forty-third and Cuming streets, Omaha, and prior to the Omaha crime he served time at Jefferson City, Mo., for robbery. One eye is gone. It was shot out in a gun fight in Kansas City years ago and the bullet still is in his head. Morley reads continually. He has taken a course in shorthand and has finished it. He now is taking a correspondence course in engineering. He is 45 and excepting his one brief period of freedom, has been in the penitentiary for 12 years. Warden Fenton says he has developed tuberculosis recently.

My story isn't a very savory one, but I'll tell it," Morley said. "I was born on a farm in Missouri, which bordered the famous Jesse James farm. When I was a boy, I used to see persons thronging the James farm to look it over and heard them talk in admiring terms of his nerve."

Runaway at 14. "My father died when I was young and I had a nasty, willful temper. I wanted to be 'hard-boiled,' and I ran away to Okla-

"I wasn't out long until I took ill. The doctor who attended me gave me drugs for two months until I recovered. I became a 'dope head' and the rest of it is terrible.

"Society had a chance to redeem me when I went to the Missouri penitentiary if it really had cared, or if it hadn't been asleep. But they didn't try to cure me of the habit, as they should, and instead dope was used as an incentive to get more work for the prison contractors.

"I left the penitentiary as bad a man as when I went in. I was caught again after that Omaha job and sent here. Again society had its chance and failed.

"The exposures made after our break proved that dope was peddled almost openly. I was crazed in those days. My system was full of dope, my arms were terrible ulcers and then maybe for a day or two the supply would be shut off. It was terrible. I had only a few months to serve when we made the break. That in itself would prove I was crazed.

"When I came back I faced a life sentence. Warden Fenton had stamped out the dope traffic. They gave me the cure. It nearly killed me. I wanted to die and

tried to kill myself once with a piece of glass and to hang myself another time.

"I was cured, but for years I was nervous, cranky and argumentative. Officers didn't like me. I have a bad prison record.

"I deserve a lot and haven't much more to endure as this cough is getting me fast. Yet, I have this to say. If society had taken more interest in prisons years ago I might be a different man today."

Morley's story of attempts to kill himself are substantiated by prison officials.

John W. Barnhardt is 70. He is serving time for forging a \$3,000 check at Fremont. Officers have a record of a previous sentence served by Barnhardt for a big forgery in Wisconsin.

Made Easy Money.

"I made easy money all my life," Barnhardt said. "I started as a plantation owner in Arkansas and got to buying race horses. I followed the horses east and became a bookmaker.

"Later I owned a saloon in St. Louis. I sold it because I was afraid of the booze. I gambled for years. Then I lost my pile. I didn't like work, really was ashamed of it, and feared the jibes of my old pals if I did work, so I turned crook."

Robert E. Stone is serving time for forgery. He has numerous jail and penitentiary sentences to his credit, always for the same crime, forgery.

"The ease with which a person can forge a check is one reason there are so many forgeries," Stone said. "I can go into almost any department store in America and 'get by' with a forged check."

"How many checks have I forged, you ask?"

"How many drinks of water have you taken?"

"I was left alone by death of my parents at 14. At 15 I was 'vagged' by police in Boston. I was released the next day but that night a man told me how easy it was to forge checks.

I am a railroad switchman. I never was a bum.

Couldn't Refuse Woman.

"But I never could refuse to give a woman what she asked for. 'If I didn't have the money, I got it.'"

Pete Hughes is nearing 60 and is serving his third term for burglary.

"I liked it, the thrill of getting into a house and getting out and the wonderful feeling of relief when I got out of gunshot distance of the house with the stuff in my pocket," Pete said simply. "I didn't have to steal. I worked on Omaha papers as a printer for years and maybe the friends I made in the early morning hours in the saloon might have been a reason, if there is a reason, that anyone on this earth understands."

Sam (Izzie) Harris is known to every Omaha policeman as a "vag" suspected of a dozen crimes, but convicted of few. He is strictly an Omaha product. Auto thefts and forgeries appear to be his hobbies. He is serving time on the latter charge now.

Love of Excitement.

"My dad used to run a hotel on Thirteenth and Howard streets," Izzie said, "and he died of booze, I guess. I never did work except selling papers. Love of excitement maybe, more than anything else, put me where I am."

Billie Bixler, Central High school boy, Omaha, isn't more than 21, but he has been in trouble for a long time. Auto thefts and petty larceny charges have been placed against him time after time.

"My mother is alone," he said. "I was sent to the reformatory. When I came back the Omaha police wouldn't leave me alone and 'vagged' me nearly every time they saw me. I got so I didn't care."

Harry Knight has four prison sentences to his credit at 46 and a wife and two children in Lincoln. Forgeries and small thefts put him in prison every time, except once when at the age of 21 he served time in the Pennsylvania penitentiary on a statutory charge.

The Married Life of Helen and Warren

Warren Discovers an Unusual Restaurant in a Remote Italian Village.

"All this glorious air—and not a window open!" complained Helen. "And they're so dirty you can hardly see out of them."

"Well, we're almost there now," Warren peered through the grimy glass that dimmed the sunlit heights beyond. "This dinky little car's got a lot of power to climb up here."

"If the cable should break!" looking down at the sheer cliffs below. "Doesn't happen to be a cable, contemptuously. Then glancing back, 'See how that track snakes up here—these Italians are good engineers.'"

But Helen felt relieved when they finally drew up in the market place of the quaint mountain-top town of Fiesole—an hour's ride from Florence.

A drowsy, Sunday-quiet hung over the square, deserted save for some clucking chickens and a dog stretched under the shade of an old stone bench.

"Dear, this is one of the most ancient Etruscan towns. Let me read you what it says," turning to the "Environ of Florence."

"Now chuck that guide book! We'll explore for ourselves. Come

on, let's see what we strike along here."

They started up a narrow street of low stone cottages. The door of the living room, opening directly on the sidewalk, disclosed intimate scenes within.

"Do they spend all their time eating and drinking?" wondered Helen, for in almost every house the family sat around a table on which was the inevitable basket of bread and fiasco of wine.

"Guess they're at it all day Sunday—their one indoor sport. Doesn't seem to hurt 'em—they're husky lot."

"Yes, and the children are beautiful," pausing to watch three dazed babies playing in an open doorway.

Further on, small dingy wine, cheese, and bread shops yawned like black caverns from the sunny street.

"Dear, I don't see anything along here that looks like a restaurant."

"We'll keep on till we find one. Now that we're up here, we're not going away back to Florence for lunch."

Wonder where they're headed for?"

A laughing, chattering holiday party had turned into the street from the other end. Pausing before one of the cottages, they all filed in.

There was no sign, nothing to distinguish it from the other houses. Drawing nearer, Warren glimpsed, through the open door, a vine-covered wall beyond.

"I've a hunch that crowd's going to feed here. Come on, we'll see what's doing."

Reluctantly, Helen followed into the dim, low-ceilinged living room—small and stuffy, with an organ, a porcelain stove, and a deep fireplace.

There was no one in sight. Following the voices and laughter, they came out on a long flight of stone steps leading to a garden below, the house being built on the mountain side.

"How about my hunch?" exulted Warren, as they went down the steps to the yard in which were several tables.

Three of these were being shoved together for the party of ten, all gaily helping.

unusual place we've found?"

"Orion said there was a place up here where you got rattling good food. Bet we've struck it right off the reel. That bunch don't look like they'd stand for any second rate fodder."

"Does everything have to be taken up and down those steep steps? Where's the kitchen? On the other side of that living room? Oh, what a dear!" Helen stooped to pet a friendly puppy.

"Got a regular menagerie here." Two cats dozed on the railing, and a big rooster was picking crumbs under a table.

"And look at that goat! Dear, you wouldn't think they'd wash on Sunday?"

In the yard further down the mountain-side, a soiled white goat gravely watched an old woman at a wash-tub. Nearby, a boy was plucking a chicken. On a still lower slope grazed several cows.

"Wonder what that bunch is ordering?" Warren was watching the party, all talking at once. "That fellow at the end'll foot the bill."

"Why do they wear so much jewelry?" Helen appraised his three ornate rings, double watch chain, conspicuous scarf pin and cuff buttons.

"Yes, he's pretty well decked out," shrugged Warren, who loathed jewelry.

"And why do so many Italian women wear black? Those black satin dresses—dear, they look so hot and inappropriate for a place like this."

"They're out for a holiday in all their glad rags. Great guns, look at this!" The proprietress was now coming down the steps with an enormous tray of relishes—salami, pimentos, sardelles, and other antipasti that Helen did not recognize. Another woman followed with two huge Basks of wine.

"That's going to be some party!" grinned Warren. "I don't see any menus," worried Helen. "How're we going to order?"

"If we trail that bunch—we won't go wrong."

Surprised and pleased that her obscure restaurant had been discovered by Americans, the proprietress now approached.

"Antipasti," ordered Warren, nodding at the variety on the large platters.

"Sì, sì!" Beamingly she started off, then turned to toss a soiled napkin over the rail to the washerwoman in the yard below.

"Dear, look, they've eaten all of that spaghetti! Surely, they can't eat anything more."

"They've just started in," chuckled Warren. "See what's coming now!"

Down the steps came the two women bearing great dishes of cold meat—sliced beef and lamb. With this was served a wide bowl of pickled green peppers.

"Dear, we mustn't watch them so—it's awfully rude."

"Huh, they're having the time of their lives—don't know we're here. I like to watch that bunch eat."

Helen had thought the cold meat would be followed by the dessert.

But later, to her amazement, she found the main course was yet to come.

The two women and the boy, each carrying trays of boiled chicken, next trooped down the steps.

"Told you they'd just started in. Been teasing their appetites—now they're getting down to business," Warren was enjoying it hugely.

Once more the procession of three, this time with great bowls of vegetables—string beans, mashed potatoes and spinach.

"How can they?" amazed Helen. "They'll all be sick."

"Not that crowd. Wouldn't want to feed 'em under contract. We'll cut the cold meat and 16 vegetables—but that chicken looks mighty good."

"Then you mustn't eat any more of this," pushing away the spaghetti Warren had ordered. "You never feel well when you eat too much at noon."

"It's different over here—you can stand for a lot more grub. Signora, to the proprietress, 'Duno pollo—like that,' indicating the broiled chicken.

"We're through with this," Helen motioned for her to take the platter.

Disappointed that they had not eaten more, she removed the spaghetti.

But with evident pride, she later served the fragrant, richly-browned chicken—here was something they must enjoy.

"Jove, that's the real Tuscan fowl," was Warren's verdict, munching a second joint. "Best chicken I've had for a blue moon."

"They're going to have salad, too," dismayed Helen. "And more wine! After all that I shouldn't think they'd want to eat for a week."

"If they had to pay New York prices for that feed—they couldn't afford to eat for a week!"

When the empty salad bowls were finally removed, baskets of fruit and a generous mould of cheese were then served to the insatiable party.

"That Gorgonzola looks fine—just about ripe. We'll have to fall for that."

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