

Crimes of Society.

The barbarous antiquity of our criminal law is illustrated by the case of a man of unblemished character who has served a year and a half of a five years' sentence for forgery in the Pennsylvania penitentiary. His identity was mistaken for that of a professional criminal. Such grievous errors might indeed occur under the best possible system of criminal jurisprudence, but the fact of their occurrence is not the gravamen of the indictment against society. The social barbarity consists in the total absence of any fair method of redressing the wrong. When such errors are discovered, the victim is not discharged with honor and awarded compensation for his injury; he is pardoned as an act of mercy. He goes back to his home with the prison taint upon him, and penniless except for charity. If our civilization were truly civilized, its prisoners if it had prisons would be restored, as fully as the nature of each case would permit, to all the rights of which erroneous convictions might have deprived them. Outside of prisons the victim may get damages for the loss of a leg—enough at least to buy a crutch; for the loss of a breadwinner by death, the family may get enough to pay the rent for a few months. But for loss of time and labor in prison under an erroneous conviction, and the consequent death of reputation, there is no remedy. Society says to this victim something like what the careless dentist said to his patient upon finding he had pulled the wrong tooth, "Never mind, my good fellow; I can save the one I intended to pull." And, as with prisoners erroneously convicted, so with prisoners erroneously accused. They are imprisoned unless they can get bail; they are prosecuted with the unlimited resources of the State; they must defend at their own expense, or as paupers, and in either case with the meagerest resources as a rule; and when they are acquitted, nothing whatever is done by society to restore their reputations or even to recompense them for the expense so unjustly imposed upon them.

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Another Dangerous Class.

Is farming a menace to human society? Logically it would seem so. At any rate, the killing of a Catholic priest at his altar in Denver by a crazy Italian who "looked like an anarchist," was widely heralded as an outbreak of anarchy; and now a crazy German, who not only looks like a farmer but really is one, kills a Catholic priest at his altar in Salisbury, Missouri. Doesn't social

preservation demand the suppression of Granges and denial of mail facilities to farmers?

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Christ as Labor's Champion.

There was much more sense than appears upon the surface of the reports, in what a Presbyterian minister said of Christ and Labor at a great mass meeting in Kansas City last Sunday. Christ "is today sending forth a challenge to workingmen," said this preacher, "daring them to accept him as their leader." Considered as a theological allusion to an anthropological god, those words may not strike a responsive chord in our intensely practical life. They may have too high a flavor of other-worldliness. But divest them of the personification, and we may all see instantly that Christ is indeed daring workingmen to accept him as their leader. For what the preacher meant, as the rest of his sermon shows, is that the everlasting principles of truth and justice are challenging the acceptance of workingmen. He was raising aloft the banner of justice against injustice, of the Golden Rule against selfishness. Already labor unions are closer to this principle than business unions. In so far as the business unions unfurl the banner of the Nazarene, it is usually as a fetich; in so far as the labor unions unfurl it, it is usually as a principle of brotherly love. Let them make it wholly their own, and the war between Labor and Privilege will soon be at an end. The Kansas City preacher was right. If the workingmen accept Christ as their leader—in the sense of accepting as their gospel the principle of the Golden Rule, which is the principle of justice—they are sure to win. They may lose many a labor battle, but they will not lose this labor war.

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THE TRUE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS.

Some one is proposing an excellent short cut to a settlement of the railroad question. It comes to us in the form of the first rough draft of a legislative bill embodying the essential idea for which Mayor Johnson of Cleveland has contended—government ownership of railways with competitive private operation of railway service.

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The bill asserts its authority in the preamble, which reads:

Whereas the railroad companies of this State, by discriminating rates and watering stock, have in equity forfeited the right of eminent domain granted