

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

them by the State for transportation purposes, and have tended, and even sometimes sought, to corrupt legislation to such an extent as to threaten the stability of republican government.

Proceeding then from the enacting clause the bill proposes—

That on and after [blank date] any responsible party shall have the right to use a locomotive and cars on any railroad track in this State, on application to the State Train Dispatcher as hereinafter provided. There shall be a man of ability and experience appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the legislature as Train Dispatcher for each railroad in the State, with power to appoint his assistants, and all yard masters and switchmen. He shall have ample compensation, and be responsible to the State only, under heavy penalties for any discrimination among applicants for right of way, each party taking their turn, as boats on the canal. On application of any railroad company for the transfer of title of the road bed and appurtenances to the State, a commission shall be appointed, part by the Governor and part by the local authorities of some of the largest towns on the railroad, to ascertain and report to the legislature, what would be a just compensation for the same, and in no case more than it would cost to duplicate it. On the acquisition by the State of one or more railroad beds and track fixed appurtenances, a permanent commission shall be appointed in such manner as the legislature shall provide, under which said road bed, tracks and fixed appurtenances shall be maintained in complete order and condition at State expense for public use. No tolls or charges of any kind shall be levied for the use of these roads. The expense to the State of the salaries of train dispatcher, yard masters, and switchmen, shall be considered as track rent and ample compensation to the Railroad companies, until the transfer of title.

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The author of this measure asks everyone into whose hands it falls to read it carefully and then talk it over with his friends. We repeat the request. For ought we know, a practicable bill might have to go much more into detail, and differently into detail in different States. But the principle has here been hammered into good general form so as to be adaptable to the railway laws of any State. The only seriously doubtful point is that which is raised by the preamble, and this will not be doubtful if public sentiment overwhelmingly supports it. The courts—even those whose judges are appointed and for life—also have their “ears to the ground.”

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A good many years ago the people of England sent all their criminals to Australia. They began raising corn and wheat, cattle and sheep; they waxed rich in a couple of generations, and the people of the parent country found that the descendants of their criminals were better than they were, and England organized land syndicates to take the land away from them.—Commonsense, of Cleveland.

NEWS NARRATIVE

To use the reference figures of this Department for obtaining continuous news narratives:

Observe the reference figures in any article; turn back to the page they indicate and find there the next preceding article on the same subject; observe the reference figures in that article, and turn back as before; continue until you come to the earliest article on the subject; then retrace your course through the indicated pages, reading each article in chronological order, and you will have a continuous news narrative of the subject from its historical beginnings to date.

Week ending Tuesday, May 26, 1908.

Presidential Politics.

William Jennings Bryan was the guest of honor at the banquet of the Bankers' Club of Chicago on the 22nd. He spoke with absolute plainness, yet with courtesy. At one point he declared, amid profound silence, as the scene is reported, that officials of banks should be held to criminal account for violating the law which forbids loans of more than 10 per cent of a bank's capital to one person. In the same silence he is reported to have asked why any one should be squeamish about applying as harsh laws to bankers as are applied to the poorest citizen in the land. In the course of his speech, which is characterized by the local papers as one of the most notable he has ever made in Chicago, Mr. Bryan proposed that—

Absolute security should be guaranteed depositors.

The Oklahoma system should be adopted and every bank in a certain district should stand behind every other bank; all banks should guarantee each other. This should be done by a tax of one-quarter of 1 per cent on the amount of the deposits.

There should be a criminal penalty for infringement by bank officials of the present law, which forbids the loaning of more than 10 per cent of the capital and surplus to one person.

An emergency currency should be issued by the government, and not by the banks.

The emergency currency should be given to the banks on liberal terms as to security, and bonds should not be insisted upon as security.

No foreign system of banking should be introduced; the American system should be improved so as to make it a secure system.

“Despite the almost unbroken silence which met the main portions of Mr. Bryan's speech and greeted all his chief suggestions,” says the Record-Herald, “the audience seemed to be impressed by the very force and audacity of the Nebraska.” From Chicago Mr. Bryan went to Kenosha, Wisconsin, where he made a political speech in which he is reported to have said that there is—

Only one Republican candidate for President who could really be considered as representative of the reforms that the people demand and that is Senator La Follette of this State. How much sympathy the Republican leaders of the country have for these reforms is shown by the fact that save in Wiscon-