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PRINCE ARTHTR LODGE, No. 333, A. A M, meets in the Masonic hall, Strain's block, Flesherton, every Friday on or before the full moon. F H W Hickling W M. Chas. Munshaw, Secretary.

COURT FLESHERTON, I. O. F. meets in Christoe's Block the last Friday evening in each month. Visiting Foresters heartily welcome. C.R., R. Waller; R. S., W. A. Armstrong.

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S Walker Sloan
PROPRIETOR

The Evolution of a Crime

The following timely sermon was preached by Rev. Ivison Wilson in the Methodist church on Sunday evening last:

You will find the words which I have selected as the basis of my remarks to-night, in Romans the sixth chapter and the twenty-third verse :—"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

As I announced this morning, I am going to depart from ordinary pulpit usage this evening, and speak on what I have chosen to designate "The Evolution of a Crime." I had intended using another subject, which was duly announced, but during the past day or so I have been so profoundly impressed with the circumstances leading up to that dark tragedy, the last scene of which was enacted in Toronto during the past week, that I felt compelled to improve the occasion, and emphasize what I believe to be useful and important lessons.

The whole story reads like a romance. It is such as some novelist might have woven out of his imagination as he traced step by step the downfall of one of the characters of his plot.

The scene opens in a home of affluence and social distinction in the state of Illinois, we will say twenty years ago, where there is a head-strong, ungoverned child. I am not going to lay any charge at the door of the parents in question. They may have exerted the best of influences, and used the wisest disciplinary measures ; but I am surely safe in concluding that the child never learned filial obedience. This may seem to some of us a very trifling fact, and yet it is the first step on the road to ruin. When will parents learn that the home in which implicit, unquestioning obedience is not demanded, is simply an institution for the manufacture of criminals ? I tremble when I hear unobeyed commands in some of our homes. I have no "favorite prescription" for the training of children. This is a problem that must be thought out, and fought out, and prayed out, in the experience of every parent—but it must be solved, if the child is not to suffer a grievous wrong.

When I next see the boy, he has reached the age of 12, and I find him absent from his place in Sabbath school. If a boy of that age is not found in Sabbath school you may know he is not about any good. It is a fact to be deeply deplored, that so many of our boys fancy themselves too big to attend Sabbath school. I am not sure that some of our older people are not to blame in this regard. I would to God it were in my power, and I would be there fifty-two Sundays in the year, if only to show the boys that I am not too old and not too good to frequent such a resort. Then side by side with this is the non-church-going habit. I am sorry indeed that the family pew is dying out of our churches. The parents too frequently have a seat near the pulpit, while the boys, if there at all, find a pew convenient to the door. Now we all know how the Sabbath is spent to an alarming degree in America to-day. There are league baseball games, excursions, and scores of other attractions to draw the boys away from the house of God, and the same tendency is gaining a foothold in Canada. Am I dreaming, or did some one tell me that excursions are being run from a village north of us, to Owen Sound on Sundays ? Such a way of spending the Lord's day is a curse to thousands of boys on this continent. Better have no Sunday at all, better have the same employment as on week days, than to spend it as many are to-day, not only trampling its sanctity in the dust, but engaging in pursuits that are a menace to the first principles of integrity.

The boy grows to young-manhood, and after receiving a good education, enters his father's office. We have no reason to believe him naturally vicious, on the contrary he seems to have been genial, affable, and possessed of considerable personal magnetism—"a hale fellow well met." Like scores of other young men, he determined to have all there is in a fast life. He became what is termed a "high roller" and when next we see him, he has been guilty of forging his father's name for a sum of money, and forced to flee his native state.

Now we are not in possession of the exact circumstances which led to his first crime, but we know some of the reasons why young men are frequently led to forge checks When drinking, gambling and a fast life in general constitute their program, it is not hard to calculate why they cannot live on the income they earn, and consequently resort to extreme methods in order to supplement it. We all know how frequently gambling leads to this peculiar species of crime. There may be some one within the sound of my voice who gambles—"oh !" you say "I am not a gambler; I may put up a little money on a game of cards, or bet on a horserace but that does not amount to anything serious." Does it not ? What constitutes gambling anyway ? Is it not seeking something for nothing ? Is it not staking a certain amount of money, and running the risk of losing all in hope of gaining more ? I care not whether a man stakes five cents on a game of cards or ten cents on a horserace or $5000 on any other hazardous speculation, he is playing a dangerous role. And I have reason to believe that gambling is systematically carried on not one hundred miles from Flesherton. It is easy for us to imagine that this young man committed this forgery, to keep faith with the book makers, and meet the expenses generally of his fast life.

I find him at the early age of 21, a convict in the Colorado state prison. I would to God our prisons were reformatory in their influence. I wish with all my heart that a term in a penitentiary had the effect of arresting a young man in his downward career, and starting him once more in the path of rectitude. But we all known the tendency is the very opposite of this. Here men come under the influence of others worse than themselves—those who are versed and skilled in all the secrets of criminal life ; and young men almost invariably leave the prison worse than when they entered it. It may be difficult to determine how the evil is to be remedied, but surely some methods could be devised, whereby those who have been detected in the first stages of crime might be rescued for lives of usefulness, rather than trained in yet more vicious lines of felony. Then what kind of treatment does the crimminal receive at the hands of society ? Is it not true that he suffers social ostracism ? Who wants an ex-convict in his employ ? What commercial value has a certificate of character from the Warden of a penitentiary ? And yet, is the ex-convict necessarily the most dangerous factor in social life to day ? We all know he is not. There are men at large, at this hour, who have committed crimes as foul as nine-tenths of those that are undergoing expiation, but because they have been clever enough to elude the clutches of the law, they are respected, nay even lionized. These aristocrates in crime are the most dangerous denizens of our social life to-day but some poor fellow who has been detected in his first violation of the law is hounded out of society, not so much because he has sinned, as because he has recently been "convict 22" and apparrelled in prison uniform.

Who can say what the result might have been had someone stood at the door of the prison when Fred L. Rice came out, had taken him by the hand and said "my dear fellow I am going to give you another chance to lead a decent life. You have tried the life of a high roller, have you not had enough of it ? Are you not tired of criminal life ? I am going to trust you and help you to your feet again." Had he found such a friend, the whole course of his subsequent life might have been changed, and the awful tragedy we have in our thoughts to night never enacted. As it was, when he stepped once more into liberty, he found himself, like scores of others of this class, friendless, penniless, reputation gone, character gone, practically doomed to a career of crime.

Shortly after this he meets two of his prison acquaintances in Chicago, and they together plan a raid on Ontario banks with what success we very well know. Where are the members of that notorious gang to-night? One was killed in a futile attempt to escape, in which a brave officer of the law was cruelly murdered, another lies in a suicide's grave, the third, whose career we have briefly sketched to-night, the other day, suffered the severest penalty the law of our land can inflict. Truly "the wages of sin is death."

But the strangely pathetic scene in all this sad drama is the picture of a mother's potent, yet impotent love—a love that all the crimes of her wayward boy could not quench, yet one that was powerless to save him. Whose heart has not bled for her in her intolerable anguish? How strikingly this illustrates the great truth that man does not suffer alone for his sins ! If only we could sin and bear all the consequences ourselves: if a boy could lead a reckless life without breaking his mother's heart, the history of crime would lose much of its pathos. And as I have read of that mother's helpless anguish, knowing how gladly she would give her life to save her boy, I have thought of a great king of the past who exclaimed in the agony of hopeless grief, "Oh my son, Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom! would God I had died for thee, oh Absalom, my son, my son!"

One thought more in conclusion. This young man had the advantage of the unremitting efforts of one of the ablest and most astute legal advisers in the province Everything that an able advocate could do was faithfully done. The finest points in the law were cleverly turned in his behalf. Men high in office in his own country exerted their influence to save him, and, at the eleventh hour his mother made one of of the most pathetic appeals, it was ever the duty of men holding the prerogative of executive clemency to resist, but all this was of no avail, because the law had been violated and the crime must be avenged.

Ah, brethren, you and I have sinned. We have broken the law of heaven. We have been tried, convicted and sentenced. But Christ our Advocate has suffered in our stead. He has satisfied the demands of Justice. And so he with all prevailing plea can approach the throne of the Great Judge and say "for my sake pardon these condemned criminals," and because of our Advocate's vicarious sacrifice, we can sing to-night with exultant gratitude

"My God is reconciled,
His pardoning voice I hear,
He owns me for his child,
I can no longer fear.
With confidence I now draw nigh
And Father, Abba Father, cry."

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