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EDITORIALS

SIDE LIGHTS ON CITY LIFE.

By JUDGE MCKENZIE CLELAND OF THE MUNICIPAL COURT CHICAGO.

Fighting the Shoplifters.

As a result of our defective system of criminal law, the enormous burden of fighting the Shoplifters has fallen heavily upon the department stores. They have had to depend upon broad aisles, electric lights, private detectives, and rewards paid to clerks who "Stop" thieves, to furnish the protection which the law should afford.

It may soon be necessary to protect their counters by wire screens after the fashions of banks. Few people realize the enormous losses occasioned by this modern evil with which our seventeenth century system of jurisprudence is unable to cope.

While no form of crime is more prevalent, none is less frequently punished than shoplifting. Seventy-five per cent of the offenders are women, often of good appearance, well connected, whose family would be greatly disgraced by the publicity of prosecution and punishment, apparently the great majority are first offenders, and when caught, plead pitifully for their release, and it is usually only in aggravated cases or where the offender appears to be a professional that any prosecution follows.

The practice usually adopted is to secure a written confession, which is filed away and the offender warned never to re-enter the store for any purpose, under penalty of arrest and exposure. Even when the person is arrested, the prosecution usually results in a short jail sentence or more frequently a fine which is quickly paid.

The shoplifter has about one chance in ten of being caught, one chance in twenty of being prosecuted and one chance in thirty of being convicted and punished even by a trifling fine.

Since the decision of the Supreme Court, denying jurisdiction in larceny cases to the Municipal Court, Shoplifters are held to the grand jury, which entails upon the merchant-prosecutor, the expense and loss of appearing once in the Municipal Court, once before the Grand Jury and once in the Criminal Court, with liberal continuances and vexatious delays interspersed.

This still further discourages prosecution. It would be hard to imagine a more demoralizing situation or one better calculated to promote and encourage crime. The ease with which these thefts are accomplished in our crowded store, added to the powerful temptation of costly goods lavishly displayed on every hand, is the starting point for thousands of criminals.

The remedy lies in taking out of the hands of the department stores the treatment of these cases and lodging it where it belongs, in the Courts, but before this is

done the methods of the Courts in dealing with these must be radically changed.

Taking and filiae away signed confessions and then allowing the offender to depart in peace to rob some other stores ten times before being caught, while very creditable to the store managers as indicative of their sympathetic feelings, is nevertheless the worst possible course to be pursued except sending the person to jail, which is now the only alternative. No person who deliberately commits crime should be dismissed without correction and such correction should be applied by the law and not by private individuals.

Nothing could possibly be more destructive of good order than the present absurd system of allowing the person specially injured by the commission of a crime to decide whether the perpetrator shall be prosecuted or not. This has come about largely because of our mistaken system of punishing the offender instead of reforming him, and individuals, therefore, assume to exercise the mercy which should be exercised by the State in restraining and correcting the offender.

It may be that when the business interests realize what heavy financial losses follow our present, tumble-down, worn-out, stupid and unscientific method of treating offenders, we will be able to exchange it for something more in keeping with our advancement in every other direction.

A new Probation bill will be presented by me to the next Legislature of Illinois that will, if passed, tend to correct these present bad conditions.

WHAT IS WHAT

Under the enactment of the pure food law of the Roosevelt administration things had to be what they pretended to be, and more than that, the label had to show the contents. This treated an uproar from those manufacturers who had been selling poisonous and adulterated and spurious stuff. They began a fight to overthrow the law.

President Roosevelt decided, when the question came up to him, that if the chemical department of the government found a preparation injurious to the public, that he would side with the interests of the people instead of the manufacturers when the law point was questionable. That is, he took the stand that the consumers had some rights worth protecting as well as the fraudulent manufacturers.

President Taft, with his judicial mind fixed on the question, What is whisky saw only the strictly legal phase and decided in a way that caused President Timothy L. McDough, of the National Liquor League in his annual report to the convention to say, "The President (Taft) has given the prohibitionist a vital blow by his decision." Mr. Taft decided that it is not the duty of the Govern-

ment under the pure food act to determine what is pure whisky while Roosevelt held that the Government should decide what was pure and what was impure whisky.

No wonder the National Liquor League is rejoicing. There was a lot of stuff called whisky that was ten times worse than whisky. But according to Mr. Taft anything that has sailed under false colors in the past has the same right now, provided the label bears the statement of contents and indicating that it is whisky or what not only in name.

This decision is far reaching. We dare say there is rejoicing more than the Liquor League camp, for what applies to whisky likewise applied to every food product. What is to hinder, under the decision, continuing to put out "Potted Turkey" that is made of pig meat and veal scraps? Of what is to prevent, "Pure Vermont Maple Syrup" from being made of glucose, corn cobs, and brown sugar? Or "Genuine Strawberry Jam" made from apple pomace and timothy seeds colored to suit the most skeptical? Of course the label will bear in fine print the fact that the stuff is not what the label proclaims it to be, but the average purchaser is not inspecting the fine print when shopping and manufacturers know it.

We may as well repeal the pure food law as to have the vitals taken out of it by such a decision.

But it is quite in keeping with the administration policy of conservation of natural resources—with an enemy in the camp to see that they are conserved!

MINNEOSTA'S FOREST FLAME.

In a century of large disasters and colossal tragedies it is impossible to deal in a comparison of horrors.

But certainly my story of collective suffering and danger and death has smitten the heart of our humanity more severely than the story of the forest fires that have ravaged northern Minnesota. And few stories have ever been more simply and more powerfully told.

The elements which work their wrath at times through earthquake and flood seem always most fearful in the red rage of fire.

And the fair land of Minnesota has been swept by a tongue of flame that made holocaust in thousands of homes and harvests, and in nearly a thousand human lives. It is a wonderful and an awful story.

Vivid among its incidents are the heroism of men and the far greater heroism of the women in the red reign of terror over the region of the fire. There was degrading instances of cowardice and selfishness among the men in terrified flight, but the record fairly shines with the calm and self-sacrificing courage of the women of the story.

Vivid, too, is the story of the animals, wild and domestic, in whom the elements melted in their fervent heat the passion and fear and antagonism of savage beasts and huddled them together in the instinct of a common danger without enmity and without fear; Wild deer and caribou and moose and the fiercer animals of the forest, mingling peaceably with the flame-driven men and women and with the domestic cattle of their farms, softened the lurid horror with a suggestion of the promised millennium, when "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie

down with the kid, and the cow and the bear, and the eagle and the lion shall feed together, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the cockatrice den."

It was marvelous how that touch of common danger made the whole little flaming world of man and beast akin.

If only some flame of light could sweep the minds of men and citizens into a comprehension of the common dangers that menace government, and law and liberty and decency, they might come together in omnipotent unity to escape and subdue the greed and avarice and lust that scorches the race.

CHICAGO WOMEN WORKING FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT.

Propose to Force Observance of All Provisions for Public Good.

A campaign with a two-fold object has been begun by a special committee of the Chicago Woman's Club. Its aim is to educate public sentiment in favor of civic betterment and to enforce all laws bearing upon this subject. Some of the women have delved into the ordinance records in search for laws which have been disregarded.

Mrs. Herman Landauer, chairman of the committee, thus explains the work in progress:

"This committee means business, and we shall not content ourselves with mere words. Regularly we shall make public some particular law or ordinance which is lying dormant; this we propose to have enforced or know the reason why it should not be. The co-operation of the newspapers has been sought, and as a result of the publicity we hope to get results."

One of the ordinances brought to light declares it unlawful to litter the streets with paper or rubbish. It provides a fine of \$2 to \$100 for each offense.

TO TEACH CIVICS IN SCHOOLS

Philadelphia Plans to Encourage Study of Practical Questions.

With a view to having civics incorporated in the public school course, a number of public-spirited citizens have engaged the services of Arthur W. Dunn, who was director of civics in the Indianapolis schools. Mr. Dunn is now civic secretary of the City Club, and will work under the auspices of this organization. He will endeavor to obtain consent of the Board of Education to introduce civics in certain schools; and in this it is understood that he has the endorsement of Dr. Martin G. Brumbaugh, superintendent of education.

Under its new plan the City Club, which is five years old, will devote itself to the general betterment of conditions. It has a plan which includes an improved river front, a park and playground system, and various other projects. In Philadelphia, as in Boston, New York and other cities, the City Club is non-partisan. Many of its leading members are identified with the National Municipal League.

BOSTON'S AGGRESSIVE ORGANIZATION.

Chamber of Congress Is a Factor for Municipal Betterment.

It is a significant proof of the

effectiveness of civic work accomplished by commercial organizations that great respect is shown for the suggestions and recommendations along legislative and administrative lines made by the Boston Chamber of Commerce, acting through its committee on municipal and metropolitan affairs.

There are four thousand members of the chamber. The committee on municipal and metropolitan affairs consists of eleven, the chairman being Prof. William B. Munro, of Harvard. The other members represent various professions and business.

Meetings are held regularly every Friday afternoon, and legislative and councilmanic measures are considered. Likewise, official affairs are discussed. Nothing is too insignificant for the committee to consider and investigate. Upon the results the committee acts, and, when necessary, the chamber gives its official sanction to proposals, complaints, protests and suggestions from the chamber carry great weight.

PRAISES NATIONAL MUNICIPAL LEAGUE.

Pointing to the voluntary activity of the National Municipal League and other important national organizations as "one of the most hopeful signs of our times," the Galevston News says editorially:

"These associations have brought together some of the best minds of the country to deal with its problems from a non-political viewpoint and without regard to partisan politics. Through their efforts plans are laid and a healthy public sentiment is developed which eventuates in much good without governmental action, and demands of public servants, irrespective of political affiliations, that they shall do those things which are essential to the best interests."

"These organizations are teachings and demanding that partisanship should control only in those affairs where there is a well-defined republican way or a well-defined democratic way to do things, and that otherwise things should be done only in the right way."

PLEGDED TO GOOD CITIZENSHIP

Members of the class of 1910 of the College of the City of New York have taken an oath to be active factors in the cause of municipal advancement and civic betterment. At their graduation the students listened to an address by Mayor Wm. J. Gaynor, who earnestly appealed to them to participate conscientiously in public affairs. In a letter to the Mayor the classmen wrote:

"To assure you that your advice was not in vain we, the undersigned, this day, after the manner of the Athenian youths of old, about to enter public life, take this ephebic oath, that:

"We will never bring disgrace to this city by any act of dishonesty or cowardice, nor ever desert our suffering comrades in the ranks; that we will fight for the ideals and sacred things of the city, both alone and with many; that we will revere and obey the city's laws and do our best to in-cite to a like respect and reverence those who are prone to annul or set them at naught; that will strive unceasingly to quicken the public's sense of public duty; that thus, in all these ways, we will transmit this city, not only not less, but greater, better and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us."