

MURDER BY WHOLESALE

THE UNENVIABLE DISTINCTION of leading the country in crime does not belong to New York, as may have been popularly supposed, for statistics gathered by Judge William N. Gemmill, of Chicago, show that with fifty-three killings for each 100,000 inhabitants, or a total of 426 last year, St. Louis led all the cities of the United States in murders and homicides. As compared with the killings in England and Wales, those in St. Louis were "too many to count." In a survey of the crime situation he furnished recently to the Committee on Law Enforcement of the American Bar Association, Judge Gemmill says that "New York, which people think is a very wicked city, is high up on the honor roll, so far as murder is concerned, St. Paul alone having fewer arrests for murders, while Chicago ranks third, Cincinnati fourth, Buffalo fifth, and New Orleans sixth." By comparison, according to the survey, Los Angeles has three times as many murders in proportion to population as New York, and two and a half times as many as Chicago. Washington is shown to have three times as many murders as New York and twice as many as Chicago. Detroit, "which likes to be called a model city," has more than twice as many as New York and nearly double the number in Chicago, while St. Louis reports 389 arrests for murder and 36 for manslaughter in 1921. What is true as to murder is partly true as to other major crimes, reports Judge Gemmill, and, as his findings are quoted in *Zion's Herald* (Boston, Methodist), he says:

"If the balance of the year 1922 equals January and February of this year, Los Angeles will lead all other cities in the number of burglaries and housebreakings. She is not even closely followed by any other large city. Chicago comes next on the roll of dishonor, followed closely by Washington, Baltimore, Buffalo, St. Louis, San Francisco, Boston, St. Paul, Cleveland, New York, New Orleans, Denver, Cincinnati, and Louisville in the order named. In arrests for intoxication Boston far outstrips all cities. But Chicago, with a sense of either pride or humiliation, refuses to list her cases. In contrast with these figures I have collected the latest statistics from Canada and England and Wales concerning the same crimes. About 600,000 people are arrested in England and Wales annually. The population there is about twelve times that of Chicago and seven times that of New York. For every arrest for murder in England and Wales in 1920, Chicago had eight and a half, New York six and three-quarters, and St. Louis too many to count. The American Bar Association is doing a fine service in trying to discover the causes of crime. I predict, however, that it will conclude that the one great cause is the lack of law enforcement. Laws are the product of civilized society. They are made to protect the innocent and punish the guilty. When they fail in doing either one of these two things, they fail society, and society degenerates into savagery. Wherever you find a lax enforcement of law you find crime. Public officials can never have an alibi. Success in enforcing the law can be their only password. Excuses won't go. The only reason why there is less crime in England than here is because there the law is supreme and whatever is needed to make it respected is done. It is for this reason that the penalty of flogging has been kept upon their statute books for a thousand years, and this last year over 1,600 criminals were flogged by order of court."

In the United States, however, flogging is in vogue in only one State—Delaware. Yet it would be a strong deterrent, thinks Judge Gemmill, to put the lash on the bare backs of the 500 professional criminals known to the police in Chicago. "Whatever is necessary to make these crooks understand that this is a Government of law and order," he says, "that we must do. Ninety-nine per cent. of our people are honest and law-abiding. They must not be ruled or intimidated by the other 1 per cent. Crime is not generally profitable to the criminal, and when he is made to realize that punishment is swift and certain and drastic, he will look for other fields in which to exercise his talents." There is another angle to this reign of lawlessness, says *Zion's Herald*, and it asks: "Is there not in

the preaching of the Christian Church too little emphasis upon the exacting demands of righteousness, and rather too much stress upon a sentimental interpretation of the love of God?"

THE RAID ON AUSTRIAN CHURCH ART

ONE OF THE MOST PATHETIC SYMPTOMS of the great distress in Middle Europe, especially Austria, is the present flourishing traffic in church art treasures. Many small churches are being abandoned, and many convents and poor churches, as a Vienna correspondent for the National Catholic Welfare Council's news service tells us in a dispatch appearing in the Catholic papers, are reduced to such straits that they are selling their treasures, "which are more dispensable than food." Ecclesiastical and Austrian State law forbid such sales, and devout Catholics, of course, only consider them as a final resource. But they are now so common that "thousands of so-called art dealers are now roaming Austria in quest of ecclesiastical art," seeking out the most remote and inaccessible village churches in the mountains. The worst of it is that, as the Catholic writer informs us, "where they can not obtain what they want by lawful means, they do not hesitate to resort to illegal practices. On the pretext of having valuable religious paintings or carvings restored for small fees, precious ornaments are taken away and copies made and substituted for the originals, which are then sold to dealers or collectors." Nor is this all, for there is much actual burglary of churches and convents and pillaging of shrines. There seems to have grown up a craze for collecting religious art, on the part of those enriched by the war. As the writer informs us—

"It has become the fashion in the homes of the profiteers to use ancient carved statues of saints and even church vessels as ornaments for the drawing-room. Enormous prices are offered for paintings and altar carvings from old churches. The art shops of Vienna and Munich are gorged with church equipment and paintings and sculpture which have been thrown upon the market in an amazing profusion. The stocks of several of the larger art shops in Vienna consist exclusively of old church furniture. The equipments of whole chapels are to be found there, and religious paintings by old masters in sufficient number to provide for five large cathedrals. There are sacred vessels from the early Gothic to baroque. It is indeed an affecting sight for any one of pious sentiments to behold here, exposed for sale, magnificent monstrances embossed in silver and gold and but lately the shrines of the Blessed Sacrament. Like other wares, these may be bought by the first comer, be he Jew, Christian or Hottentot.

"The spoliation of churches is increasing alarmingly, more especially in the Tyrol. Within the last few weeks various valuable objects have been pilfered from seven Tyrolean churches. The miscreants have thus far escaped detection. In the mountainous parts of Austria the religious spirit of the people has moved them to erect chapels and crosses along the roads and in the passes. For many centuries, too, it has been the custom of these people to decorate their homes with statues and paintings of saints. None of these chapels or crosses or statues of paintings is safe now. Robbers lie in wait, sometimes for weeks, to seize an opportunity to steal them. These thieves are accomplices of dealers who are profiting by the present craze for church ornaments, vestments and sacred vessels.

"Repeatedly have strong measures been taken by the authorities to put a stop to this sacrilegious vandalism, and many priests and superiors of convents have been punished when it was found that they had not taken the proper precautions to safeguard the valuables in their care. In spite of all, the crimes continue. It is believed that drastic laws will have to be passed to require venders and possessors of articles of virtue to prove that they have obtained these in a legal manner.

"The churches of Austria are real treasuries of old Catholic art and culture, and the religious sense and reverence of the people urge them to save all these sacred objects from profanation. It is very sad when many children are going hungry and when the Christian middle classes of Austria are being ruined; but it is worse when the House of God is no longer safe from the mercenary spirit of a demoralized age, craving for gold and not shrinking from crime as a means of getting it."

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