

RELIGION-AND-SOCIAL-SERVICE

OUR SHARE IN THE MURDERER'S GUILT

FOUR YOUNG MEN were sentenced to death the other day in Brooklyn, and the grim tragedy in the still courtroom was the grimmer in that it might have been prevented. In cold blood and after long deliberation, these young men had murdered and robbed two bank messengers in a Brooklyn elevated station. Thus six lives are taken away, and the guilt is fastened not alone on the four young criminals, three of them hardly more than boys, but primarily upon the American public conscience. The method of their upbringing was wrong, as it is wrong to-day, we are told, everywhere in the land—evidenced in the national scandals which have exposed a cesspool of corruption, in the courts of every large city, in the reformatories, in the jails, in the prisons. The fact is brought out in our issue of March 15; it is brought out again in this because just now the subject is forcibly engaging the attention of our religious leaders, jurists, editors and journalists, all faced suddenly, it seems, by the appalling tragedy presented by a feeble public conscience which has almost discarded every form of religious and moral instruction and surrendered the home as the mainstay of virtue. No nation, we are told, can depend on its police system to preserve its moral fiber. The gallows and the chair are sorry substitutes for the Sunday school and the old-fashioned altar of maternal knees. The problem is long past the debating stage, and earnest thinkers of the three great branches of religion embraced in American life, both clerical and lay, are seeking some method whereby American youth may be saved from the wanton neglect which in so many cases ends in a lonely cell or in legal execution.

Morris Diamond, "beefy and bewildered"; his brother, Joe, "slender and sardonic"; John Farina, "with the lean, hard face and wrong eyes," and little Tony Pantano, "with the sad, intelligent smile," completed in the Brooklyn Supreme Court all but the last details of their lives that led to the electric chair. After sentencing them, Justice James C. Cropsey said that the occasion should not pass without comment. One of the outstanding facts in the case, he observed, is the age of the offenders. Three of them are but little more than twenty-one years old; the fourth is only a few years older. Yet two of them had previously served terms of imprisonment, and the other two are said to have had long association with criminals. An equally distressing fact, continued Justice Cropsey, is that the age of these offenders is not unusual.

As we quote him from the *New York Sun and The Globe*, the Justice went on:

"Most of the criminals are boys and young men. To be exact, over eighty per cent. of them are less than twenty-five years of age. If the people of Brooklyn ask why so many youths become criminals, I can tell them. A dozen years of investigation and experience in these matters have demonstrated that the vast majority of all the youthful offenders committed crime because they had bad associates and were not under the proper influences in the years when boyhood was turning into manhood—between the ages of twelve and eighteen. That is the most important period in a boy's life. Then his ideals are acquired, his character formed.

"This condition is a challenge to the manhood of our community. What are we men doing? Tens of thousands of boys are nightly on our streets looking for amusement, seeking adventure, yearning for companionship. Many of them have no fathers, and the parents of many others give little or no heed to the places their boys visit or the companions they choose. Do we men owe no duty to these boys? Can we longer remain blind to the perils that beset them? Should we not provide places where such boys may meet and play and be entertained and instructed, and all the time be under the influence of the men of the right kind?

"This is a practical thing. It can be done. It has been done in a small way and with wonderful results. Why should not we undertake it in a big way? We can lessen the crimes in our midst by giving our attention to the youths. They need a man's guiding hand and helpful personality. They need the example of a true man's life in forming their character.

"Brooklyn can be made better. Whether it will, depends upon us, its men. Shall we turn our backs and ignore existing conditions or shall we accept the challenge, and lend ourselves to the task? It's a man's job and it needs red-

blooded men who will put something of themselves into the undertaking.

"Men, this is a call to us. Are we awake? Do we hear it? Will our consciences let us ignore it? Shall we not help to make better the boys of to-day? Should we not begin at once?"

Religious education is coming back, says the Rev. Walter M. Howlett, Secretary of the Religious Education Department of the New York Federation of Churches and of the Metropolitan Federation of Daily Vacation Bible Schools. "Regular daily hours of worship, combined with systematic instruction in things spiritual, will soon be included in the routine of every child of public-school age in New York City if a movement now under way is completely successful." Protestants, Catholics and Jews,



Copyrighted by Underwood & Underwood

ON THEIR WAY TO THE DEATH HOUSE

Morris and Joseph Diamond to pay with their lives for a crime of which the public is not entirely innocent.

we are told, are uniting in the movement. Now, however, religious instruction has been abandoned to a large extent, says Mr. Howlett in an interview with Charles W. Wood, published in the *New York World*, "and America is just now paying the penalty." Experience has shown that the public school, college and university are not places for religious instruction, and the home, which was once "logically relied upon as the place where this education should take place, is not the place it used to be" because of the social transition through which we have passed. So,

"Under the circumstances we can hardly wonder that the moral condition of large groups of young people, especially in our American cities, is giving cause for alarm. They are lacking in reverence. Their sense of the sacred has never been developed. They do not know the attitude of worship. They have no conscious knowledge of God.

"Looking at it only in its social aspect, this has brought about an unendurable situation. Such crimes as that of the Diamond brothers make us realize with a shock this utter lack of moral sense within a section of our community. Those boys happen to be Jews, but their partners in crime came from Catholic and Protestant homes. We Protestants have hitherto centered our thoughts upon extending Protestant religious education. To-day we must see the equal necessity of the Catholic and Jewish children developing *their* religious life."

Catholics and Jews are in full accord with this view. America has insisted on complete separation of Church and State, says Archbishop Hayes, who was also interviewed by Mr. Wood. But the Archbishop is sure that America never intended to divorce religion from life, and he says that there is a very general feeling that the spiritual rights of our little ones should not be violated. Tho fully aware of the present situation, Archbishop Hayes is not pessimistic, and he says:

"The very fact that the situation is being recognized so clearly is cause for congratulation. But there is no time to be lost. Whatever one's religious views may be, all must agree that it is not fair to the children to neglect them as they are being neglected to-day. That it is not fair to society at large is also true, but my heart aches for the little ones. They need God in their young lives. They need spiritual guidance. They need to be delivered from the aimlessness and boredom, to say nothing of the more acute tragedies, of the godless life.

"Socially, also, this involves much more than the problem of crime. Even without the murders and atrocities which have so shocked us lately, there would still be an urgent social need to resume religious instruction generally. Where there is no religion there is no purpose in life. And modern life woefully lacks purpose."

For the problem as it exists now a radical remedy is suggested by William McAdoo, Chief City Magistrate of New York City. He would have the police go into the breeding-places and haunts of the criminals, and arrest them out of hand and lock them up as vagrants. From the biological

standpoint, writes Judge McAdoo, in *The World*, "this army of young criminals is emotionally deficient; that is, they are strangers to love, affection, pity, sympathy, friendship, charity, kindness, temperance and chastity." In many respects they

are not much advanced from merely predatory animals. Outlaws and dangerous men, goes on the magistrate, are evolved from heredity and environment, and some of them are incurable and ought never be allowed at large. He suggests, therefore, a large custodial institution, self-supporting, where these people will be kept and looked after physically and mentally, in many cases during the term of their natural lives. But

"The difficulty is that the moment you begin to talk about using scientific methods with criminals, people who have never looked into the subject at once say it is all nonsense. They say we are coddling the criminal, treating him as diseased, covering him with flowers and encouraging crime. But this is strictly not so.

"What those who believe in those things are advocating is simply that we shall anticipate the crime as far as possible. And, on the other hand, when they have committed crime, this army of predatory cave-men and women shall be kept for the safety of the public under present methods for as long terms of imprisonment and confinement as possible.

"Also we must always keep in mind the rights of first offenders. Those who are mentally and physically sound, who do not belong to the class I have spoken of, who have yielded to sudden temptation, great pressure of circumstances, violent mental agitation or other causes, should be dealt with charitably and kindly. Of these guilty only of minor offenses, through probation wisely administered, we can salvage much good material."



Copyrighted by Underwood & Underwood

"MEN, THIS IS A CALL TO US"

Says Justice James C. Cropsey, in pointing out, after sentencing four murderers, that "most of our criminals are boys and young men."

A JOHN KNOX NEEDED

A MINISTER WHO WAS HARANGUING against divorce recently made an unfortunate mistake, we are told, for in his choir were no fewer than seven persons who had been through the divorce court. The conductor of the choir, says the *Dallas News*, was a divorced man and was then the husband of a woman who herself had been divorced. Another singer had had three divorces and was potentially eligible for a fourth, at least to the extent that he was then living with his fourth wife. It is not alleged, we are told, that any of these legal separations had been obtained by collusion or been negotiated in any manner legally improper. "But under the circumstances the hymn-hoisters back of that minister were naturally ill at ease during the sermon." Nor is it surprising, it is said, that they didn't come back right away. But when the preacher found out the composition of his choir, he apologized. "If you like," remarks the *Dallas* paper, sensing the moral in the episode, "you may say that he was a coward for that. Or you may decide that it only made matters worse to back down