THE GANGSTERS of NEW YORK

The Greatest City in the United States Is in a Worse Condition of Unrebuked Lawlessness Than Was Ever the Most Notorious Frontier Camp or Savage Jungle—Desperate "Gun-Men" Wantonly Shoot Men Down in Broad Day, Defying the Police—And the Officers of the Law Are Not Able to Cope With Them.

"Your leather!" he said. "Quick!"

THE audacity of the New York gangsters has reached its perihelion. Nothing like it can be found in the police annals of any city in the world, nor in the history of the wildest mining camp on the frontier of civilization. For supreme daring—or, to be more accurate, superlative effrontery—the gun-man of the metropolis is the peer of his Parisian prototype, the dreaded Apache of the boulevards, the thug of the London back alley or the strong-arm crimp of San Francisco's "Barbary Coast."

In a sense he is a throw-back—a reversion to a type of savagery unknown to the present generation. To him a life—whether his own or another's—is the veriest bagatelle. And the police of New York are baffled at the problem of adequately coping with him and his kind.

Barely a fortnight ago the gangster's daring reached a point higher than any previously known in the history of New York City. Big Jack Zelig, of Chinatown, a man with the most unsavory of records, walked out of the Criminal Courts building and down the steps with his lawyer. He had just been released on bail for being implicated in the "shooting up" of Jack Poggi's Doyers street saloon, one of the favorite resorts of Chinatown's underworld.

Down the steps he came with his counsel, his eyes blinking in the bright June sunshine. Hundreds of pedestrians were passing. Policemen and plain clothes detectives stood about and watched him as he walked off. He had not got across the street when a man ran toward him, whipping out a revolver as he ran, and shot him in full view of the bystanders and the police. And Big Jack Zelig fell with a bullet in the back of his head.

Battle Between Gangs.

This final impudence of crime, performed in broad day under the very eye of the officers of the law on the very steps of the building whose justice the criminal should most dread, was attained in the natural growth of an oligarchy of lawlessness, a growth so clearly perceptible in its several steps that this climax of contempt for the law should provoke no surprise whatever.

Within the 12 hours preceding and the 12 hours following the shooting of Big Jack Zelig a gang of desperadoes had driven in a taxicab down a narrow street in the Chinese quarter and opened a fusillade of shots upon members of a rival gang, wounding one man in the foot; had fought like wild beasts, with bare hands, in the room at the police station where they had been herded after the shooting; a procession of three taxicabs carrying armed men had slowed down by the sidewalk in a busy street not a half mile from the New York City Hall, while their occupants discharged a hail of bullets at an enemy and then fled; an Italian vaudeville actor, the associate of criminals, had been instantly killed as he came down the steps of his lodging house at 8 o'clock in the evening; an hour later two men had been wounded by revolver shots fired by rival gangsters; at 2 o'clock in the morning a prizefight manager had been "shadowed" by a taxicab for many blocks and at last was fired at by the men in the machine, and two passers-by had been struck down by bullets in a battle of armed gangsters in another part of the city.

Only recently a wellknown gangster walked into one of the largest saloons on the lower East Side, a resort that has connection with a gambling house upstairs, and called for the proprietor. He knew that a big winning had just been made and that the saloonkeeper always carried his "roll" with him, not believing in the efficacy of safes.

"Let's shake!" said the gangster when the man came forward.

The saloonkeeper, a gun-man himself, thinking that the remark meant a call for the drinks, asked for the dice box.

"What'll you have?" he queried, as it was handed to him.

"Your leather!" snapped the other. "Quick! Not the 'phony,' but the big black one you carry the yellows in!"

He got it and some $4000, and walked out as quietly as he came in. Nor were the police notified. Gangsters settle their feuds without the aid of the officers of the law, and the saloon man is waiting his turn to "even up." But it is a sample of the way in which the metropolitan desperado does his work, which for coolness and utter disregard of the law remains unequaled in the criminal records of any city in the world.

Even if the police had been notified in the instance just narrated it is hardly likely that they would have take any action. Nor is it likely that any of the men who took criminal parts in the astounding record of violence recited above will ever be punished by the law.

For the law, in a period of several years, has shown its inability to cope with the terrible bandits of New York. Few indeed have been the prison sentences visited upon the habitual outlaws of the city and the instances of capital punishment for the scores of murders in the last 10 years might be counted upon the fingers of one hand.

The greatest city in the United States is in a worse condition of unrebuked lawlessness than was ever the most notorious frontier camp or savage jungle.

Is it because the men who have terrorized it with slungshot, knife and automatic revolver are endowed with a courage that the police cannot subdue? Are they supermen, heroic figures in size, cunning and bravery?

"Bah!" say the patrolmen stationed in the districts which the gangsters infest; "they are about as brave as rats!"

Nothing could exceed the degree of contempt, the utter scorn, for the courage of the gang men, that is evident in the speech of the policemen who know the gangs best.

"Why," they say, "a man doesn't even have to carry a gun to fight those guys with. One 'white man' can lick 40 of them. They're cowards from start to finish, and if a real man looks at them they'll turn tail and scuttle into their holes."

Then why do they continue to rob, maim and murder with open contempt for the law?

The answer seems to lie in the perfection of the system which enables the gangster to commit his crimes and defy the courts to prove his guilt.

Arrest after arrest may be made, but the prisoner is tried only to be dismissed for lack of "sufficient" evidence. Organization among the criminals of New York is answerable for their immunity from punishment, and their organization has continued to grow in strength for years until today it has reached the point where the carnival of crime of this last period is possible.

Today no less than 14 localities in the city of New York may be pointed out as the stronghold of criminal gangs.

To district them and detail them would be interesting and delightfully exhilarating to the man who knows. But to those who casually visit the metropolis the geography of these gangs must remain forever a mystery.

On Third avenue, if a line were drawn north from the Brooklyn Bridge to Seventieth street, it would divide the region of the worst gang headquarters in New York City. On the West Side, a line drawn from Twentieth street to Seventieth street, stretching from Sixth avenue to Tenth avenue, would cover most of the dives where the four gangs of the West Side make their headquarters.

Reign of Negro Gang.

Seventh avenue, in the Twenties, is where the Tanner Smith gang, once the famous Mickey Moran's Micks, held sway. In the Tenderloin, from Thirtieth street to Fiftieth street, west to the river, the famous Gopher gang, now partially disrupted, battled with the Herald Square gang north of the "Black Belt," for years the principal negro district in Manhattan. Two gangs of negro thugs, for the major part of the last decade, have reigned in this territory, giving only to two men the acknowledgment of kingship. The gangs that dominate the "Black Belt" are the "Jungle Band" of Ninth avenue and the San Juan Hill gang, which operates from Fiftieth to Sixty-fifth street and on Sixty-sixth street between Amsterdam and West End avenues. In this latter district are what is known as the "one-armed" gang, a small group of youthful criminals.

In designating the localities of some of the gangs of New York it is not intended to lay out in geographical fashion exactly where each is located, but simply designed to convey to the reader in a general way the partition of the city among these outlaw bands in order that a visitor may not go astray.

Each one of these organizations comprises a shifting membership of from a dozen to one or 200; and the larger and most powerful gangs, with "standing armies" of 200 gangsters, who live entirely by criminality, command tribute and silent support from hundreds of others who live in the neighborhoods they rule.

How many members does each gang boast?

The gang has no hard and fast lines of membership. It is recruited among the youths of its neighborhood and in its organization resembles nothing so much as the feudists of Kentucky. A quarrel which leads to a fight with knives or pistols between members of rival gangs is taken up by the relatives, or, more generally, the friends of the man who is hurt in the first quarrel. Revenge is the dominating motive, and revenge is a passion which cannot be quenched. The killing of a member of one gang leads to the killing of another in retaliation and so the unending seesaw of crime goes on. An individual who has been no more than a passive spectator in the life of the gang may suddenly, insane with passion fanned by the blind code of the underworld, be aroused to manslaughter and henceforth stalk as the hero of his skulking crew.

Most active of all the gangs in the city today are the two Chinatown gangs. Over the broken fragments of the gangs which terrorized the city in days gone by—the old Five Points gang and the gang which rallied under the banner of "Nigger Mike" Salter, "Yakey Yake" Brady, who ruled the neighborhood in the foul, narrow streets beneath the shadow of the Brooklyn Bridge, and, most infamous of all, the gangs led by Monk Eastman and Paul Kelly—there have arisen the two organizations of today, known as the Jimmy Kelly gang and the Sirocco gang.

Haunts of Criminals.

Monk Eastman is now doing time for highway robbery and Paul Kelly, still a young man, whose followers only a few years ago numbered 2000, has resumed his baptismal name of Paolo Antonio Vacarelli and engaged peaceably two years ago in the real estate and insurance business with his brother, James R. Vacarelli, far from the scenes of his former exploits, living in the Bronx. It was during his reign as leader of the Paul A. Kelly Association, which reached its maximum strength in 1906 and ruled from Chinatown to Fourteenth street, that "Eat 'Em-Up Jack" McManus was murdered and Harrington was killed in Kelly's own saloon.

From the frightful wrecks who frequent the three tiny streets of Chinatown—Pell, Mott and Doyers—and the neighboring streets of Chatham Square, Second avenue and Third, Hester and Worth, from the nondescript derelicts of every nationality and every criminal profession, pickpockets, gun men, sandbaggers, cadets (the men who live on the earnings of fallen women), highwaymen and burglars, blackmailers and thieves of every description, the present rival gangs were conscripted. The leader of the gang owes his leadership to his reputation for courage among a following of men without courage. The gang, under his leadership, fattens off the money levied from saloonkeepers who fear its power, from the money gained by robbery, and from the proceeds of "annual balls" given under the name of its leader and for whose single admission tickets saloonkeepers and shopkeepers pay prices ranging from $10 to $100. It is said that these balls have netted the gangs as much as $5000. Their character may be imagined.

Rich as the spoils of the gangs are, their membership is so numerous that the money cannot satisfy them so long as the territory in which a gang operates is divided by another gang. Over the division of territory there is constant warfare.

So it occurs that the feud between the Sirocco and the Jimmy Kelly gangs of Chinatown has been constant and growing more and more bitter. The first open outbreak, possibly, was in October, 1910. Giuseppe Poggi, better known as Chick Tricker or Trigger, who with Jack Sirocco had conducted the notorious saloon on Park Row known as the Flea Bag, and had been evicted from it by Captain Mike Galvin, was then running the Maryland Cafe on West Twenty-eighth street, off Broadway, in the Tenderloin. The place had a beautiful reputation. Under Dan the Dude Mulcahey it had been known as the Stag. Five years before Kid Joyce had been killed in front of it and his pals wounded in a battle.

Record of Bold Crimes.

Kid Reagan was sent up to Sing Sing for the killing. In January, 1910, at a ball given by the Fashions Club at Lyric Hall, Sixth avenue and Forty-first street, Chick Tricker was wounded and two girls struck by flying bullets in a fracas started by the Jimmy Kelly outfit, who were sore over the breaking up of their dance at Tammany Hall in the preceding September. In September one Joe Rocco Marino was wounded in a fight in front of the Maryland.

On the night of October 7, 1910, at 1 o'clock in the morning, while Chick Tricker's Maryland Cafe was filled with hilarious men and women, crowded around the little tables, the swinging doors were pushed open and five men entered. They opened fire upon the crowd with revolvers. The panic that followed was horrible. When the powder smoke cleared away it was seen that two men, Phil Casey, a racetrack tout, and Frank Mack had been killed outright and two others wounded. A single policeman held the whole panic-stricken crowd at bay until he had arrested the ringleaders.

Over a year later, on the second of January, 1911, "the Boys of Second Avenue" gave a dance at the Stuyvesant Casino at 140 Second avenue. Julie Morelli, a member of the old Monk Eastman gang and later of the Paul A. Kelly Association, with a long record as a gun fighter behind him, went up to the hall, sending the word before him that he was out to "start something." Before he could make good his boast he was shot down. He died refusing to disclose the names of his slayers, but a few months later, after another fight had taken place at the Stuyvesant Casino, on March 6, the Jack Sirocco gang of Chinatown began to chafe under the rumor that they were accused by the Jimmy Kelly gang of Morelli's murder. It was learned that Big Jack Zelig of the Sirocco gang was named as the man who had done the deed.

Most savage of all was the deadly encounter on May 4, 1908, when Luigi Poggi, known as "Loole the Lump," a youth of 17 or 18 years old, who was a partisan of Jack Sirocco's, sat at a table in a Coney Island resort. Kid Twist, who led a Chinatown gang, and a henchman of his, Lewis, called "Cyclone Loole," entered the place, and Twist, recognizing "Loole the Lump" as a member of a rival gang, commanded the young gangster to get out of the place, and heaped humiliation on him by making him go by way of the window.

Gang Fights Among Selves.

Poggi's rage at his disgrace called for nothing less than killing, and he lost no time at his revenge. Summoning the members of Sirocco's gang by telephone, he waited till they arrived and then sent a fake message into the resort which caused Kid Twist and Cyclone Loole to come out into the open. As they emerged from the door a perfect hail of bullets was discharged at them and both fell dead. Poggi was given the proud credit of firing the first fatal shots. He escaped from Coney Island, but later gave himself up to the police and was sent up to Elmira for 14 months. He was released a few months ago and for a while walked the streets of Chinatown with vastly increased glory.

Then one day—February 13, 1912, to be exact—as he was strolling through the district with Jimmy Kelly, his friend and patron, a gangster named Isola, who rejoiced in the name of "Gamy," bestowed upon him by admiring friends for his fighting qualities, turned loose his arsenal on the two, shooting to kill. He failed in his intent completely. The 13th day was a lucky one for him, for he was speedily released from custody by the courts.

Four days later a man named Frank Ranese, who had been shot and wounded the preceding Winter, was shot and killed by some unknown assailant. Before he died he was questioned, but denied that he knew who had shot at him. Big Jack Zelig, who had been accused of killing Julie Morelli in January, 1911, was also said to be guilty of Ranese's murder; he had, moreover, been charged with the stabbing of Frank Rizzo, which took place in the Crystal Cafe, 107 Second avenue, a day or two after the shooting of Morelli. He was arrested, but later released for lack of sufficient evidence to convict him.

Twelve days only passed before the gang leaped upon Handsome Jerry Florita, as he stood in the flaring lights before the Unique Theater, on Fourteenth street, near Third avenue, and stabbed him with their knives.

In the middle of April there were two gun fights. A youth named Jimmy Buck, who was acting as Jimmy Kelly's personal guard, while Loole the Lump, who had formerly served in this capacity, hid from the police, was shot while fighting an elusive gangster who took a pot shot at Kelly as he walked along the street; and away up at 114th street and Third avenue, Giuseppe Morelli, son of the famous counterfeiter, Lupo the Wolf, quarreled with Joseph Polizzo and Kid Baker in a saloon over the division of spoils. Each emptied his revolver at the others and all three fell dead.

Four days later, on April 20, the automobile made its second appearance in the annals of the gangsters' crimes. Five men drove up in a taxicab at dawn to the saloon conducted by James Fitzgerald at Tompkins and Grand streets. They robbed the barkeeper at the point of revolvers and disappeared in the car. A few hours later, however, a man was found in the rear of the House of Blazes at 34 Laight street, groaning with pain from a pistol shot. He proved to be none other than Gamey Isola, who had figured in the revolver practice of two months before. The chauffeur who had driven the taxicab to Fitzgerald's saloon, not knowing the errand of his passengers, identified Isola as one of the five men. It was supposed that the other four had shot him in a quarrel over the division of the money, but Gamey kept his mouth shut firmly when asked who had shot him.

A month elapsed unmarked by open hostilities and then the succession of gun fights began. And no certitude of quiet is promised.

Five men stand out above the rank and file of the gangsters of Chinatown. One is Jimmy Kelly, who leads one gang and whose real name is said to be Vincenzo di Silvio; he is keeping cautiously out of the present feud, though there is little doubt but that he will be drawn into it eventually. His headquarters and those of his followers are at his saloon, the Cafe Mandarin, an evil-looking place which stands on Doyers street at the point where it curves between the overhanging tenements and Chinese restaurants to run into Chatham square.

Notable New York Bad Men.

Next is Big Jack Zelig. He is also known as William Albert. He is head of the Yiddish gangsters, and the feud between his men and those of the Italian Sirocco is the bitterest of all. He is most cordially hated by his Italian enemies, and it is probable that he will emerge from the hospital only to be made the target of further shooting.

Then there is Big Jack Poggi, who runs a saloon and Chu Chu parlor at 12 Chatham square, with a back room in which are a piano and tables for women as well as men; its rear entrance, closed by heavy wooden doors, opens on Doyers street, and it was at this back door that the pistol bombardment took place. You can see on the glass over the rear entrance of the Chinese Tuxedo across the street the small hole made by one of the flying bullets.

Another is Giuseppe Poggi, the notorious Chick Tricker, who conducts a saloon at 241 Bowery. He is a Sirocco partisan who has been told off for special punishment by the Zelig gang. Though the attempt to shoot him failed, it is not likely that the Jewish contingent will give up the effort to "get him right."

Last of the five is Sirocco, who shares with Zelig the title of Big Jack. He it is whose followers, grown jealous of the fat pickings in the way of blackmail that have got into the pockets of the Zelig outfit, have sworn to get Zelig.

THE DESERT DANCING GIRL

A TRAGEDY OF THE BARREN WASTES

BY ALMA L. SMITH.

PERHAPS I had slept an hour on the desert when the uproar started. I sat up suddenly in the darkness of a camel's-hair tent with the echo of a woman's screams vibrating in my ears. Going to the door I beheld in amazement my traveling companions, the Arabs, falling upon their faces, while they chanted loudly in a weird, minor key.

I made out that a baby had died. It belonged to a Persian woman who traveled in a cage-like box on a camel by day, but danced for the footsore pilgrims by night.

As I gazed on the curious people before me the woman sprang from the ground beside her dead child and, waving her bare, dusky arms over the prostrate praying tribe, wildly called down curses on the camel drivers.

"Vile, creeping things! May you die of thirst and your bones lie forever outside the gates of Kerbela (the Holy City). Poisonous scorpions! May you be turned to blind, green owls and fly screaming through the air a million years. You crept so slow you killed my baby."

I moved nearer the edge of the low-chanting mass. The woman's grief-crazed brain seemed to fail her, she could think of no more horrible sentences to pass on the slaves, but she remained standing in the midst of the fallen men, swaying her graceful body to the rhythm of their unearthly melody.

She was young and perfectly proportioned. The beautiful, sad, sad eyes, the black, disordered hair, the padded jacket and short skirt, the shapely, sandaled feet, all went to make a picture in the glistening sand and moonlight, a picture that haunts me yet.

But I, a Nazarene, must offer no sympathy. I dared not disturb the odd ceremony. As I listened and looked the voices grew softer, the woman swayed more slowly and finally sank exhausted to the ground. The chant died off into a scarcely audible whisper, like the wind in trees at midnight. I hardly realized just when they stopped entirely, so light had been the last sound wave. A hush like that following a benediction hung over us a few seconds before the men got up quietly and began talking to one another.

Almost directly they dug a shallow hole and buried the child, while the mother sat apparently unmoved, staring dry-eyed across the heat-scorched sands.

By ones and twos the tired men disappeared into their tents until only the mother, one Arab and myself were left outside. This native was a Haji, with a beard painted fiery red, and unquestioned authority. He now saw fit to exercise this power by abusing the woman and ordering her to bed. She shrank from him and begged piteously to be let alone. I saw an expression of deepest cruelty overspread his features as he bent over her, hissing.

"So be it. You sit here this night and tomorrow your ear drums shall be bored in with thorns and your soft eyelids split thrice." And his fingers caressed a keen knife blade while he spoke.

The threat was sufficient. Horror shown in her dark, tragic eyes. With one last, long look toward the small mound of sand, she moved rapidly away to her tent. I noticed the unconscious grace, the subtle glide of her movements. I felt the charm and understood why she danced for weary men.

I, too, sought sleep and my pallet once more but mental rest was far from me. For the hundredth time within a month I condemned myself for a travel-mad idiot who had followed the bait of adventure 17,000 miles from Western civilization.

Why, I mused, would I endure the hardships of a desert trip with a band of wanderers, rocking all day on a camel's back, eating only dried fruits and drinking muddy Tigris water from a goatskin—why? Because the sweet siren voice of Adventure called—was still calling—and I smiled at the ability of that voice to be heard over these bodily discomforts as I got up and went once more out of the tent for a cool breath.

It was almost immediately that my attention was attracted to a queer-looking object lying on the desert to the east of our camp, near a depression called The Wells. A few low trees and camel thorns grew there, but I did not remember this particular boulder, for such it appeared.

Perhaps, I thought frivolously, some feverish, bespectacled antiquarian dug it up and left it after he had removed the ancient scarab it concealed. The place invited exploration. I decided to walk out to it.

I had gone about half of the distance between the camp and the desert stone when I was brought to a standstill so suddenly that my vertebrae tweaked. With a slow, clumsy twitch the thing had rolled jerkily over once, then all was still. The sands were silent, with only a desert's silence. No human was awake but myself. I was perfectly well; it was no hallucination. This object of my stroll had turned over, unaided by human hands. And more, as it turned I could have sworn it emitted radiant flashes as of diamonds in a basis of gold. My breath came short and hard, my eyes were strained from their sockets—I wanted a little more assurance that I was looking upon a phenomenon. I had not long to wait. The gorgeous apparition turned again and, slowly acquiring a regular motion, came directly toward me. Its revolutions dazzled my eyes as the light of the moon caught the fire of the jewels. Fear and wonder transfixed me while an icy grasp enveloped my arms and legs. I seemed to be freezing with horror—the the ball was gaining speed, fairly whirling toward me, aflame with its own splendor.

Suddenly my paralysis dropped away. Self-preservation sent me running at my highest speed across the hot earth. I believed it was a small celestial body that would kill us with fire or smother us with its poisonous gases. Musa, my good guide, slept by my door. I must warn him of this approaching doom. I was breathless and could not call out. I was tiring—and that horrible thing just behind me. I staggered against the first tent prop and looked back to gauge the distance between myself and this messenger of death, when a brain storm seized me. My hand sought my head, there was something vaguely familiar about the shape and swift tumbling motion of the body. A picture of the States and a stage flashed through my mind. At this moment the little demon of brilliance swerved from its direct course.

Fear left me. I was trying to remember the faint likeness. Ah! I had it! The contortionists! A tumbler! I was about to congratulate myself when the pathos of it struck me, for the ball had stopped beside the tiny grave and the dancing woman was alone with her dead. The red costume with its million spangles and cheap stones had served her well. Had cruel Haji seen the fiery ball he would have fallen on his face and implored the sun god to remove this sign of withering drouth. She had planned cautiously.

I went noiselessly into my house of cloth. I know not how long she remained or how she went away. I was only too grateful that the greedy love of adventure had not quite led me into betraying tender mother love.

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Saving the Bison.

The American Bison Society, now in the fifth year of its existence, is doing a good work. The announcement by Director Hornaday, of the New York Zoological Society, that it will aid the Bison society in stocking the proposed Wind Cave National bison range in South Dakota with a "nucleus herd," as soon as the range is established by Congress, follows the recent shipment by it and interested individuals of gift bison to the National ranges in Montana and Southwestern Oklahoma. Yellowstone Park, of course, includes a flourishing herd, and the Corbin herd at Newport, N. H., and the well kept group in the Bronx zoological garden show how far east these fine animals may graze and increase in number. Yet there are but 2000, more or less, of the American buffalo in existence. There should be millions of them, as once there were. They are still in imminent danger of extinction. It is not merely that the bison makes a valuable beef animal, and that its hide is more valuable than that of any domesticated beast; there is a sentimental value in its preservation. It is the most conspicuous of the American fauna. The New York Zoological Society has not abandoned its efforts to establish a state preserve in the Adirondacks, and in each of the states in which the bison originally ranged. It is difficult, however, to stir state pride in this matter. The bill now before the Senate committee on agriculture appropriates only $32,000 for the purchase and fencing of a valuable tract in the Black Hills district of South Dakota. It is little for the Nation to pay. The return will be rich and lasting.—New York Times.

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