

PORTLAND, OREGON, SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 13, 1910

IS LAWLESSNESS CHEAPENING LIFE?

From the Growing Number of Unpunished Murders, as Revealed in Chicago, Homicide May Become the Least Punished Crime



Leroy J. Stewart, Chicago's Civilian Chief of Police, Who Has Thrown a Statistical Bomb.

THIS is not a tale of the African slave trade of old or the horrors of the Congo of today. Neither has it anything to do with Indian massacres, with the cannibalism of the South Sea islands, nor the nameless murders that will for all time stain the career of Abdul the Damned.

On the contrary, it is a plain, unvarnished recital of the manner in which civilized people, supposedly, are doing each other to death; of the increasing difficulty of convicting the slayers; of the lawlessness that makes the great American cities veritable breeding grounds of crime.

But recently it was that two automobiles full of joy riders conducted a running battle through one of the principal streets of New York. Luckily no bystanders were injured, but that was no fault of the warring factions, who were doing their best to fill each other full of lead, and who scurried into obscurity when their battle began to bring forth a mob.

Yet New York, with its Chinese tongs, its "gangs" that hunt each other down like Kentucky feudists, is still away behind Chicago when the criminal records, instead of the populations of the two cities are considered. Only a few weeks ago the "wickedest city in the country" received her blackest brand from her own chief of police, Mr. Stewart.

With a regular statistical bombshell, the "civilian chief" astounded Chicago herself, and the entire country as well, by giving out the fact that in the last four years there have been 693 murders and but two hangings.

WHEN the Chicago chief gave out his remarkable figures he did so with the idea that they would be considered by the Bar Association. He wanted the attorneys-at-law to have some light on the insistent complaints from the plain, common people that crime goes unpunished.

Therefore he showed that, with 693 persons done to death, there had been 547 persons arrested on murder charges. Of these only 132 were convicted.

In all the convictions, except two, the usual thing happened. There were prison sentences or, worse, delays, legal squabbles, wranglings, new trials and eventual discharge.

Not everywhere is the condition so bad as in Chicago. Yet the difference in favor of the rest of the country seems one of degree rather than of kind.

The districts which were brought into such malodorous prominence by "Hinky Dink" Kenna and "Bathhouse John" Coughlin are about as bad as can be imagined. But it is doubtful if the other big cities of the country can afford to throw stones.

The cold, bare, blood-stained fact is that lawlessness is rampant, and that, coupled with the increasing difficulty of securing convictions for crime, it is cheapening human life. Everywhere the same remedy is urged. Its logic may be faulty, but the body of the people take to it, nevertheless. That is, "If the courts don't punish, we will."

That has been the cry in Ohio, a supposedly civilized state which has shocked the country with its lynchings. In Springfield, for instance, where the militia has been called several times to preserve order, there was a time when the worst riffraff of the town was whitewashed, through political influences, whenever it was haled into court. There the colored population holds the balance of power, usually, and it came to be so that a black man could commit almost any crime on the calendar with impunity.

The awakening came when Patrolman Charles Collis was shot by a negro he was attempting to arrest. Then, in America, was paralleled the storming of the Bastille. No French mob ever made a more savage attack than did the dead policeman's maddened friends on that Clark county jail. Veritable battering rams were brought into play, the negro dragged out and probably clubbed to death before he was riddled with bullets and strung up as an object lesson.

What this lawlessness means may be gathered from the fact that there were 78 lynchings in 1908 and 100 in 1908. Both these years were above the recent average, as in 1907 there were but 63, and in 1906 the number was slightly larger, 72. Years ago there were many more.

However, lynchings are but one cause that comes from the effect of permitting crime-breeding sections to exist in cities. Lynchings are the result of unbridled rage; the crimes themselves come from the criminal population.

This may easily be seen in the case of Chicago. There the undesirable women number 10,000 or more, and the tribute paid to them is \$20,000,000 a year.

What makes these figures even worse than they might at first appear is that the dissipation of Chicago has, in a large measure, run riot in its lowest forms. There began a period of regenera-

tion in 1906; but, like many other movements, this has only been partially successful—in fact, has, in many instances, been more apparent than real.

At that time the lowest of political elements were in control, and the police department was a recognized market for the sale of special privileges to gamblers, resort keepers and the like. The gambling interests were estimated to be raking in at least \$15,000,000 yearly.

There were also nearly 300 criminal hotels, with a capacity of 10,000 rooms. There were also between 300 and 400 houses of even less outward respectability, with many dance halls of the low-

est description.

In the wards given over to the lower element there were literal myriads of saloons of the worst type. All told, there were about 7500 saloons, as compared with 5000 groceries.

These low dens were under no license restrictions. Any one with a few hundred dollars could go into the business whenever he felt like it. Around the stockyards and in similar localities frequented by workmen the conditions were almost beyond belief.

Over all these unspeakable precincts there presided the Chicago political bosses, and anything went to those who could pay in money and

votes. The breeding grounds of crime were the feeding grounds of the corrupt politicians.

What might have been expected under these conditions came to pass. In an address before the Chicago Medical Society in 1906, Dr. Thomas Grant Allen declared that in six years there had been 159 murders, with only eight hangings, and that Chicago's murder rate was ten times as great each year as that of the whole of the British Isles.

The outcry at that time resulted in the employment of 1000 additional policemen, the passing of various ordinances restricting the liquor traffic, prohibiting criminal hotels and, in general, attempting to establish some sort of control over the lawless element.

In some measure these efforts were successful. There was at least a temporary diminution of the crime wave, which had reached such a point that no man's life was safe. But, as has been the history of many other cities, it proved

far easier to pass ordinances than to stamp out the real causes of corruption.

No police force can be reformed in a day, and no ordinance is going to purify the souls of the criminal and dissipated elements of the

population. Therefore Chicago is still struggling—in fact, has made scarcely more than a start.

As regards the punishment of murderers, she has actually retrograded, as the special report of her police chief shows. And this chief, by the way, is an experiment. He is known as a civilian chief, because he was selected for his business and executive ability, in the hope that, as a complete "outsider," he would be better able to control the force and put a stop to its corruption than a trained police officer whose affiliations had for years been with the men he was to command.

PEOPLE ARE ALARMED

As Chief Stewart's report on the punishment, or rather the lack of it, of homicides shows, he has his ear to the ground and is keenly alive to what the general public is saying. And, indeed, the comments on the lack of punishment that is meted out to murderers is not confined to Chicago, nor is the increase in savagery which manifests itself in doing an enemy to death.

Still, on account of incomplete statistics, this matter is largely one of observation, rather than of exact statement. Until very recent years, the gathering of mortality statistics by the United States government has admittedly been extremely incomplete. Many of the states have not had registration of these statistics, and even in the registration states the classification of deaths by violence has left much to be desired.

What statistics there are, however, indicate an extreme increase in the crime of murder, and the more complete the statistics the greater number of murders shown.

Thus the figures for the latest years available, as published in the census report of 1909, are:

1903	834	1906	2101
1904	935	1907	2709
1905	1540		

These, of course, are manifestly much below the real numbers. Perhaps, when the census of 1910 is fully compiled, there will be a better idea of the crimes and convictions than is now available. For the present, however, a better idea of the situation may be gained by the more complete returns from the city of New York for the same years. They are:

1903	561	1906	869
1904	602	1907	843
1905	711		

Even allowing for an increase of population, it can be seen that the murder rate of New York has been steadily climbing.

THE WORST GO UNPUNISHED

Judging the country at large from unofficial statistics, the increase has been even more sensational. What is more, according to them, the number of murders to each execution has increased from 17 in 1885 to 76 in 1906. By five-year periods, from 1885 to 1906, these figures follow:

	Murders and homicides	Executions	Ratio of murders to executions
1885	1,803	108	17
1890	4,280	102	42
1895	10,509	122	79
1900	8,375	117	71
1906	9,350	123	76

Here again there is something of an approximation, because the number of executions does not altogether represent the number of murderers punished, as some states have abolished capital sentences.

So the safest plan, after all, is to go by the statistics from the big cities. Of course, Chicago is admittedly worse than any other spot in the United States. But, in a measure, Chicago is still the danger signal. What applies to the windy, crime-ridden city applies also to other parts of the union, though in a less degree.

The records show that Chicago's worst criminals are going unpunished. The influence of politicians and the apparent laxity of the courts are there fast becoming a scandal that may equal that of the crime wave of 1905.

What with the difficulty of securing convictions and the delays that follow those that are secured, it would really seem that murder is getting safer every day. In England, for instance, the usual custom is to allow three Sundays to elapse between the sentence and the execution. Any appeal to sentiment in favor of the murderer must be made in that time.

In one sense, the situation in America is more favorable to the general public than to the life-taker. The abolition of the death penalty in some states and the difficulty of securing juries strong enough to bring in a verdict of first-degree murder in others show that the people at large are becoming more and more averse to the taking of human life.

Murders, though, do not come from this (CONTINUED ON INSIDE PAGE)

