

CRIME

Our Country's
Greatest Problem

by

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Read at the National Meeting of the American Prison
Association, at Salt Lake City

When Victor Hugo wrote his famous *Les Misérables* he made his hero, Jean Valjean, say: "There are no bad herbs, nor bad men; there are only bad cultivators."

This was a broad and sweeping statement; but surely we will all agree that there are many bad cultivators.

We can not hope to gather figs from thistles. We will never pick perfect fruit from trees that are not cared for. The greatest asset any nation may possess is not wealth, nor commerce. It is good citizenship, a citizenship that loves and has confidence in its government and its institutions and is loyal to its country's flag.

If I were to say what I think are the chief causes for the increase in crime, I would set down, environment, disloyalty and thoughtlessness.

If I were asked what I think of prisons, jails and reform schools as reformatory institutions I would be compelled to say that in nine cases out of ten, these places are absolute failures so far as the making of good boys and men out of bad ones is concerned.

Habit is a dangerous chain that binds the public as well as the individual. Habit of thought and action on the part of the public has built jails, and prisons, and so-called reformatory institutions for the incarceration of those who have violated the laws we have made for what we are pleased to call the "protection of society."

Right here I want to point out just one of many instances that have come under my observation during the ten months that I have

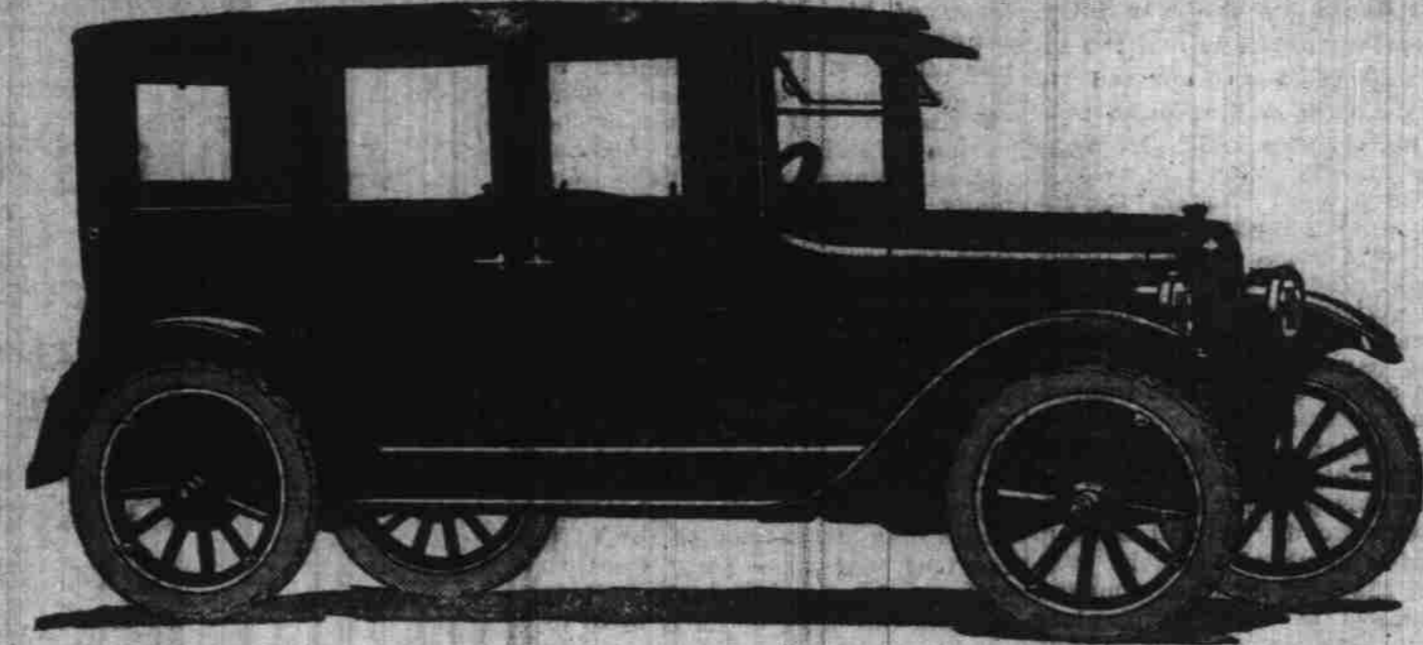
been warden of the Oregon state penitentiary where four hundred and thirty men and boys are confined, and I am sure that many similar cases may be found in every prison in the country:

A man is sentenced to a term of ten years in prison. He leaves behind a wife and four boys, the children ranging in age from three to twelve years, all too small to contribute to the support of the family which is left destitute. This family lives in an isolated section of the state. A few days ago the wife wrote a letter to the husband in prison relating the sad state of affairs at home, saying she felt every day that she would become insane, and suggesting that the easiest and best way out of her troubles was to jump in the river flowing close by her door.

I have no solution to offer for this problem and similar ones, but there must be a solution, and a correct one; for obviously it is wrong for the state—for society—to take away the bread-winner and leave his family of five to flounder in poverty and want—helpless charges upon the public and eventually to join the ever increasing army of criminals and delinquents. How has society been protected in this case? If environment exerts an influence upon the lives of children, what shall we expect of these four? And bear in mind that I am only citing a single instance in many thousands.

I have heretofore called attention to the power of habit and its influence upon the public as well as the individual. The American people have fallen into the

RADIO OUTFIT DEMONSTRATED IN CHEVROLET SEDAN



Something entirely new in the radio appeared on the streets of Salem last week. The outfit was in a Chevrolet sedan recently purchased from the Newton Chevrolet Company. It was operated by H. B. Churchill of the Churchill Radio Shop, Salem. The outfit consists of a modified super-hetrodyne, 7-tube back set working

on a two foot loop with a non-power loud speaker which was located in the back seat of the sedan.

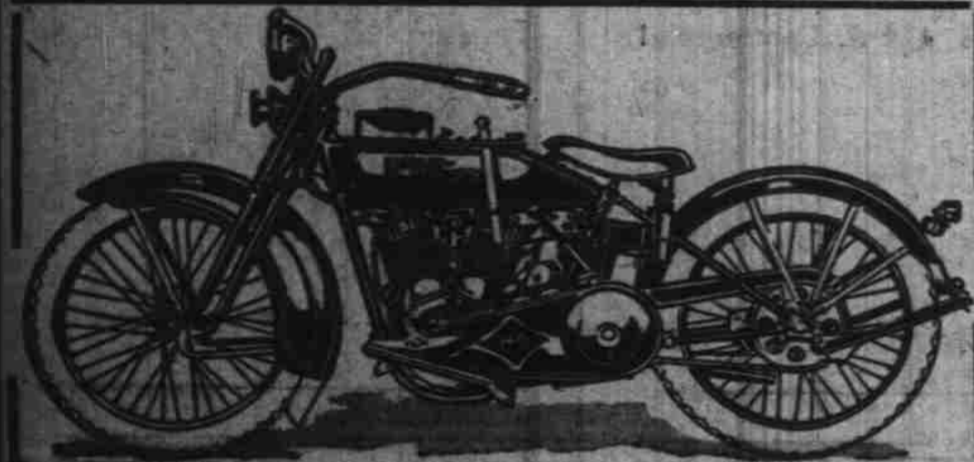
Mr. Churchill's main object of the experiment was to locate certain radio interference which has been bothering amateur operators in Salem. He has succeeded in

finding some of the interference and is trying to remedy this through the telephone company. Mr. Churchill is going to give some more time to these demonstrations and endeavor to locate further interference. The picture above is the same type car as Mr. Churchill is driving.

THE FIRE HAZARD

PORTLAND, Ore., Sept. 6.—Forest fire conditions remain serious throughout the Pacific coast states, according to early September bulletins received today by the Western Forestry and Conservation Association from protection agencies from Montana to California. Light rains in August enabled gaining control of outstanding fires but it is again extremely dry. From now until the first fall rain is the period in which to fear strong wind and low humidity. Professional fire fighters remind the public that last year 85% of the season's losses in Oregon and Washington were in September and that Sept. 12, 1923, was the famous "black day" in these states when noon was like midnight from the smoke of blazing forests.

So far, while 1924 has been one of the most dangerous seasons of history, extraordinary fire organization and expenditure have been aided by absence of protracted dry wind and, except for heavy damage to reforestation on open lands, highly successful under the adverse circumstances. The reports just received contain the first official estimates of losses which, al-



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the penitentiary could possibly have done and society is a lot better off. My theory is that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," and that it is better to help a man or boy go straight than it is to reform him after he has taken the crooked path.

Organized society should take every precaution to preserve its members, for every time one is lost by ostracism and branded an outcast criminal, then the social structure has been weakened to just that extent.

And in the light of this we find sheriffs, district attorneys, policemen and judges who often seem to take a good deal of pleasure whenever they get a conviction and the state's attorney tries his best to send every man brought before him to the penitentiary.

Not many years ago I was a newspaper reporter and it was my business to attend trials in police and other courts. I have seen boys brought into court for the first time charged with some offense and I have seen them tremble like frightened rabbits as the judge or prosecutor, trained in court procedure, fired question after question at the prisoner who often did not know the meaning of the terms they used, and I have known them to convict themselves through their own ignorance, being too poor to employ counsel to defend them. And this leads me to believe that some steps should be taken to change the present court practice and furnish a competent defender for the prisoner as well as a prosecutor for the state. Better yet, let the state's attorney stand in the same attitude toward he accused as he takes in behalf of the state, and instead of a merciless prosecutor let him act in the capacity of advisor.

I do not think many men are railroaded to prison, though many have told me they were. But I do know that many boys and men are made criminals by long sentences who might be saved to society if leniency were shown at the proper time.

Thoughtlessness

I have said that thoughtlessness is one of the chief causes of crime, especially in the young—and the great majority of our inmates now are young men. A boy of twenty has not the experience or the understanding of a man of mature years and consequently should not be expected to bear equal responsibility. But the law makes no distinction and too often the courts do not. The result is that our prisons are full.

I am partial to columns of figures and a mass of dry statistics. I seldom read them. But a few days ago I came upon an article written by Edward H. Smith and published in "Business," a Detroit magazine, in which he shows that the cost of crime in the United States is \$10,000,000,000 annually. This vast sum is divided and classified as thefts, robberies, forgeries, embezzlements, arson and all other dishonest transactions and the expense of prisons, jails, police forces, courts and reformatory institutions. So the greatest and most dangerous problem confronting us today is CRIME.

—A. M. Dalrymple.

MAKE HIGHWAYS SAFER

In their efforts to reduce the number of automobile accidents at grade crossings certain railroads have decided to prosecute those who crash through closed gates, thus damaging railroad property.

The time will come when all much-traveled highways will pass overhead or underneath, railroad tracks.

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The cities with the most motor cars are the most prosperous.

though still preliminary, go far to correct the conflicting statements which have been current. They indicate that outside the Government's national forest holdings, the damage up to date in the five western states amounts to about \$1,250,000, not including that to forest reproduction. About half a million dollars represents standing timber loss; nearly as much in destruction of logs and logging equipment; while quarter of a million is damage to settlers and miscellaneous community property. In the three heaviest timber states, the total losses, outside national forests, appear to approximate: in Washington, \$500,000; California \$475,000; Oregon, \$185,000.

Government losses have not been compiled but may approach \$3,000,000. California has suffered most. In that state the forest service has already spent \$425,000 in fire fighting and still has a largely-augmented emergency force including rangers brought in from Arizona and New Mexico and seven detachments of troops used for patrol. Throughout the

coast many national forests are still partly or wholly closed to visitors.

A similarity in the reports received from state, federal and private forest officers alike, through the five Pacific states, is the belief that the 1924 season teaches the necessity of more police restriction. The extreme hazard has been given wide publicity and in general the public has responded. There have also been over 400 prosecutions of fire law violators. Nevertheless, man-caused fires due to carelessness or willfulness are still occurring daily.

About 5500 fires have been reported already this season. By far the greatest source has been the forest visitor class, using lands not its own, including campers, sportsmen, smokers, motorists, berry pickers and the like. These have been responsible for from 30 to 47% of the fires, according to region and agency reporting. Lightning comes perhaps next in some regions, with the remainder allotted mostly to land-clearing.

On the greatest danger lies in hunters, land-clearing settlers and careless burning of logging slashings. The hazard will remain great until after heavy rains, for dry wind and low humidity may occur at any time to rekindle any fire not completely extinguished.

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Due to the world-wide shortage Mexico is having trouble again.

In Paris the fashionable girls are going without stockings, perhaps so they won't have to go without men.

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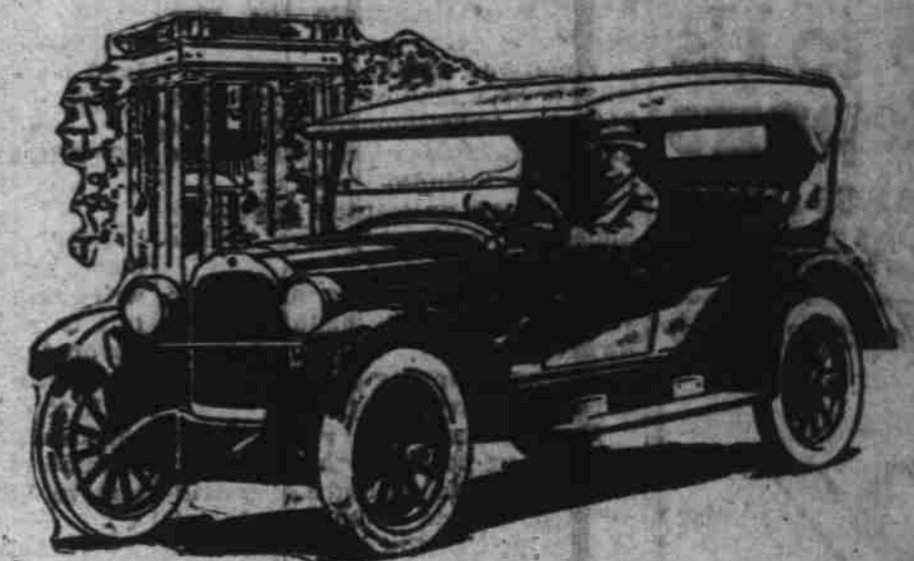
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