

## NO PROFIT IN CRIME

*Human Experience Shows That No Degree of Theft Pays One Mill on Dollar---Examples of Mott Haven Red, Alonzo Whitman, Ellen Peck, et al.*

(New York Sun.)

Young men and young women just from college and looking about for opportunities should firmly reject all suggestions or inducements to take up crime as a career. Moral considerations aside, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, which would justify such a choice. True friends would never think of recommending it.

No matter how assiduously, intelligently and drastically the business of violently or furtively acquiring one's neighbor's goods may be pursued, the business leads to squalid misery in the end. As a life work it simply doesn't pay, particularly for those that go into it in a small way. Moreover, crime is becoming increasingly disreputable. It is a bad game financially and it offers no social rewards worthy of the name.

There are many men and some women in New York who have followed the trade for years—some of them, indeed, for a span of 50 years. Today, such of them as have not sunk completely out of sight in the morasses of the underworld are objects of pity even to the police. They have become shambling mendicants, old, broken, utterly penniless, wholly dependent on begging. They live like toads in some dark hole, their only solace in the twilight of life being such rum or such drugs as they can beg or steal. Most of their active years have been spent in practicing the lock step. They will appear before Peter at the gate dragging their left feet. Their immortal souls will spring from unconsidered clay thrown into a potter's field hole. At the hour of their death many of them will be cursed by recollections of evil gains tossed away and by regrets such as come eventually to human beings that stray at the cross roads.

### Poor Business.

As a plain matter of human experience there is no degree of theft which will pay one mill on the dollar. Take religion out of the discussion entirely. Put aside all contemplation of the Ten Commandments and the moral law. Forget the Golden Rule and the ethical guide. Consider crime solely as a business proposition. Weigh the experience of notorious criminals that have made a stir in the world because of their boldness or shrewdness. The result is nothing affords intelligence. There is nothing in it but shame, dirt, loneliness, contempt and an unmarked grave. There is not one commercial criminal, that is to say a thief who steals by guile or strength with the sole idea of getting money without work and who cherishes no special malice toward humankind, in a thousand that ever enjoys in his closing years any sort of prosperity, and shade of the tranquility that old age requires. In this there is observed the operation of an immutable law of psychology. Not only are material gains impossible to hold, but the brain itself is so charged by the hysteria of the trade that the calmness essential for happiness is forever destroyed.

Ask old Mott Haven Red, one of the most daring and expert burglars the police ever sought. Ask Ellen Peck, queen of the confidence women, who lured \$1,000,000 from the purses of too trustful men and who is broke at the age of 90. Ask Monk Eastman, perhaps the most dangerous gang leader in New York's history before he went into the army, won the distinguished service cross and earned the respect of all his comrades in arms. Ask Alonzo Whitman, once a State senator in Minnesota, later a wizard at forgery and recently a bum on the Bowery. Ask John Dowd, probably the last of the old Whyo gang, who is now a nickel grafter after 30 years of dishonest plotting. Ask Pat Gallagher, "swell tin tapper" and now a cadger in East Side gin mills. Ask Jimmy Farrell, clever forger and counterfeiter for 30 years, but now down and out. Ask a hundred such, and you would get one answer: "There's nothing in it."

### Living Example.

Their testimony is more important than that presented by the police, for they are living examples of the futility of theft. Their whole lives are shocking illustrations of the fact that of all the ways of wasting time crime is the least profitable and the most ruinous. There may be some methods of squandering the years by which men and women can get a fairly even trade with the devil, either mentally or physically, but in the crime trade Sir Satan takes principal and inter-

est and then most usuriously seizes the body and soul. There are no exceptions to it. It is of no consequence to point out that here and there in the world are men who drive about in costly motor cars, live in mansions and rent pews in churches who made their fortunes evilly. But what goes on inside these men? Who knows what blackmail they pay? Who can guess their secret humiliations? Who can estimate their fear of the hereafter? And every so often one of these rotten trees falls with a crash and throws up a dust in the world.

At police headquarters there is an angled room approached through a wicket of steel. It is a graveyard of human lives. The careers of men and women are to be found there, all tucked away neatly in steel boxes, like bodies in coffins. It is a mausoleum of fallen humanity; a vault wherein the dead souls of living persons are already buried. Novelists would do well to enter this vault and read the inscriptions. There is nothing on the dark sides of life which may not be found there. This room is officially entitled "The Bureau of Criminal Identification." Therefore it is a morgue, in which may be identified the personality of individuals with aliases as scars, prison sentences as distinguishing marks. It is not a cheerful place, though there are few rooms more interesting. In addition to being a morgue it is a laboratory for the study of crime. There are people who visit it regularly to perfect their knowledge of how best to protect society from marauders. None know better than these students that crime offers no reward. It is time thrown away, lives squandered to no end.

### Alonzo Whitman's Record.

One of the steel boxes containing dead souls is marked with the name "Alonzo J. Whitman." Here was—is—an individual who schemed for a generation to make crime pay, equipped as he was with about every physical and mental asset necessary to the trade. Tall, handsome, scholarly looking, splendidly educated, he worked at forgery for 20 years. Not so long ago he was sitting upon the curb at Canal street and the Bowery regarding the toes of his right foot protruding through the ruins of a shoe. A little later a judge in Cincinnati was giving him two years in the penitentiary. There is scarcely a better example of the utter foolishness of crime than Whitman.

He is the son of a Minnesota mine owner and lumber man who was rated as a millionaire in the '70s. Young Whitman went to Hamilton college and subsequently to the Columbia University law school. Not one boy in 100 had as good a chance to wrest fortune honestly from fate. He went back to Minnesota, got into politics, was elected to the State senate, served a term with some ability, ran for congress and was defeated, and then tried his hand in the wheat pit of Chicago. It won't do to say that unlucky wheat speculation and the wiles of opponents drove Whitman into crime when his money was swept away, for there was something askew inside his head. His progress downward is interesting. Wiped out at the Chicago board of trade in 1893, he became a bookmaker on Western and Eastern tracks and for a time did pretty well. He once bet \$15,000 to win \$1,000, making the wager with the late Davy Johnson on the old Monmouth Park track, and won the bet, Pierre Lorillard's mare Wanda just managing to get her pretty nose in front of the thoroughbred that imperilled Whitman's \$15,000. Eventually, within a year or so, he had to quit as a bookmaker because his money was gone and his credit was no good.

What next? Plain forgery. He forged a check somewhere out West and was convicted. When he came out of prison he tried a little more chirography. The outcome was the same. Year after year his name occurs in the record of arrests and convictions. At times his loot was big and he wriggled out of the law's grip, but in the long run there were always manacles on his slender wrists and his feet were always headed for some State's penitentiary. The last heard of him was that he was serving a prison sentence in Ohio—and he is more than 60, nearing the end of his life without a dollar and sure to be harried by the police of every city once he shows his face.

### Notorious Ellen Peck.

Did you ever hear of Ellen Peck? In her day she was the most cele-

(Continued on page three, column 1.)

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Olar, S. C., April 21, 1919. 3t

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