

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1896.

REMOVE TEMPTATION.

EXPERT ADVICE TO DECREASE THE CRIME OF KLEPTOMANIA.

Criminologist Join in a Request to Merchants—Strange Fancies of Persons Addicted to the Habit—Valuable Articles Ignored and Mere Trifles Purloined.

The leading criminologist of the world, the members of the congress of criminal anthropology, have just united in a request or resolution to the great department stores of Europe and the United States to cease tempting the kleptomaniac. These savants hold that the marts of fashion and necessity offer opportunity for the cultivation of an affliction that impels to crime and leads to prison.

Thefts in the large stores both here and abroad have become a matter of real concern, owing to the tremendous increase in their number, the variety of objects stolen, and the quality, or rather position, of these victims of criminal disease. This is considered a social problem or phenomenon that has been observed by criminologists the world over. To the reformer, to the student of inherited criminal instincts, to the moralist, it has proved a cause of actual fear. It is no exaggeration to say that at the present time no other question finds greater importance in the minds of the magistrates and physicians.

It is these facts that have led to the concerted movement that is about to be inaugurated to attempt to decrease the prevalence of this crime that is considered a disease. Prof. Lacassagne, a Paris scientist and editor, has just announced the action that is to be taken by the savants.

It is held by these men that the modern store with its tempting display, embracing in many instances a vast variety of articles, is a constant obstacle to the cure of the kleptomaniac. The illustration indicates something of the truth of this idea, showing as it does, the fashionable woman who, with purse filled with banknotes, steals a paltry handkerchief and ignores the diamonds but a few feet away. Not only is this true, but in displaying their wares so that all may see, the employees of the stores where fashion spends its wealth, put their goods in such a position that it seems the easiest matter in the world for a shopper to filch at will. Given then, a person with a disease that impels to crime, it will be seen that with the combination of opportunity with the kleptomaniacal instinct, human will is not sufficient to prevent theft.

In discussing kleptomania, Dr. Lacassagne says that "without doubt the conditions of our epoch permit us to observe in many cases this sort of theft." It is new and yet it is old. It was described by scientists whose knowledge grew to maturity during the first half of the present century. "This impulse to steal without motive," the doctor says, "was called kleptomania. In our day this impulse is termed by the leading scientists one of the most important manifestations of degeneration. These men believe that kleptomaniacs are individuals who steal absolutely for the sake of stealing. Such is not, however, the opinion of the majority of criminologists. It is our belief that kleptomania is not for us a thing apart. It is a morbid manifestation which exhibits itself in a certain number of those who are mentally diseased, but it is also in all its forms a manifestation of a vicious nature."

Dr. Lacassagne, in making this statement, agrees with the most noted man of the United States who have discussed the subject. Experts on insanity when questioned say that there is no doubt that many persons who steal and are termed kleptomaniacs are in reality on the verge of a plunge into lunacy. It is, they claim, a desire with which every lunatic is strongly impressed to steal everything on which he can lay his hands that is portable. Therefore, it cannot be denied that kleptomania exists, they say. The disease is insanity; the kleptomaniac is a lunatic.

Rich women with criminal tendencies, Dr. Lacassagne says, after yielding to the first few impulses to steal, become decided thieves and utterly incapable of resisting temptation. He mentions one such woman who purchased goods to the amount of \$25 in a Paris store. Passing out of the establishment she stole a sponge valued at four cents. On another occasion the same woman bought and paid for more than \$100 worth of goods, and then stole a 15-cent pocketbook, which she afterwards said she wished to present to her cook.

There are, it is declared, a large class of women thieves whose mental condition is such that they have not the slightest idea what they are doing when they steal. Such is the condition of their brains that the moral sense, so far as properly is concerned, seems to have entirely disappeared, and in its place is such turpitude that it makes one almost shudder to think of it. Totally irresponsible and ignorant, from a mortal standpoint, although of bright mind and fine personal presence, they are, the criminologists hold, as innocent as a baby who snatches at the tablecloth, beings down the

bric-a-brac upon the floor and wonders why in the world it is punished.

It is for exactly this class of women that the criminologists have decided to petition the stores not to tempt. And this is what they say to justify their request:

"The great stores are veritable provocateurs of special theft. They constitute a real danger for feeble sickly persons. A great many women who would not steal elsewhere here finds themselves fascinated and overwhelmed with the desire to appropriate small articles within their reach. It is a temptation that is truly diabolic, for the chances of detection are minimized at certain hours during the day when the stores are crowded, and each clerk has many customers, waiting to be served, these meanwhile handling the goods that lie upon the counters.

"The best method of preventing these women from becoming thieves would be, it seems, to station at each counter an officer of the law, not in ordinary dress like the rest of the customers, but in a uniform as conspicuous and noticeable as possible. If a policeman were placed at each counter there would be no more theft. Women steal in these places because they believe they can do so without being detected.

"The kleptomaniac steal only in the great stores, in which places the surroundings are all of provocative theft. The articles of merchandise are so arranged as to excite the covetousness of the visitor; for the customer, merchants know well, must be fascinated and her desire is excited by the lavish display of rich goods.

"These excitants of the senses might be called the impulses to crime, for as a corollary stimulates the appetite for food, so do heaped-up counters whet the feminine greed for possession. The strongest willed woman will yield by expending more than she, in her sober moments, has set aside for her wants. But who can measure the force which draws on and overmasters the feeble or degenerate minds?"

No one realizes the truth of these statements more than the men whose duty it is to apprehend the persons who are guilty of just the sort of theft to which the French savant refers. In London, in New York, in Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston and San Francisco the police and the larger stores have a list of the people who are known to be kleptomaniacs. As a rule, all such people are possessed of wealth. They have absolutely no temptation to steal beyond that engendered by a diseased mentality. While the method of treatment in such cases—so far as the shopkeeper is concerned—varies with the city, it is often the case that when it is found by a mercantile firm that they have lost something by theft, the record of the kleptomaniacs who have visited the store the day of the theft is secured, and to each of them is sent a circular requesting that they forward to the firm at once the missing article or the price thereof. The kleptomaniac does not remember whether she has stolen or is guiltless. As a rule, however, she feels impelled to send the price stated. Therefore it often occurs that the article is paid for by several persons.

M. Paul Dotet, the distinguished French alienist, in discussing this question says:

"It is possible for us to draw the line between the kleptomaniac and the shoplifter if we know the value of the objects stolen. The professional shoplifter steals all articles save those of some value, but the true kleptomaniacs pick up things of trifling cost, in comparison. When detected they say with undoubted sincerity: 'It seems to me as if everything belonged to me—I might have taken all.' These thieves are the mentally unbalanced whose minds are slightly touched by disease. Here the intervention of medicine is legitimate. We have asked many times for a law compelling the appointment of inspectors in the great stores, whose business it shall be to deter by their presence all attempts or even thoughts of theft on the part of these kleptomaniacs."

The views of a savant and detective are not far apart in the matter. Thomas Byrnes, the greatest detective the United States ever produced, said to the writer: "It is folly to say that there are no kleptomaniacs. An experience of more than thirty years with criminals and those who have been guilty of minor thefts but can hardly be called criminals, has proved to me that not only does kleptomania exist, but that it is a disease. Again, I have found it to be the result of a sudden impulse of a woman who could not represent an unreasonable longing to possess a certain article which it seems to her at the moment that it was not worth living without. Sometimes it happens that the mother steals for her child without the slightest thought that she is committing a crime. Such an event is, in my estimation, the result of disease or temporary insanity. We are prone to call persons thieves who steal, regardless of the circumstances. I am free to say that I consider the displays made by the great stores of the country a constant temptation to persons whom either heredity or acquired mental affection has given a bent toward theft, which does not mean that they are thieves, but that they have been robbed, by some strange process, of all

knowledge that they are committing wrong."

Proprietors of large stores, questioned regarding the matter, admit that the allegations made by the criminologist are to a large extent true. They say in defense, however, that as they display their goods so do they sell them. The question then is, is the fact that there are hundreds of people who steal, though morally irresponsible, of sufficient force to induce the business men to change their methods? Or is this class of lunatics to be punished for offenses in the same way as the thief who, with full knowledge of the evil and its consequences, breaks in and steals?—Detroit Free Press.

CONVICT SINGING CLUB.

Sweet Strains Rise Within a State Prison Walls.

Among the convicts in a certain well-known prison in the United States are two young white men and six young negroes. They are up for offenses ranging from murder to the stealing of \$100. It is the habit of these eight to gather in the evenings, after their day's labors have ended and provided, also, that they are not doing penance for deeds within the prison offense in the eyes of the warden—for the purpose of cultivating their taste for music.

The little musical communions are held in an assembly hall perhaps 50 feet long by 25 feet wide, with a great high ceiling and walls of solid concrete, broken by but the single means of egress. It is not to be supposed for a moment that the builders of this penitentiary aimed to make of this room one of the most effective concert halls in the land in the matter of acoustics, but such it has proven to be. Constructors of theaters and of halls all over the country have attempted in every imaginable way—profiting by the experiences of others—to equip them with resonating properties, and while some have succeeded, others have failed miserably—have placed before the public auditoriums into the sides and ceilings of which have sunk the sound waves from swelling organs and great choruses of vigorous voices. Authorities will tell one that acoustics are an uncertain quantity that no ingenuity has yet been able to fully control.

So this prison room was accidentally made into a grand concert hall—grand from the point of view of musical effectiveness, though diminutive in the matter of seating capacity, for it will hold not more than 100 people. Into this room, then, gather every evening these eight felons. One of the young white men went into the prison possessed not only of some knowledge of music and ability to play the piano and organ, but with the real love of it which can be acquired only from the Maker. He sits down at the organ and the others gather about him. At the present time they are all in love with a new negro melody that seems a little more complicated than anything that has been put on the stage in the last three years; which is as yet unknown to the Detroit public, but which, unless all signs fail, will become the rage here before the winter shall have ended.

The organist plays the air through once or twice, and then all is in readiness for the song. At the left of the organist stands a huge negro, who is in for life for the murder of his mistress. He had the evidence of his eyes one evening that she was faithless, and burning up with jealous love he slew her, and the jury considered the crime sufficient reason for removing him forever from the daily sight of toiling, free humanity. This negro is possessed of a fine baritone voice, and he stands there, his black, bulging chest half revealed by the unbuttoned cotton shirt, and sings the song, stanza by stanza the organ pealing out the full air. The sound rolls back and forth, impressive power being given it by the reverberations. The first stanza finished, the other six singers join the murderer in the chorus. Before them lies the music and all follow it with the closest attention. The stops, the pauses, the raising and lowering of tones—all are conscientiously followed, and all is done with an absolute unification of effort and with an accuracy in time that is astounding, considering the supposedly ignorant character of the singers.

If the music was enticing when the one man and the organ expressed it, it was enthralling when all joined him. A gentleman who heard the music, in company with the writer, listened to the entire song, and then appealed to the warden for a repetition. He had been all over the United States, had heard singers of all degrees of merit and all manners of voice, and at that moment he thanked the warden for his courtesy and assured him that he was never more pleased. He was asked if the character of the surroundings had not influenced his emotions at the expense of his judgment, for the warden had heard the voices

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RESPECTFULLY,

Manchester Robertson & Allison, St. John

so frequently that he had become somewhat indifferent to them. But no, the visitor declared, he had heard all the minstrels that had trod the stage in recent years, and never had he listened to a simple air more effectively rendered than the one, the notes of which had just died away. Once more, then, the warden ordered them to sing it.

The chorus was composed of first and second tenors, first and second basses, a baritone of lesser caliber than the murderers' and an alto, an effeminate vocal arrangement possessed by the other white man. How they did enjoy the singing of that song. It was a simple melody reciting the ruffled course of true love, but filled with catchy periods that will ere long be worked to death on the streets. All the voices were good, and the visitor heartily declared that, had it been sung from the stage of an opera house, the listeners would have been satisfied with not less than four or five encores.

The moral of all the foregoing is the value of concentration of mind. As the singers stood up it could be readily seen that not a good heart was among them. Expressions of low cunning darted about in their shifty eyes; the hardened features gave no sign of regret for the past; the ill-shaped hands indicated the lack of conscience beneath. Quiet, well-behaved though they were, it required no stretch of the imagination to picture them taking part in an insurrection of liberty or revenge that involved the murder of their keepers and, perhaps, the killing of themselves.

Excepting the organist, when they entered that prison their knowledge of music was of the vaguest sort. They may have known in a general way that they possessed good voices, and undoubtedly they enjoyed the rendition of popular songs at the cheap variety theaters. But they knew absolutely nothing of the rudiments of music, and they cared less. Once inside the prison walls, however, they realized that they did care something for it. It is lonely, wearing work, this assassination of the moments, with no sound save that of a creaking door or scampering rat. Left to their own reflections, and those not of the most elevating sort, nature drove them to the most congenial employment of mind during the idle moments, the cultivation of music. The organist, not long after he arrived to work out his three years, took them in hand and taught them music after his style, and it was better than their own method of self-instruction. He listened, and detecting the unevenness of the various voices, gave their owners directions how to best overcome the weakness. Assiduously they obeyed him, and before two years had been passed they were what might be called accomplished amateur musicians. They all could read the music, not in the uncertain, stammering way of the beginner, but after the quick, skillful manner of the orchestra player, and what they learned was never to be forgotten.

But more directly to the moral. Concentration of thought has brought to these young criminals knowledge that could be but of the best for them. It could have done as much outside the walls, but concentration with liberty—at least not concentration on a subject of this nature. Perhaps were the matter one of plotting for the illegal possession of a few dollars they could and would apply their whole attention to it, but to nothing else, unless it be escape from the authorities. Inside the prison, with their minds totally free, during the evening hours, from all outside influences, whether of good or bad nature, they found themselves compelled, for their own temporary pleasure and perhaps for their permanent salvation from the insane asylums, to apply their thoughts to the one subject. Not even the memories of the past could come up to annoy them, for long dissociation from events deadens them to the average mind and memory. And thus, inside these two years these young men schooled in vice and crime only, unable to do much more than write their own names—unlettered, uncultured, rough, violent in temper and action, had mastered the intricacies of music as the average young

miss with musical tendencies could never dream of doing, because her thoughts radiate away from her lessons in as many different directions as do the beams from the sun.—R. D. Wagstaff.

GERMANS PLAY PINOCHLE.

It is to Them What Poker is to the American Card Player.

What poker is to the American card player, pinochle is to the German, although, perhaps, the game could be better compared to whist, says the Chicago Times-Herald. For, as in whist, there is no opportunity to bet except on points, and no opportunity to raise bets. At the same time the game is played very differently from whist or, in fact, any other game.

Pinochle languishes during the summer, when the German sits outdoors in summer gardens sipping beer. Only the most devoted of the game's votaries then play it, but with the advent of winter the pinochle season begins. During these months there are thousands of Germans who sit by the hour in some convenient spot and play the game, either in pairs or four-handed, and almost always where liquid refreshment can be obtained. The man who wanders into one of the small German saloons around town almost any day can see a party of men deep in the mysteries of pinochle. Not a word is said unless it be necessary to claim points in the game.

There are pinochle players in Chicago for whom the game has so deep a fascination that they spend all their time playing it. Usually a party of two or four will play together with regularity for long periods. There have been many cases where the same men have played pinochle against each other with unvarying regularity for a period of one, two or more years. Many have played with each other for an even longer period. Two of the best pinochle players in Chicago are August Schmidt and Carl Meyer. These two men have played pinochle against each other every day, Sundays included, for twenty-two years. They first met in a north side saloon on November 3, 1874, and each became so delighted with the other that they have been antagonists ever since. Schmidt used to live on the west side, but four or five years ago he moved to the north side so that he would not have so far to travel to reach the saloon where they always play. The game has lasted so long that it has ceased to attract any attention among the habitués of the saloon. But should one or the other fail to appear at the appointed time and take his station at the table which has been set aside as theirs by right it would create a bigger sensation than anything else which could be imagined.

A good deal of pinochle is played in that saloon, and it is very seldom that any other game is indulged in there. They tell a story of a party who entered and wanted to play poker. They called for a pack of cards and sat down to play. But with the very first hand there was trouble. There were five in the party, and five hands were thrown around the board, and

then the betting began. Never had the first hand dealt in a poker game been provocative of so much speculation. Everybody stayed and, all only took two cards. The betting was lively. Nobody seemed to mind the old gaming superstition that the winner of the first pot in a poker game is sure to quit loser at the end of the game. Each of them bet lively. The first man staked the limit at once, the second raised him, the next raised him, the dealer called, but the age raised.

And so it went for several rounds, until three of the players began calling each time, while the other two raised, and they were determined to stick. In course of time they ran out of chips and money, and the show-down came by universal consent. One hand showed four aces and a king, another had four kings and an ace, four jacks and a queen, a full house on queens, and another full on kings was exhibited. It looked for a while as if their would be a row. Each man believed that the others had tried some sharp practice, and when the words grew very high and the men were about ready to fight with each other, the proprietor, noticing the threatened disturbance, intervened.

He was quickly informed of the cause. He glanced at the hands, and, knowing a little about poker himself, appreciated the cause of the trouble. He smiled broadly: "I think minecell," he said, "dot you vos hold of got the pinochle pack already yet."

And so they had. The mystery was explained. They had a double pack of cards with eight of all the good cards in it. Then they all turned on the proprietor and swore at him, at pinochle and other things. But it did no good. They were compelled to divide the pot, and when the division was made they got up and quit, deciding to go somewhere else where less pinochle was played and there was less danger of a repetition of the occurrence.

A Judge's Experience.

Mr. James Reilly, an early frontier judge, tells the following tale of his first experience at the court of justice: "I had just been elected judge when a fellow up for horse stealing consented to be tried by six jurors. Most of the men were off gold digging. Well, I summed up. The jury retired. I waited a long time outside. The jury waited longer inside. The sheriff tried to get in. I got in when I lost patience. Five were for conviction. The sixth, a friend of the prisoner, for acquittal. When was a desperate chap. I tackled him. He volunteered to bring in a verdict of guilty before I let him up. I lost two of my fingers by bowie knife amputation. I was very popular there! My calm, firm administration of the law touched them."

Willing to Take Less.

"See here, young man," said the stern parent, "I have satisfied myself that you want my daughter because she is to have a million in her own right."

"Just to show you that I'm not mercenary, and to make future relations more pleasant, I'll compromise her and now at 75 cents on the dollar."

No Wonder.

"Say, Wobblers, what made you people mob that foot ball team we sent down here?" "Our fellers looked 'em over an' thought they was Flyin' Rollers."

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