

A Murder a Day ~ and Proud of It



It Isn't Safe to Be a Civilian In Chicago; And It Isn't Safe to Be a Policeman—Here Is The Great Crime City of The World—The Killings May Be Cruel or Tragic But They Frequently Have Comic-Opera Sequels

By GREGORY CLARK

A MURDER a day keeps the angels away. There are no angels in Chicago. For they have a murder a day.

Of course, it doesn't run on a daily schedule. Some days there won't be a murder all day. But then they make up the next day by having two or three.

A whole day will go by without a single murder. Then the Chicago papers have a peculiar bare, dumb look. Everybody sits around in a sort of hush.

But all is well. The following morning, the usual cheery world is rickety once more with news of murder.

Chicago is proud of its murder. Of course, there are those amongst the three and a half million people in greater Chicago who protest that they are pained by the city's crime record. But you will find all sorts of people in a city of that size.

You take the average taxi driver or young business man or the lady who sits at a desk on each floor of the hotel, and they will tell you first about the murder record and second about the Boulevard.

"Chicago, you know," says any one of them, "has a murder a day. Oh, yes! That's more than the whole of Britain put together. Have you been on Michigan Boulevard yet? No? Well, to-day ain't so windy, but you take a walk along there on a windy day! My...!"

Here are the figures announced by the Chicago police for the three most popular forms of crime for the past few years. The figures are stated to be absolutely accurate. As a matter of fact, in order to get the figures right, the police hadn't the time to capture even half the criminals involved. But the figures are right, you understand. Ab-so-lute-ly.

	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924
Murder	330	194	190	228	270	347
Burglary	6,108	5,495	4,774	4,301	3,019	2,155
Robbery	2,912	2,782	2,558	2,007	1,402	1,799

This year, so far, there have been 282 murders to date, which brings it out exactly right, a murder a day, including Sundays and holidays.

Now, you will observe from the above table that while burglary has fallen fearfully, from 6,000 to only 2,000 in six years, and robbery—which means hold-up—has been appreciably reduced, murder, on the contrary, has showed a steady increase. Murder is obviously Chicago's pet crime. Take away their burglaries. They can do without their hold-ups. But spare them their murders. Woodman, woodman!

There is rarely anything poetical or mysterious about Chicago murders. They are what police call open-and-shut. A husband tires his wife. What will he do with her? Why, kill her. A wife grows weary of her husband, such a mutt. What will she do? Why,

shoot him. It is far quicker than divorce, and cheaper, too.

There is the case of a man who shot his wife and married again the next day. After the police had been hunting for him for two weeks, he came back from his honeymoon and gave himself up. The trial lasted fifteen months, owing to the fact that he was a traveler and had to be on the road a great deal of the time. A lot of the witnesses went away, and those that were left had forgotten most of the facts, having got them mixed up with other murder cases they had witnessed or read of. So that finally, the judges who were trying the case failed to get re-elected in the big elections, and the new judges, not knowing the first year of the case, dismissed the matter from their minds, as they wished to begin their careers with a clean sheet.

The Reward of Faith

THINK of that second wife, receiving her husband back to her arms freed of all stain! Her heroism rewarded. And it was really clever of her to have gone on all that time without shooting him, until he was cleared. Now she is free to do as she likes, of course. Jest about murder is unseemly. But Chicago and her crime situation has reached the jesting stage. It is hard not to be jocular about Chicago's police and judges, her crime and criminals, her social condition as a whole.

To a high police official, we put this question:

"What is the explanation of Chicago's crime record?"

His answer: "Politics."

The police are appointed and controlled by the elected city officials. The judges are elected for a short term of six years. The prosecuting attorney, the clerk of the court, everybody, is elected.

Nobody can hope to be elected without the support of the bosses. Countless hundreds of good men have run for all these offices on a ticket of reform, refusing the support of the bosses. None of them ever won.

The men who chase the criminals, who catch them; the men who try the criminals, who prosecute them; all are elected. To keep their jobs, they have to pay attention to the requirements of the bosses who virtually elected them.

What this leads to, you are not asked to guess. In 1923, there were 270 murders in Chicago. There were 135 persons tried for murder, of which 56 were sentenced to the penitentiary and 9 were sentenced to death. Of the nine, one was hanged! Seventy of those tried were acquitted.

Life, you might say, is sacred in Chicago. One life paid for 270 lives!

If this extraordinary ratio holds good in murder, what must the harvest be in mere property crime such as burglary and hold-up? Chicago, however, seems to care more for property than for life. Because, it has been the stricter application of the law in cases of burglary and hold-up that has caused the decrease in these crimes in the past five years.

The real trouble for criminals started in Chicago in 1917. One day an express company's

The CANS FAIR IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS PICTURE ARE COPPER STILLS OFFERED FOR SALE IN THE FAMOUS STREET MARKETS OF THE HALSTEAD DISTRICT, CHICAGO—WHERE YOU CAN BUY PISTOLS, BILLIES, AND ALL OTHER SOCIAL ACCESSORIES.



CHICAGO HAS SEVERAL SQUARE MILES OF SLUM, DISORGANIZED, DENSELY POPULATED AND MYSTERIOUS EVEN IN BROAD DAY LIGHT.

truck, with two armed guards aboard besides the driver, pulled up at a big munitions plant with the payroll of \$9,000.

A touring car was halted at the entrance. As the express motor paused at the door, bandits in the other car fired sawed-off shot guns, killing the guards and driver, and decamped with the cash payroll. There was no hold-up. Just a flat killing.

Chicago went up in the air. This was too much. At the Chicago Association of Commerce, the big business men of the city got mad. If nobody else would look out for the life and property of the city, they would. So they formed a committee of their own members to see what could be done.

The first president of this committee was Edwin W. Sims, Canadian born, a prominent lawyer and ex-judge.

In 1920, after a couple of years of discussion, this body took a charter in the state as the Chicago Crime Commission, with Colonel Henry Barrett Chamberlin, one of the original promoters of the idea, as its operating director. He was a former newspaper editor and owner, a lawyer, soldier and what not. He had a thorough knowledge of Chicago's problem.

The first year the crime commission got busy there were eighteen hangings in Chicago. The murder rate fell from 330 in 1919 to 194 in 1920 and 190 in 1921.

10,000 Professional Criminals

THE crime commission's method was very simple. They simply made an independent investigation of every case, of each adjournment, and, with the power of the Association of Commerce back of them, brought the facts to notice. In the offices of the commission are files covering every crime committed in Chicago since 1920, with a record of every criminal, and of the disposition of every case. There are upward of 200,000 files in this collection.

Colonel Chamberlin, the director, says that

there are about ten thousand professional criminals of all sorts in Chicago.

"That is less than a third of one per cent. of the population. Yet the crime which they commit is out of every proportion with the population. In my opinion, Chicago's unenviable crime record is due entirely to public indifference. Chicago is a careless city, not a wicked one. The problem is further complicated by the fact that there are twenty-seven nationalities making up the city, most of them creating a large enough colony to make a separate problem in itself. There are more Poles, for example, in Chicago than in any city in Poland."

"Each of these groups has brought its own social customs, its passions and habits with it. What means their police in Europe had of dealing with them the Chicago police do not know, and in any case would not likely be free to employ. They are a free people here, and freedom has its price."

"The cure of the evil," says Colonel Chamberlin, "lies in the administration of justice. Justice is a simple thing, intelligible to all races. But the laws of this state are in a sad state of antiquation. They need to be rewritten and revised. As they stand now, there is a loophole in every paragraph, every phrase. The law of precedent has piled up mountain high. In the state of Illinois we are using English law, for example, that has been rejected in England for hundreds of years."

The comical plight of the States, having got rid of the King of England but bound in a hundred ways by the will of remote kings and barons, is one that amuses Colonel Chamberlin.

"We put a bill for the revision of our criminal laws before our legislators last year, but it was thrown out by the people."

The absurdity of the situation is shown by the bail bond system. Murderers can get bail.

Louis Bernstein, whose business was professional bondsmen for criminals, owned a build-

ing worth \$25,000. On it he had a mortgage of \$11,500. He had a half interest in the equity, which gave him \$6,750 worth of property. With his state, his credit should have been half of that, or \$3,375. Between August and February of one year Bernstein was accepted on bail bonds for offenders totaling \$269,500!

And every bond was solemnly drawn on that \$3,375 worth of property.

This is a sample of the loopholes and the looseness of administration of United States law which practically invites people to be crooks. It is too easy. The secret of the matter was that Bernstein controlled a big vote in the part of the city where he lived. A score of others could be quoted from Chicago records. But Bernstein's \$269,500 is the best one.

Needed: A Dictator

SOME people say that criminals commit crimes in order to get away from Chicago. Chicago has hundreds of miles of cobblestone roads. Chicago has more streets than a Chinese village. Chicago has streets of houses in which people live that would not be tolerated by the Toronto health department even as stables. It has a beautiful side and a horrible side. On the way out to some of the nicest residential regions to be found on earth, Los Angeles included, you have to pass over an open drain of raw sewage as big as a river. It has a Catholic church to every square mile of city, with churches of the other forty-two denominations in proportion. But its traffic policemen bawl you out like Thames bargemen. You are likely to be spat on out of any of the handsome giant office building windows. You rent an apartment for one year; then you move out because the bedbugs have moved in.

Not a mile from its main centre you will see a pedlar shoving a rattle-trap cart and screaming:

"ZZZZissasout!! Schickkzts!"

He is calling fruit or vegetables in one of the twenty-seven languages of the great mid-American metropolis.

It is a city to get away from, yet three and a half millions live there in pride.

Whether it is the political corruption or the indifference of the people that is the major cause of Chicago's Gilbert and Sullivan opera plot, there is little likelihood of improvement in the lifetime of those present. In one of the municipal offices, two men were being interviewed on the subject.

"What we need," said one, "is a benevolent despot. We ought to pick a man famous for his wisdom and character, and appoint him dictator for a time . . ."

"Excuse me," broke in the other official. "But who would appoint him—the Republicans or the Democrats?"

And the circle closes.

The manager of one of Chicago's great hotels has his opinion of crime:

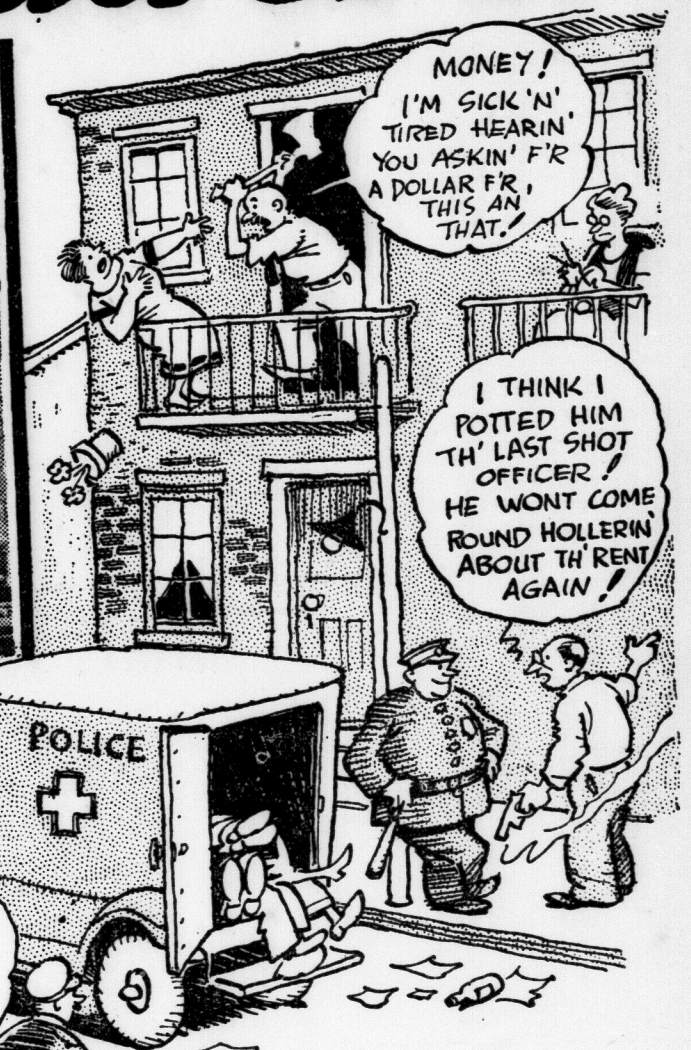
"The real trouble with Chicago is that nobody gives a darn about anybody else so long as nobody interferes with him. Now, that crime you read about is all confined to the criminal classes. They don't come up and disturb the decent people. So leave 'em alone. Let them kill each other. It is purely local."

That appears to be the attitude of Chicago towards a murder a day.

In a theatre, the manager came in front of the curtain and announced:

"Ladies and gentlemen—there have been a number of reports of pickpockets in this theatre. Will you kindly watch your pockets and purses. The theatre cannot be responsible for any losses occurring in this manner."

The audience was so little impressed by this



extraordinary announcement that it did not turn its head to look at its neighbors. Chicago has roughly six thousand men on its police force. A very large number of these are employed as traffic police, and wear a khaki uniform to distinguish them from the regular police who wear blue. In the downtown district and in those regions where crime flourishes, detectives in large automobiles patrol small areas constantly day and night. They are called the "flying squad."

In plain clothes, leaning back as comfortably as their large guns will let them, smoking cigars, these detectives roll along, eyeing the people on the sidewalks, stopping to investigate everything out of the ordinary.

The Terrible Newsboy

FOLLOWING one of these cars for some distance, in a taxi, we came to a large crowd on the sidewalk, peering into an alley. Two large detectives leaped out of the car ahead, and charged the crowd like rugby players.

"What is it?" we asked our taxi driver. "Oh, I dunno; a broker committed suicide or a girl has shot her sweetie, I suppose."

Presently the two huge detectives came out of the mob, dragging a small boy with them. We asked some one what the trouble was.

"A newsboy using profane language," said he. Chicago has its thrills. We followed around in the vain hope of seeing that day's murder. But we had to leave the flying squad talking and laughing interminably with a couple of girls at the least busy corner of their patrol area.

That day's murder took place. It was duly chronicled in the evening papers.

In three years twenty-one policemen were shot and killed by thugs, and ninety-six persons were shot and killed by the police in the enforcement of law and order. These ninety-six were not included in the murders of those years.

The causes of the shooting of civilians by policemen as given in the police reports are illuminating: "Attempted to escape from police officer; failed to stop auto on command; resisted arrest; made move as if to draw gun when found hiding; refused to halt on order; stray bullet while dispersing gamblers."

It isn't safe to be a civilian in Chicago. And it isn't safe to be a policeman. The best thing to be is a casual visitor, in the day time.

Michael Heenan, aged 17, was shot and killed by Thomas Chap, a bartender. Chap defended his action, saying that Heenan had scratched matches on the new bar and had kicked his dog. (This is on record.) Chap was released on \$10,000 bail, being a well known and responsible citizen.

Eight and one-half years later the Crime Commission, mulling over ancient documents, discovered this case, which had never come up to trial!

They brought it to trial. The jury dismissed Chap, on the ground that the case was so old!

"It is an axiom," says Colonel Chamberlin, "that cases delayed one year come fifty per cent. closer to acquittal. And our laws are so involved the delays in getting a case to trial are inevitable."

"On top of the technical assets to the criminal in the complexity of our laws, there has been another thing to blame, I think, in the production of this situation we find ourselves in. And that is, there has been too much mollycoddling of the criminal, of the less than one-third of one per cent. of our population which is criminal. Suppose we pause in our sentimental consideration of the condition of jails and spend some time and energy in safeguarding the law-abiding citizen and the property he has acquired by honest toil!"

The best men in Chicago want their laws rewritten and revised, want the police and judicial system remodelled to take it out of political grasp, want the United States brought up to date from the time they threw kings overboard. They want to get rid of King John and the barons.

But what Chicago wants is not what its best men want, necessarily. The big city still lifts its gigantic towers and colossal smelters to the marvellous sky. They still sell the Wrigley building to visitors from Canada and the sticks. And they provide their one-a-day.

CANADA FIRST

NOT merely in breadth of expanse, and wealth of resources, but in things of the spirit; Not merely in natural beauty, but also in ideals, principles and character; Not merely in national prosperity, but in the happiness and contentment of citizens; Not merely in the assertion of rights, but in the willing assumption of duties; Not in splendid isolation, but in courageous co-operation; Not in arrogance and disdain of other peoples, but in sympathy, love and understanding; Not in treading again the old, worn, blood-stained pathway which ends inevitably in chaos and disaster, but in blazing a new trail along which other nations will follow where wars shall be no more. Some day one nation will be honored above others for blazing such a trail. That honor I covet for my beloved Canada. And so, in that spirit and with these hopes, I say with all my heart and soul—"CANADA FIRST!"

LAURA E. JAMIESON