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Crime Decreased In Wartime

War Brings Some Compensations to the Folks Who Stay At Home

LONDON, Dec. 20.—War in spite of all its terrors brings some compensations to the folks who stay at home; and even if the compensations do not balance their anxieties and sorrows they are welcome.

Among such indemnifications is a decrease in crime. That this decrease has been considerable in Great Britain is shown by the report for the year ended March 31 of the Commissioners of Police and the directors of convict prisons. Prisoners received under sentence were 64,160, as compared with 114,283 in the previous year—a decrease of 50,123.

The report says that three main causes seem to have contributed to this great decrease:

1. The enlistment of many habitual petty offenders.
 2. The restrictive orders issued by the Liquor Control Board and those made by justice, and by military authorities; and
 3. The great demand for labor, rendering employment easy and well paid and resulting in ability to pay fines.
- One of the notable effects of the war on the prison population, say the commissioners, has been that the exceptions are now for the most part the physically and mentally weak. There is every reason to believe that the country's call for men appealed as strongly to the criminal as to other classes.

Burglar Gang Enlists.

A young burglar, one of a gang of five, told the chaplain of a London prison that his four pals had enlisted; two had been killed and two others wounded. He said he meant to go and "do his bit" as soon as he got out of prison—a promise which he faithfully observed.

The decrease in the case of female committed on conviction for drunkenness was not so marked as in the case of males. An inquiry made by the lady inspector of prisons during the year into the character of the population committed for this offence to Holloway prison showed that during 1913, 1914 and 1915 10,888 commitments on convictions of drunkenness were recorded against 1,628 women, who, including the above convictions and those incurred in years preceding 1913, had on their combined records a total of 30,986 convictions. The average convictions for each individual rose from 2.6 in 1913 to slightly over 5 in 1915. Though the figures are inclusive, they show, if the same proportion holds as at Holloway, not only a considerable decrease in the total reception into prison but a decrease of over 60 per cent. in the individuals responsible for the convictions.

In spite of the fall in the prison population, the manufacture of war stores has been conducted in prisons with unabated vigor. During the twenty months ended March 31 last orders were placed for nearly seven and a quarter million articles for the use of the navy and army.

Inmates Work Overtime.

The prisoners have even cheerfully worked overtime. "It is no small thing," the inspectors of prisons say, "to call on prisoners for an addition of some 25 per cent. to their ordinary working hours, but this has been accomplished without a murmur, and though due allowance must be made for the fact that a reward is given in the shape of an increased supper ration, yet this cannot be regarded as the only reason for their increased exertions."

It is stated that one prisoner offered as an economy to forgo the extra supper ration. On this a chaplain writes: "Under the broad arrow garments there beats many a heart still responsive to the loftiest sentiments of loyalty and patriotism."

The enlistment of lads has also reduced by half the made population of the reformatory institutions, and a number of old reformatory boys have done well at the front. Two of them have won the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

In other directions the home people benefit under war conditions. The Bishop of London in the course of a street preaching campaign has been denouncing the sexual immorality which he declares to be rampant in the metropolis since the war and he has called upon "the women to purge the heart of the empire."

Girl Takes Up Challenge.

The challenge is taken up by one who is described as "a girl worker" employed in a war industry and it is now her word against the Bishop's. Under the name of Margaret Munro she writes in a newspaper: "Surely a good deal of that change of mind and spirit the Bishop so rightly demands has come about."

"Who are more quickly able to judge of the city's morals than the unguarded girls who walk London's streets at all hours of day and night,

who must perform, while their men folk are abroad, dwell, dine and play by themselves? The streets grow daily darker, yet I and my fellows, many of them country girls, ignorant of city ways, called up to do the nation's work in this London of ours. I and my like walk unmolested through the city.

"If indeed London were a sink of iniquity, could we young women take up men's work, labor by their side unhampered, one girl alone with one man perhaps all the day?"

"Yet these are the things we do. Could we serve at midnight canteens, surrounded by the roughest men, from the roughest parts of the city, unassailed by so much as a phrase that twangs of familiarity? Yet there we stand all night in the midst of these workers; we travel to the canteen just before midnight on omnibuses, on foot, and no man stays us.

Times Have Changed.

"Even in a very few years of London experience most of us can remember a time—a pre-war time—when to loiter in the streets was to be spoken of, when to frequent tubes, theatres, restaurants alone was to invite familiarity. I almost laugh when I remember. Those were the days when few men wore the King's uniform; it was every man for himself, not every man for King and country."

"Now, work over, we take our solitary dinner in a crowded restaurant where once a waiter would politely but firmly have asked us at once if we were not waiting for a friend. We go to the very theatres the Bishop condemns, alone and remain alone. That, I think, is the surest test of the type of an entertainment."

"I cannot tell you how proud I am of all this. For, indeed, it might not be expected. Never have men and women had greater need of one another; they are both distraught and lonely in soul by war's cataclysms.

"Never, too, in our country's experience have the sexes lived so apart. The women at home, the men barbed, in camp or in trench. It would have been in no way surprising had reaction set in."

Recalls "War Baby" Cry.

The writer recalls with indignation "that cruel cry of 'war babies' that rang through the land" some months ago, when a prurient and emotional Member of Parliament stirred all the prudens in the country to alternate fits of blushes and pallor by assured predictions of an unprecedented increase in the illegitimacy statistics, until a committee presided over by the Archbishop of York pricked the bubble.

"Do not," says Margaret Munro to London's Bishop, "let us have a repetition of that mistake."

People of either sex who frequent the darkened streets of London by night cannot but be struck by the absence of drunkenness and rowdiness. A timid stranger turned loose alone in the less frequently thoroughfares might well expect to meet at any moment with footpads who would demand money with menaces or to be sand-bagged and have his pockets emptied. It is certain that the footpad and the thug might operate in many streets with virtual impunity, for police are rarely seen except in crowded places such as the Strand and Piccadilly.

But Dick Turpin and Jack Sheppard have been roped in the army along with the sons of their potential victims, and offences of violence in the streets are of the rarest occurrence.

In the suburbs, too, a halcyon time of immunity from petty lawlessness prevails. The darkened residential roads are as silent and empty as remote country lanes and the most timorous dame may walk them unescorted without fear of a worse mishap than cannoning against a lamp post temporarily out of business.

The itinerant hawk who, in time of peace may with impunity hold up one's maid servant at the house door while he pesters her, sometimes with half-veiled threats, to buy—he also is gone.

But these reliefs are, it is to be feared, only for the duration of the war—the minor compensations which will vanish with the disappearance of the great shadow.

NO MIDNIGHT MASS IN PARIS

PARIS, Dec. 25.—There was no midnight masses in Paris on Christmas Eve, Cardinal Amette, Archbishop of Paris, having so decided. The holiday services will take place wholly in daylight in order to economize in lighting and fuel.

Helen Keller Will Not Marry

According to a despatch from Boston Helen Keller, the famous deaf, dumb and blind girl, has abandoned a matrimonial career for the sake of the woman who has enabled her to learn to talk and offset her innate infirmities, Mrs. John A. Macy.

Miss Keller was engaged to Peter Fagan, a Socialist, who became acquainted with her while a reporter for a Boston newspaper and was employed by her as secretary. But romance came into her life, much against the wishes of her mentor, Mrs. Macy, upon whom she is absolutely dependent for communication with the world, for development of her powers of speech and observation and to whom she is indebted practically for her life.

Mrs. Macy's opposition to her pupil's marriage was based not upon selfishness, but on the realization that it would hinder the further development of a marvelous girl, and so the romance has been shattered. Mr. Fagan sailed for Tampa, Fla., with another denial added to the many made by himself and Mrs. Macy that there had been any romance at all. He, too, realized that it was best for his lover's destiny that all thoughts of marriage be abandoned.

The fact of the matter is, however, that about a week ago Mr. Fagan took into his confidence the editor of a Boston newspaper by which he had been employed and for which Mrs. Macy's husband had been literary editor. He told the editor that he and his employer were madly in love with each other and that they desired to be married in secret. They planned a literary career and Miss Keller was to abandon the lecture field in which Mrs. Macy was her necessary interpreter.

Mrs. Macy had made known her opposition to their romance and they sought to be married in secret and surprise her, hoping that she would be won over to the inevitable. They thought that the marriage must be without her knowledge or not at all. Miss Keller visited Toronto a few seasons ago and gave a short address.

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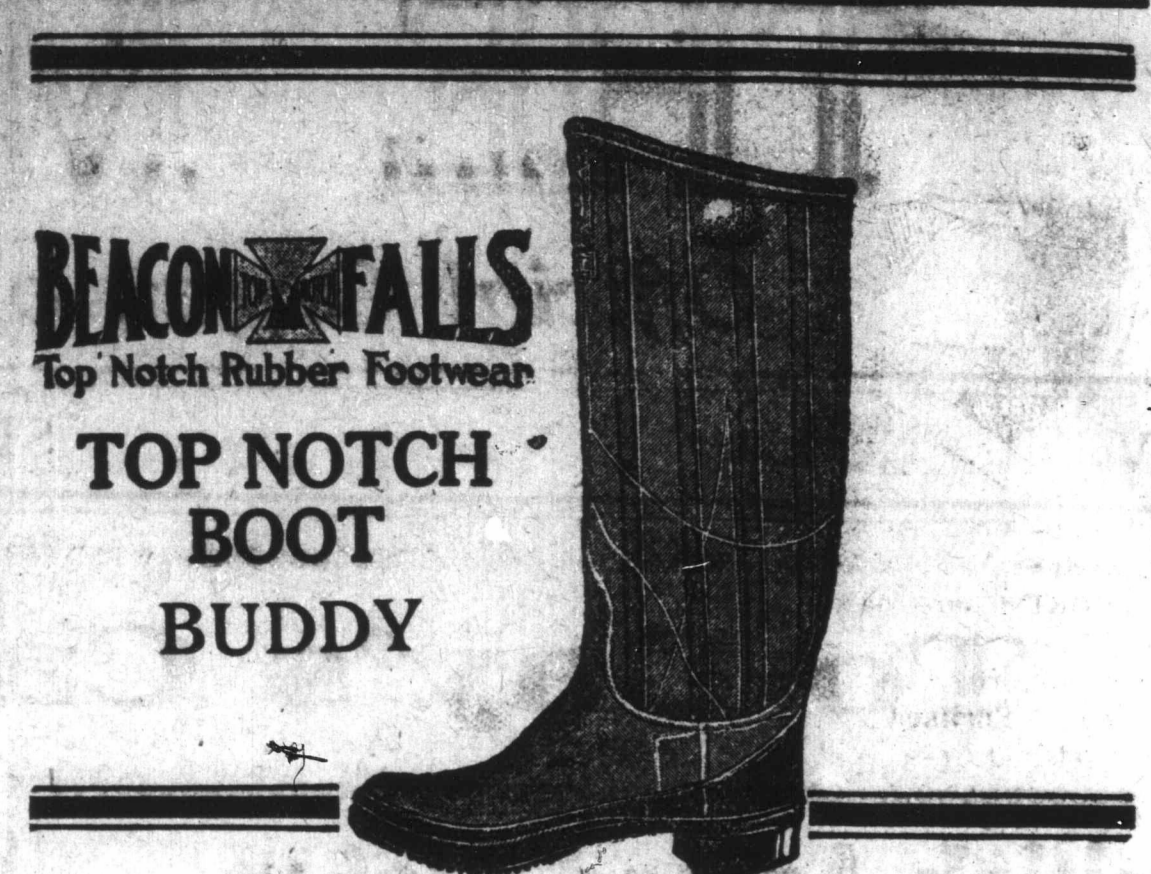
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