

CRIME AND PUBLICITY

(By Professor Coleman Phillipson)

That crime is increasing or, at all events, is still assuming large proportions, despite the amelioration of economic and social conditions generally, is a matter of grave public concern. Legislators, thinkers, social welfare workers, and all people consciously striving to bring about the establishment of a complete sanity and well-being in the social organism have unceasingly exercised their minds as to the causes of crime and its repression, and also as to the rapid increase of divorce and other matrimonial causes. All these are big questions, and it may be that in the opinion of some people they appear to be insoluble. I do not propose to deal with these great difficulties, especially so considering the small space at my disposal here, but I wish to emphasise at present one point, namely, the question of publicity, which has by no means received the consideration it deserves.

Sensationalism

Large sections of the public have come to assume a pernicious attitude toward criminals and parties in unsavory domestic cases. Whether this apparent change in public temper is an effect of the war it is difficult to say with certainty. Probably it is to some extent. The fact, however, remains that the violent or sexual offender has become an object of public interest and solicitude, not because of an endeavor on the part of the public to suppress crime and reform the offender, but chiefly because of unhealthy sensation-mongering. The criminal has become a sort of "hero" rather than the "villain in the piece." All kinds of irrelevant details are sought, such as his private habits, his appearance, the way he does his hair, the loudness of his cough or sneeze, his demeanor and movements in the dock, and so on.

Again, in a divorce case, for example, crowds in the court are deeply interested in the costume, frock, furs of a party or a witness, as well as in their triumphs, defeats, and agonies in their conflicts with counsel. And newspapers, which are run by business people and not by angels, supply all such demands. Thus crime is regarded by many as a dramatic interlude in the regular business of life, and the criminal as an interesting protagonist invested with a halo of romance. Hence the orgy of publicity, the debased propensities of souvenir hunters, the visits to the place of crime, and, what is far worse, the increasing indifference toward the anti-social conduct of law-breakers and unconscionable revolutionaries and agitators. To see the long queues outside the court waiting for a feast of sensationalism or for a disgusting salacious repast, to see people rushing for successive editions of papers giving pornographic and filthy details, is most disquieting.

Publicity

That the administration of the law should be under the public eye is universally admitted, that the press should be unshackled is everywhere insisted on. Speaking generally, this is as it should be, in the interests of the community at large. But the very interests of the community demand that there should be certain exceptions—that is, in cases where publicity does more harm than good. In the first place, fear of publicity is not necessarily a deterrent from crime or matrimonial unfaithfulness. Neither the press nor the open court is an effective public censor in regard to the criminal-minded or those swayed by overwhelming passion. In regard to many others, on the contrary, such publicity is an enormous, and sometimes a downright unfair, addition to the ordinary legal punishment. The law's penalty is intended to purge the culprit of his offence; but publicity is not merely purgation, it is well-nigh destructive, involving the culprit's family on the one hand and on the other jeopardising the culprit's entire future after he has paid the penalty.

Unhealthy Effects

When the pillory was abolished in 1837 in England no one urged that its publicity was a deterrent, nor did any one suggest that the press might act as a substitute. Publicity has no restraining influence on crimes of violence and passion and of sexual abnormality. Indeed, upon certain persons it acts by force of suggestion, as an aphrodisiac; it puts them in an imitative frame of mind. A person of strong will in the face of bad examples can exercise self-control; a weak-minded person or one with criminal or vicious propensities gives way and follows the worse when brought before his eye in a concrete form and in glaring colors. Besides, an exhibition of immundicity is not healthy for even the best of men; to be in contact with dirt, to breathe a foul atmosphere, must be injurious to all of us and to the whole body politic.

Again, does publicity prevent conjugal infidelities? Does it not rather prevent many modest and self-respecting men and women—especially women—from setting forth their marital sufferings before the public? Yet among other sections of the population publicity has actually imparted to adultery an air of being "fashionable," of being a custom "honored in the observance" and therefore "respectable."

Remedy

To lay the blame on the press is futile. The press does not purport to be a philanthropic institution or a moralising agency. The press usually gives what the public wants. Hence what is necessary is to awaken in the public mind a juster and finer sense of social order and a truer estimate of moral values. Above all, crime and vice should be made the object of hatred, and not of sensation-mongering or dramatic sympathy. Further power should be given to the judges to regulate press reports of criminal and divorce cases. Many European countries, for example France and Holland, can dispense with unsavory details and picturesque sensationalism. Surely we can, too. The press would welcome such an innovation, and would be able to pay more attention to things that really matter, both national and international.

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Wykeham Preparatory School, Mount Lofy, which was visited on Saturday by Dr. M. J. Rendall, former head master of Winchester College, England, is run on entirely English lines, and is named after the foundation of William of Wykeham at Winchester. The principals are Mr. O. S. Hutchison and Mr. J. Swanson, who came to South Australia to join the staff of Scotch College. They saw the need for a preparatory school for boys in the hills, and Wykeham was opened at the beginning of the third term of 1924.

News 2/3/25

Mr. Clive Carey, the newly-appointed teacher of singing at the Elder Conservatorium, has returned from his summer vacation in New Zealand. He made a tour of the thermal region of the North Island, and in the South Island visited Christchurch, Mount Cook, Queenstown, and Dunedin. At Christchurch he was joined by Mr. Frank Hutchins, of the Sydney Conservatorium,



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and with Miss Vera Mitchell (cellist), who has lately returned from study in England, gave three concerts. Concerts were also given at Wellington, Timaru, Wanganui, and Auckland. Among other works, Mr. Hutchins gave Caesar Franck's Prelude, Aria, and Finale, while Mr. Carey's programmes included groups of national folk songs and several of his own compositions. Mr. Carey says that the outbreak of infantile paralysis is affecting concert attendances in New Zealand. In Melbourne he met Professor Laver and Mr. Sutton Crow, of the Melbourne University Conservatorium, and Mrs. James Dyer, of the British Music Society. He has arranged to return to Melbourne during the next vacation and give a song lecture before the society.

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PROMISING SOPRANO

Miss Alice Mallon

COMPLIMENTARY CONCERT

South Australians are proverbially kind and enthusiastic in their support of young local vocalists who essay to go farther afield. This was demonstrated on Saturday night by a large audience which gathered in the Adelaide Town Hall, where a complimentary concert given to Miss Alice Mal-



Miss Alice Mallon

lon, A.M.U.A., who is leaving Adelaide for a year to study at the Melba Conservatorium in Melbourne. Miss Mallon gives her reasons for the transfer as a wish to enlarge her experience, and feels that in an entirely new sphere she may gain points and impressions which will widen her outlook.

She was fortunate in the artists who proffered their services for her benefit, and a most enjoyable programme was presented. Miss Mallon's first number was the well-known and difficult aria from Wagner's "Die Frelsehutz," "Softly Sighs," which calls for finished technique and the quality of perfect tone blending. This the young singer will acquire with further study. She was well received, and as an en-

core gave the old French song, "Rosette a l'age de quinze ans." Her second bracket comprised "Where the Bee Sucks" (Sullivan), "Sinnove's Song" (Kjerulf), and "One Fine Day," from "Madame Butterfly" (Puccini).

FINE DRAMATIC VOICE

These served to show the quality of Miss Mallon's fine dramatic voice, which is colorful and full of individuality. Her final number was Bizet's "Agnus Dei," of which she gave an intelligent rendering.

Miss Mallon exhibited a voice of much possibility throughout, which will require careful study and development if she is to achieve her objective of opera. She was the recipient of many floral offerings after each number, and with Miss Alice Meegan, A.M.U.A., who made a skilful and sympathetic accompanist, was repeatedly recalled.

Mr. Fred Williamson displayed a musical tenor voice of lyric quality in Handel's "Where'er You Walk," and as an encore gave "Bitterness is Love" (J. Dunn). In his later rendering of Cole-ridge-Taylor's "Eleanore," and his encore number, "I Heard You Singing" (Eric Coates), he gave further evidence of smooth phrasing and beauty of tone, which marked him as an asset to musical circles in Adelaide.

Mr. Charles Schilsky, with Miss Alice Meegan, opened the programme with Brahms' "Allegro Amabile" for piano and violin, and as a solo number Mr. Schilsky gave Saint-Saens' "Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso" with fine technique and interpretation.

EXCELLENT NUMBERS

Mr. James Anderson is always popular, and as recitations give Johnson's "The Gift of the Gods," "Sitting Up" from Pickwick Papers, and as encores "The Caravan" and "The Caretaker."

One of the features of the evening was the performance by Mr. Harold Parsons, Mus. Bac., the prominent cellist, of Valentin's "Adagio" and "Allegro," and Popper's "Hungarian Rhapsodie," and as an encore Couperin's "Old Air." Under Mr. Parsons' skilful fingers the cello becomes almost human in its appeal, and the perfect technique of the player is forgotten in

the rich harmonies and speaking tones of the instrument under a master hand.

The concert was under the management of Mr. Charles Cawthorne, but an enthusiastic committee of ladies did much to ensure success. The committee were—Mesdames C. R. J. Glover (Lady Mayoress), J. Lewis, McAree, Phillipson, A. G. Rymill, A. E. V. Richardson, and Villeneuve Smith, Contessa Filippini, and Misses Avis Chapman, M. Horgan, D'Arcy Irvine, L. Lewis, O. Lewis, Madge Markwell, Alice Meegan, Muriel Prince, and Truman.

Among the helpers were Misses A. Phillipson, E. Rogers, R. Bedford, P. Connolly, J. Scott, M. Cogan, V. Whiting, G. McAree, Y. Richardson, E. Laurie, and others.

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CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

"Not a Deterrent"

PROF. PHILLIPSON EMPHATIC

Public opinion on the value of the cat o' nine tails and whipping as a means of punishment for men convicted of criminal offences has undergone a great change within recent years.

The reversion to that form of punishment in the eastern States has again drawn attention to the subject. Recently Sir William Irvine (Chief Justice of Victoria) ordered the lash for a man convicted of manslaughter, and in Sydney Judge Edwards, in awarding a man found guilty of indecent assault two years' gaol and the infliction of 12 strokes of the cat, said that he had arrived at the conclusion that flogging was the only satisfactory solution for such offences.

Professor Coleman-Phillipson, of the Adelaide University, who is a criminologist of note, disagrees with the view.

"I have expressed myself in public more than once that as a general principle I don't believe in corporal punishment," he stated.

ENGLISH INVESTIGATION

"The matter was fully investigated in England some years ago. Some conservative minded people were in favor of retaining that form of punishment, but others considered that flogging did not have the deterrent effect imagined. They maintained strongly that it should be abolished because the chief object was not achieved, and that it tended to brutalise all those who actually took part in the administration of the penalty. The victim of such punishment, they held, became far worse when he was liberated, and resorted in a greater measure than ever to his old practices.

"Several English judges claimed that the infliction of the lash tended to minimise the crime of garroting. Particular attention was paid to Liverpool, but subsequent investigation showed that the decline in garroting in that city was due, not to the infliction of the lash, but to improved lighting of streets and alleys, particularly near the docks, where the foreign element congregated.

"I have visited Pentridge and Yatala prisons, and although it is essential in these days of progressive public opinion that prisoners should be treated in a humane way I consider that the tendency, particularly in Pentridge, is to lighten the punishment in some cases, and really make prison life more attractive than it should be.

"Although I speak as a humanitarian, and it may seem strange that I should speak thus, I must have due regard to the rest of society and the public interest. The treatment I have mentioned applies particularly to the recidivists—that is, that class of offender who falls again and again, and is referred to by society as a hardened criminal. If such a man has a fairly pleasant experience in gaol he does not mind returning to it.