

# Few Drop From Sight Nowadays Without Leaving Trace

## Missing Persons Bureau Finds Most of Those Who Disappear and Identifies the Vast Majority of Dead --- Fewer Runaway Girls in 1920 Than in 1919---Statistics From One Hundred Cities Indicate a Large Increase in Suicides

**M**ATTERS were brisk in 1920 both at the port of missing men, whence news sometimes comes out, and at the suburb of suicide, from which nobody issues forth. The statistics of the bureau of missing persons at Police Headquarters show that the figures for 1919, which were 12,500, jumped a little more than 100 in the year just closed. This increase is easily accounted for by the additional population accrued to the city in the twelvemonth.

**No Case Is Given Up**  
**Until Last Doubt Is Settled**  
Capt. Ayers' assistants, men and women, number thirty-five, inclusive of the clerical force, and the bureau is suffering from lack of help, like most bureaus these days.

Heavy reports of missing persons come in daily and cases lay over from day to day and from month to month; yes, and from year to year, for, said the Captain: "We never give up a case until it is finally disposed of by the discovery of the missing person, alive or dead. And all our cases are considered alive until we know beyond dispute that they are dead and buried."

"This branch of the police duty is concretely humane. We have to be, and we strive to be, patient, sometimes under pretty difficult conditions. Often we are misunderstood and faults of omission and commission attributed to us of which we are guiltless. But we seek always to keep in mind that we are dealing with grief-stricken persons in the relatives who are seeking their lost ones, and they are not normal. I impress on the members of my staff that they can accomplish more by sympathy for the relatives than by permitting themselves to grow used, and thereby callous, to suffering."

**Runaway Boys and Girls Often Think Themselves a Burden**

"The question is often put to the persons who have disappeared and been hunted down why they subjected their families to such grief and invariably they reply, if they answer at all, that they didn't appreciate how much these relatives cared. Boys, especially, who are given to running away, seem to think they were rather an encumbrance on their mothers and fathers and that the latter would be glad to be rid of them. If people were more ready to give expression to their genuine affection there would be fewer missing persons."

"I was talking on this subject before one of our humane societies recently and the question was asked in regard to runaway girls and my answer was the same. Parents too often show their captious and not their loving side to these young persons and the children get to think nobody in the family cares much about them."

"There were 300 runaway girls under the age of twenty-one in 1919 and 200 less in 1920. I account for this by the gradual disappearance from our streets of the khaki uniform. That has a powerful effect on many young women. In 1919 our city was still full of soldiers who had been demobilized but still wore the uniform, and many of the young girls took it into their heads to follow to their homes the young soldiers they had fallen in love with. I think the number of girl runaways is likely to decrease still further in the present year."

**Persons reported missing at Police Headquarters are subdivided as follows:**  
1. Those who are temporarily missing; that is who have temporarily dropped away from their usual haunts and friends. In many cases these persons would probably return of their own accord after a period.  
2. Persons who have been missing for a period of three or four years. These are called in the bureau language "investigations."  
3. Persons who have died from accident on the streets, drowned in the rivers, died from natural causes in lodging houses or elsewhere, all of whom have left no mark of identification.

"A singular instance of the last group," said Capt. Ayers, "was the young man who lost his life in the great Wall street disaster. He lay in the city morgue for four days unidentified, and it was unprecedented that in a case of so much notoriety no relative came to tell of a missing son or brother. None did come until after the time I mentioned had elapsed."

"Then it came out that the dead man's parents had no idea that he would be in the vicinity of Wall street that day. He had started from home on a search for work and expected to be gone three or four days. He happened to meet a friend who was going to look for a job on Dey street and went along on the chance of getting one, too. Therefore his people felt no anxiety until the time arrived when he was expected back home."

"A case with a happier ending was the disappearance in 1919 of a sixteen-year-old boy who had failed in his examinations. He disappeared from the city as if the earth had opened and swallowed him. For over a year we were looking for him, and regularly every month his mother, on the verge of hysteria, came to see me. I cheered her as best I could by telling her each time that we were sure to find him and that only patience must be her part. But I had given him up in my own mind. He had not joined either navy or army and there was no clue except a very general description."

"Over a year had elapsed when we got word of him in New Orleans. He was reported to be working for the United Fruit Company. But when our agent there got after him he was too late by six days. The boy had gone to Havana. From there he went to Vera Cruz and down the South American coast. Finally we located him in the central part of Mexico. As soon as he knew that his folks would not punish him for his escapade he was glad to come home. He's all right now; his experience literally took him out of the boy class and did him good."

"A stranger case than this one of the boy," said Capt. Ayers, "turned up in New Jersey last year. It was the mysterious disappearance of a man who had the confidence of all his neighbors in his home town, where he was considered a model of deportment and fine character, as well as that of the bank where he was assistant cashier. This bank is in New York."

**At Last the Girl in the Case Figures in the Investigation**

"When we started on this case we wrote our unusually fine marks on the D. D. 13 form. Never had there been a man so universally respected. He was a pronounced family man—never went anywhere without his wife, &c., &c. How about his associates in New York?" I asked, intimating that perhaps we could get a line on his secret life through them. These questions were repelled with anger. The man, it seemed, was just as good in New York as he was in New Jersey."

"Just the same, we got to work and by digging right we found that one of his friends was an attractive showgirl and occasionally—say, once a week—he used to visit her in her apartment. We also learned, after an investigation of his books at the bank, that there were several things on record that didn't agree with his superlative reputation. At last we had material enough to thoroughly discount the stories of foul play that had been rife, and we located the gentleman at Santa Barbara, Cal. He is cleared off the missing slate, and the bank is willing to have him come back, for he was a valuable clerk, and the officers all liked him. I don't know how his wife would receive him."

An increase in the labors of the bureau was caused by innumerable requests for information about persons lost sight of during the war. These came from almost every foreign country, and the applicants took advantage as soon as they could of the better mailing facilities that followed the armistice. The bureau was able to clear up a great number of these international disappearances."

**Statistics Covering 100 Cities Show Slight Increase in Suicides**

The coroners' rates for 100 cities show a slight increase in the percentage of suicides for aggregations of 100,000 population in 1920 over that of 1919. It is believed also that new ways of killing themselves have been discovered by people, and therefore many deaths escape record in the suicide list. Probably the figures might be sensibly increased."

Since the report of 1911 was issued—and a considerable increase was noted, as much as 3 per cent. above the rate given by the United States census—the menace of suicide has been recognized as a national evil, and various societies, including the Save a Life League of New York city, have given serious attention to the subject with an intensive effort to awaken the moral and spiritual efforts of people to combat the growing evil.

The suicide rate in 28 New England cities of 100,000 population for last year was 12.4;



Capt. John H. Ayers, in charge of the Bureau of Missing Persons, New York City Police Department.

In 27 middle Atlantic cities of same population the rate was 12.2; in 14 Southern cities it was 11.6 and in 19 central cities it was 15.4.

Twenty thousand Americans killed themselves in 1919, according to the statistics published by Dr. Frederick L. Hoffman in *The Spectator*, a life insurance journal published in this city. He states that there was a noticeable increase in suicides by women and an alarming increase in child suicide, 88 boys and 137 girls being included in the massed figures. This was an increase of 50 over the report of 1918 of child suicides. The average age of the boys was 16 and of the girls 15.

No adequate reason has been found for the self-destruction of these children, but the opinion is advanced that the noticeable increase of suicide among women is due to the fact that women are to-day entering upon public life as never before and find it, or some do, too strenuous.

**President of League Interviews Hundreds Thinking of Suicide**

Since last July the president of the Save a Life League, which has headquarters at 108 West Seventy-seventh street, has been interviewed by 1,200 persons weary of life, despondent and ready to release themselves from it. In many cases the mere talking the matter over saved the man or woman, who was, said Dr. Warren, ill physically or mentally.

"We do our work by means of agents throughout the country, and welcome communications from anybody we can help. When we are able to see the intending suicide it is sometimes possible to diagnose the case as one needing sanitarium attention, and then we send wherever possible these persons to such aids. In some instances we are able to place the patients in sanitariums, where they do not have to pay, and in others we do all we can for them."

"Suicide is on the increase, and in our annual report it is shown without exaggeration to be a national menace. The spread of the idea of self-destruction among children is particularly distressing. Often failures in school work turn their thoughts to suicide, but more often the children have fallen into a morbid state of mind, where they believe that they are not cared for or needed in the home."

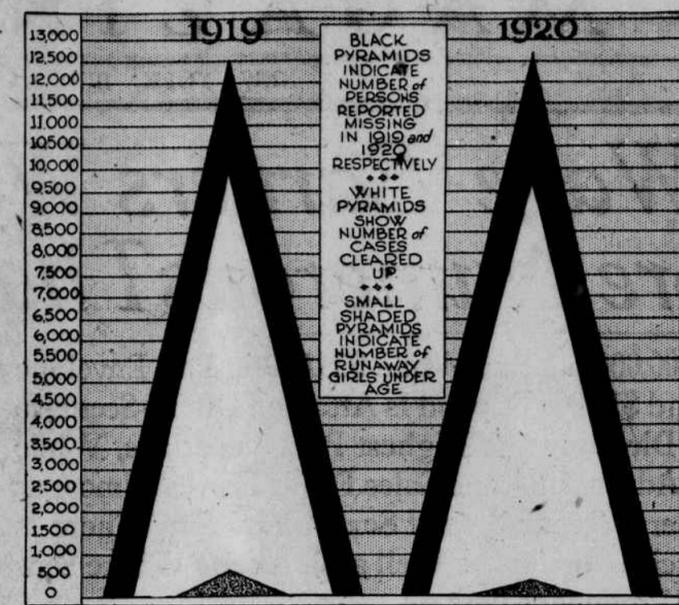
Dr. Warren said that more than 6,000 suicides in the United States were brought to the attention of the Save a Life League during 1920, an increase of more than 1,000 reported in 1919.

The division as to sex was 3,567 men and 2,604 women. Included in the totals were 500 homicides, who afterward destroyed their own lives. The expense in connection with the interment of the total given in the statistical figures given above (12,000) would be not less than \$2,000,000. The economic loss to the country was more than \$10,000,000.

**Suicides Range in Age From 5 to 103 Years**

Particular statistics follow from Dr. Warren's report: "The youngest suicide was 5, the oldest 103. Divorce figured prominently in self-destruction last year, more than 100 couples killing themselves for this reason. The great number of farmers who have given way to despair has been noticeable, also farmers wives. Possibly the many splendid boys lost in the war may have been the cause. Nothing could be more regretted than the 400 soldiers who have destroyed their own lives since returning from the war, many having also been guilty of homicide. Conditions brought about by the enactment of the Eighteenth Amendment have been the cause of not a few suicides; also the drug addiction has supplied a considerable number."

"Last year there were in the United States seventy-five presidents and managers of large business concerns, thirty-six men in the millionaire class, and twenty-three rich women, who became weary of life and finally terminated their mortal existence. In 1919 editors of newspapers seemed to be immune, but this last year a dozen or more writers, including two or three editors, help to make up the list. The lawyers number twenty-four, with eight judges. Doctors supply the greatest number among the professions. There were fifty-one reported to us. Probably the unusual demands made upon them during the war and the influenza epidemic were the cause. Next to the physician was the actor and the actress, forty reported. There were thirty-four teachers and college professors, and twenty-seven college students. Brokers numbered twenty-four, and



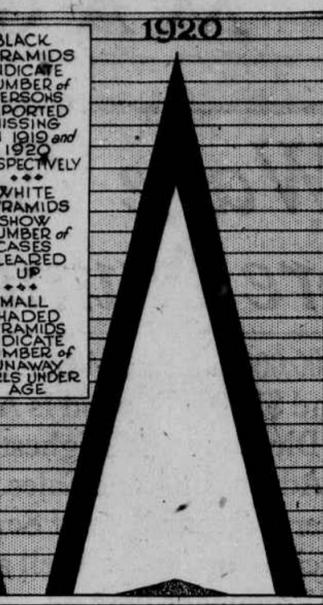
bankers fifty-nine, including fourteen bank presidents. Clergymen, twelve; also two evangelists and a Y. M. C. A. secretary.

"Self-destruction among children has reached an alarming situation in this country. In 1919 there were 477 children who ended their lives in the United States. In 1920 the number increased to 707, boys 223 and girls 484. The average age of the boys was 15, the girls 16. Boys most frequently use a pistol, girls resort to poison. About 200 of these children obtained poison in some way, and 150 had recourse to a revolver. What a pity that parents permit either of these deadly agents to be so easily obtained in their homes! Doubtless the many, both old and young, who have shot themselves during the last year did so because of the fact that many soldiers have brought back their guns from the war and have left them where they can be easily found."

"This league strongly advocates uniform drug and pistol laws for every State. With such laws forcibly enacted many lives would be saved. This fact is well illustrated in our own city. When in 1911 the Sullivan law became operative there were 233 suicides by shooting; in 1920 there were only 101. This child suicide problem is most distressing. The causes include fear of punishment, school troubles, unhappy home environment, cruelty, revenge and love affairs. We believe many of these promising lives could have easily been spared if parents and friends had been a little more humane and had often shown a little more kindly interest in their welfare."

"Not only in the United States, but all over the world, reports show a marked increase in suicide since the war ended. During the war the rate fell the lowest in many years. This is always noticeable in time of some great national calamity. Social, economic and high intolerable conditions which have arisen since the war ended have seemed to greatly cheapen the value of human life."

"From London, Paris and other European cities come distressing reports. In Poland women have committed suicide in hundreds rather than surrender to the Red army. In certain colleges there has been an 'epidemic of suicide.' To avoid slow death by starvation it is said that entire families in China have poisoned themselves. It is estimated that a half million Chinese committed suicide last year. It has also been stated that 1,500 merchants alone in Japan have ended their lives. When the Armenians felt disaster was certain, when attacked by the Turks, thousands of women threw themselves into burning buildings and rivers. A priest relates that for a month the River Yeprud was a river of crimson, as a result of the many who destroyed themselves."



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"The Republicans were the ones who were opening law offices in Washington eight years ago."

Congress is going to send out free seeds again this year. The distribution will cost \$250,000, plus postage. This is one way the members build their fences for reelection. They hope to win favor by sending the voters something.

The \$360,000 is a drop in the bucket to the total of Government expense. Yet, with the cost of mailing, it amounts to ten per cent. of the total outlay in a year.

Every member of Congress maintains a mailing list of the people in his district. Usually he tries to send out something every few months, copies of speeches and documents when there are no seeds. When an election is close the volume of such free matter is greater.

About one hundred members of Congress the retirement of many of whom is with public approval, are packing up to go back on March 4. They are sending their things ahead while they still are able to use the post office frank. One member sent out fifty mail sacks filled with Congressional records to give him light reading during the long winter evenings at home for the next two years.

Senator Harding's decision, when President, to send his messages to the Senate and House, instead of delivering them in person as Mr. Wilson has done, is good news for the Capitol police. When Mr. Wilson appeared before Congress great crowds clamored for admittance to the galleries and it meant much work for the police.

The gallery tickets were prorated among members of Congress. Usually the wife got the ticket or there was trouble at home.

The speculative circle in Washington is wondering what will happen to Rear Admiral Cary T. Grayson, the White House physician, when Senator Harding arrives. Dr. Grayson has been the medical attendant for both Mr. Taft and Mr. Wilson. Senator Harding up to now has given no intimation as to what he desires in the matter.

It's going to be a lot of work to get the White House social lists in shape again. They have gone to wrack and ruin in the last few years, due to the war and to the condition of Mr. Wilson's health which prevented the customary White House functions.

When the Hardings go to the White House they are expected to revive the customary affairs, the most notable of which are the four large receptions, the Congressional, the Judicial, the Army and Navy and the Diplomatic.

Certain correspondence schools have been sending out literature offering to train people for Government jobs, picturing the posts as highly desirable and paying as much as \$12,000 a year. These \$12,000 jobs are few and far between. They require men of high executive ability and are available only through selective appointment, not application.

"Dr. Robert Yarnell, who recently returned from Germany, is reported as having said that 'there is an alarming increase of suicide there.' It is no wonder when Dr. Max von Gruber of Munich declared that 'Germany ought to allow at least ten or fifteen millions of its sick and undernourished children to die without trying to save their lives,' and that 'they will die one way or another.'"

"From far away India comes the good news of the abolishing of sati, or the suicide of a child widow on her husband's funeral pyre. This barbaric custom for centuries, thank God, has ended. It has cost millions of innocent lives and its abolishment will save millions of others."

"It would seem that the most serious outlook on earth to-day is in Hungary. Before the war there were from fifty to sixty suicides yearly, but in 1920 they report 5,300. Of this number 3,200 were women, 2,100 were men, and more than 10,000 made an unsuccessful attempt to end their lives. The situation has become so serious there that Government, society and church circles have begun a campaign against this growing evil. Pastors are preaching sermons in all churches warning the people against the sin of self murder, and a special police force has been organized to keep strict watch and to prevent the people from killing themselves."

**Suicides in New York City Show Decrease in Five Years**

"There were 958 suicides in this city five years ago when the Save a Life League began its organized activities. Since then there has been a gradual decrease in suicide. In 1920 the number fell to 737, or a saving of 221 lives. Those who ended their lives here last year were 521 men and 216 women. As usual illuminating gas was the means used most frequently, 287 ending their lives in that way. Two-thirds were between the ages of 25 and 50 and 30 were under 21."

"During the year just closed," said Dr. Warren, "the league has been called upon to minister to a great many hopeless and helpless lives in this city and other cities. We receive applications from every State in the Union. The work of the league is without regard to creed or nationality and is personal and confidential."

"How do you perform this work?" "A large part of it is done, of course, by correspondence. We send out daily quantities of helpful literature. One piece, 'A Letter from a Would Be Suicide,' has done great good. This man was saved for his family. He now has a fine store and is healthy and prosperous and his family is happy and healthy also. Every word in this now celebrated letter I can vouch for as true."

"The Save a Life League never makes a charge for service or for literature. A board of well known citizens is in charge of the work, which is carried on entirely by free will offerings. Ruel W. Poor, president of the Garfield National Bank, is the treasurer of funds donated."

# Washington Observations Day by Day

By DONALD M'GREGOR.

New York Herald Bureau, Washington, D. C., Feb. 5.

**R. WILBUR F. CRAFTS** of blue law renown, is not a total abstainer in one thing, at least—clothes.

In 1920, he revealed in his autobiography, just issued, he bought one pair of cuffs, one suit of underwear, two pairs of socks, one necktie and a dozen and a half collars.

Dr. Crafts, following the lead of President-elect Harding, has coined a word to describe those who pooh-pooh the efforts of his International Reform Bureau, Inc. They are "impuritans."

W. P. G. Harding is a distant relative of W. G. Harding. "W. P. G." is Governor of the Federal Reserve Board; "W. G." is the President-elect. W. P. G. Harding is from Birmingham and a Democrat.

Governor Harding consoled Franklin D. Roosevelt, erstwhile running mate of Governor Cox, that his new bonding company job is better than it would have been if he had been elected Vice-President. Thomas Riley Marshall agreed. After eight years' experience Mr. Marshall thinks the Vice-President is America's most neglected man.

Almost everybody admits the Government ought to provide a house for the Vice-President, but nobody ever does anything about it. Vice-President Marshall has lived in a hotel all the time he has been in Washington.

Mr. Marshall is telling how the Volstead act affected the communion services of a negro congregation down South. The parson was unable to find any communion wine, so he got one of the sisters to make some. She did, out of persimmons. It tasted well, and the ceremonies were a success until at the close the worshippers found their mouths so puckered they had to whistle the Doxology.

You can buy a "Boise Penrose" sandwich at the Senate restaurant. This is it: Two slices of graham bread, between which are placed cold sliced tongue, a piece of tomato and a leaf of lettuce. Penrose sandwiches cost a quarter apiece.

One of Senator Arthur Capper's treasured possessions is a faded letter dated June 26, 1889, complimenting him for his work when he resigned as the Topeka correspondent of the *Kansas City Star*. He went into the publishing business for himself.

President-elect Harding's decision to call off an elaborate inauguration angered the Washington profiteers such as the dress-makers, florists, hotel keepers and speculators. He has dropped 100 per cent. in their estimation. Some of them wish Gov. Cox had been elected.

cerned. Mr. Baker had the Army up to 225,000 men, with recruiting progressing at a cost of \$125 for each recruit. How to get rid of the surplus is the thing that now is bothering Mr. Baker.

It's time the consumer was receiving the benefit of lower food prices. The value of farm products in 1920, the Department of Agriculture figures, dropped \$5,105,000,000 below the 1919 valuation. The value of farm products for 1920 amounted to \$19,855,000,000.

Representative John H. Small (N. C.) is looking forward to March 4. He will return from Congress then, and will be through buying suits of clothes for the children of R. C. Bland, a farmer, of Robersonville, N. C.

Mr. Small years ago, while campaigning, promised Bland he would buy a suit of clothes for every addition to the Bland family. The number of children has now reached thirty-four.

But Mr. Small kept the bargain.

Washington for many years after taxicabs replaced horse-drawn vehicles in other cities remained true to the cab and the caddy, generally a negro. But now he is gone—gone, that is, with the exception of four or five who, with coats much too big for them and ill-fitting silk hats, are to be found at Franklin square.

Elsewhere in Washington, the cabs—"seagull hacks" as they were popularly called—have given way to the taxicab.

There are so many distinguished looking men operating elevators at the Capitol that the casual visitor is bound to wonder whether he is being taken to the proper floor by some Senator or Representative who is taking his turn at the "lift." Even those who know their Washington well are apt to be fooled by the importance of the individuals.

These elevator conductors, however, are usually men who have been appointed through friends of Senators or Representatives, party workers, for the most part, who get the jobs as part of the party patronage. They come to Washington and are assigned to the positions on the elevators.

The war time restrictions against visitors going into the White House, or even the White House yard, still are in force. The time was that anybody who desired, when on a trip to Washington, could look at the Red Room, the Gold Room and the Blue Room, merely by applying for a card at the Executive Offices. The ban went on, however, when hostilities opened, and it never has been removed.

The Government is landlord for a number of people in Washington, and some of them are bootleggers. This developed not so long ago when the police arrested a woman occupying a house that had been purchased in one of the parking projects but which, not being needed for the time, was rented.

The woman had whiskey in her possession and there was evidence that she was selling it. The fact that the Volstead law holds the owner of property responsible for the presence of intoxicants presented a problem that seemed to run around in a circle.

One of the things that's going to be generally missed when the Democratic Administration departs is the umbrella of Albert S. Burleson, the Postmaster General. It's been in Washington a long time, even when Mr. Burleson was minority leader of the House.

Everywhere Mr. Burleson goes, rain or shine, the umbrella goes there too. Now it's going along with him back to Texas.

## Radio Market Reports for Farmers

**T**HE time may not be far distant when progressive farmers of Pennsylvania have their own wireless apparatus on top of their barns and get the latest market reports of the State and country direct from Washington.

The State and Federal Departments of Agriculture are now experimenting in this matter. Every evening at 6 o'clock a 500 word condensed report of the markets is received at Harrisburg by the department from Washington. The State does not own its own apparatus and it has no wireless operator on its payroll. For the time being the apparatus of the Harrisburg Technical High School is being used, and the operators are high school boys.

A more powerful wireless station, however, has been found by the State Department in Harrisburg. It is maintained by two former army and one former navy wireless operators. Washington also knew of this plant, and it has asked the ex-service men to cooperate with the Federal and State Governments in receiving the Washington nightly reports. They have consented.

If the experiment is a success the State

will probably equip its own wireless station on the top of the Capitol or one of the new office buildings now being erected in Capitol Park.

So far the reports have been distributed only among the local newspapers. The annual Farm Products Show, supported by the State Department of Agriculture and the allied agricultural associations of Pennsylvania, will be held in Harrisburg, and while this is in progress the farm reports will be published for distribution among the thousands of farmers who will attend the show.

Interest among the farmers in the experiment is growing. Several have written to the State Department to know what it would cost to equip a wireless station on their farms and how long it would take to learn the code. One former wireless operator has gone to farming in Lancaster county, one of the country's richest agricultural districts, and he is already picking up the reports as they come from Washington.

A wireless company has written to the department saying it could furnish a complete outfit for farmers and newspapers at \$150. This company predicted that soon every newspaper in Pennsylvania would have its own wireless apparatus and operator.