

"THE CRIME OF THE CENTURY," A THRILLING DETECTIVE STORY. BY RODRIGUES OTTOLENCUI.

ly, but I ain't such a chump as that barkeep. Why, he asked if you was a detective, an anybody with half an eye could see you didn't belong to that set. But you ain't no reporter neither. I'll tell you what you are. You're a gentleman, one of the real sort. What you're up to in this section is none of my business only as I can give you tips in exchange for cash."

"Yes, but what information have you to impart which you think I would care to buy?"

"Well, the fact is, I guess, if you're after anything special I ain't in it. But I say if you'd like to see a sight as would make the old man in Mulberry street open his eyes I'm your guide."

"Speak more plainly."

"Say, would you mind turnin round an walkin the other way? That duck over there lookin so innocent into that cigar store is a detec in plain clothes. He ain't seen me yet, an I'd rather he wouldn't."

"I thought you had done nothing to make you fear the police," said Mr. Mitchel, turning, however, and retracing his steps.

"Neither have I, but then, you see, by this time tomorrow I might want to prove I was in Jersey City today. You can never tell, an it would be awkward for that chap to swear he'd seen me down here. See? But about this little circus, I s'pose you know that since the Lexow committee cleared up things this town's been run like a Sunday school—all the gamblin places shut up tight, with rooms to let, eh? Well, s'pose I could take you to a place where there was just the fanciest kind of a layout—faro, poker, roulette, everything. How would that strike you?"

"I would not give 10 cents to visit such a place."

"Wait a minute, mister. There's more. S'pose I was to tell you that



"Seven sharp, foot of Jay street. Good place for a crowd like ours, eh?"

the place was run on a steamboat; that we do a moonlight excursion down the bay to cover up tracks. How then?"

"If your statement is true, it is interesting, of course, but I'm not connected with the police, and the arrest of such people is nothing to me."

"I guess you're straight enough," said the crook in an odd tone, and it dawned upon Mr. Mitchel that the fellow had been sounding him for fear that, after all, he might be a detective. His replies had been so honestly made that even Slippery Sam was satisfied, for in lower tones he added:

"I didn't think you'd care for that, but I calculate you're lookin into crime as a kind of study. Am I right?"

"You are," said Mr. Mitchel, admiring the fellow's astuteness.

"Good!" said the crook. "Then I've got you. What do you say to attendin a lecture on crime to an audience of crooks?"

"And who is to deliver the lecture?"

"Why, Preacher Jim, we call him. He's the longest headed, smartest, bravest an squarest crook in New York city." He spoke with evident admiration. "I tell you, it makes me feel mean offerin to sneak you into this lecture, but if I wasn't sure you wouldn't make use of what you'll see to get some of the boys in quod I'd cut my heart out first or yours." For a moment he looked vicious enough to carry out his threat upon the spot, but in a moment he had resumed his suave tone and continued: "But what's a man to do when he ain't got a nickel to his name an he meets a gent as easy to get money out of as you are? I tell you the temptation's too much for Slippery Sam."

Mr. Mitchel laughed heartily at this estimate of himself and then said:

"Yes, my man, you have now offered me something for which I am willing to pay liberally. Where is this lecture to be delivered and when?"

"You won't have long to wait, 'cause it's tonight. The place is the steamboat I spoke of, the floatin gamblin palace. The B. S. U.'s have chartered the boat for tonight."

"And who are the B. S. U.'s?"

"The Burglars' Social Union. Sounds like a queer society to you, don't it? Well, it's queerer than you think. Oh, you'll have a good time for your money!"

"I suppose I shall need some special dress in order not to excite suspicion. Shall I not?"

"Not a bit of it. Say, mister, you never made a bigger mistake in your life. Why, if you was to go to masqueradin in clothes you ain't accustomed to you'd give yourself away in ten minutes. I tell you, the crowd on that boat tonight'll have brains, an you want to keep cool. No, sir; dress natural, an you'll feel natural, an as you'll feel you'll act. Say, do you know it's the funniest notion folks has—they as don't know, I mean—that a thief dresses different from other people? Why should he, now? Tell me that."

Why, if he did, wouldn't everybody be out to him in a second? Well, I guess!"

"Very true. But would it not be best not to wear such expensive clothing? And then my diamonds. They attracted your attention, you know."

"Oh, there'll be just as good clothes there an just as good diamonds! But, then, as you ain't a regular crook—no offense meant—why, I guess you'd better leave your best stones at home. There's some men so mean they'd rob the dead, much less a brother crook. Of course you've got to pass for a thief. You don't mind that?"

"No; not at all," replied Mr. Mitchel, laughing. "And now where shall we meet?"

"Seven sharp, foot of Jay street. Good place for a crowd like ours, eh?"

He laughed at his own feeble wit, and his hand closed eagerly over a ten dollar bill which Mr. Mitchel handed to him. "A tenner! Pretty good for a start. Tanks. I knew you was the genuine article the minute I spotted you. Well, so long! Jay street, 7 sharp." And Slippery Sam disappeared into a byway so quickly that Mr. Mitchel wondered as he walked on how the police ever caught him at all.

CHAPTER V. THE ETHICS OF HONEST THEVERY.

Promptly at 7 o'clock Mr. Mitchel was at the appointed place, where he waited long enough to begin to doubt that Slippery Sam would keep his appointment, when suddenly that worthy appeared at his side, like a sprite in a pantomime. Evidently he enjoyed the trick of stepping forth from places of concealment, for he chuckled at the surprise which he created and remarked:

"Excuse, me mister, but I've got my reputation to keep up. See?"

"Ah, yes, of course!" replied Mr. Mitchel, remembering the fellow's name. "Well, you see I have come. Are you still willing to take me to this meeting of your friends?"

"Why, cert! What am I here for? You follow me, an all I've got to say is keep your eyes peeled an your mouth shut, an you won't git into no trouble. By the way, what line are you in?"

"What line am I in? Oh! You mean what sort of crime is my speciality?"

"You're fly, mister. You see, you've got to be introduced, an we'd better fix up your trade before we git started, so's to have no slips."

"Well, then," said Mr. Mitchel, slightly amused at his anomalous position, "as an expert, what would you advise? What sort of crook do I look most like?"

"That's the trouble," said Sam, scratching his head by way of assisting thought. "You look so much like the genuine gentleman it's hard to place you. Say, I've got it, by ginger! You're a bank note engraver; that's what you are—regular trade, I mean, but you do an occasional job with the queer, an you've never been spotted yet. See? That's why you ain't known out of your own private circle. What's more, you've just dropped in to hear the lecture, but you ain't lookin for no new pals, nor you ain't extendin your operations into other lines. That's the ticket. That's as safe as a string. No inquisitive questions answered an no new friends desired."

"Very good. But how do I happen to know you?"

"Oh, me! Oh, as to me—that's simple! One of your pals is up the river for carelessness in changin a bill. I met him, an he give me a message to you when I come out. I'm hard up, an you're stakin me till I git on easy street. How does that strike you?"

The insidious naivete of the latter part of this answer tickled Mr. Mitchel's fancy, and he laughed aloud as he replied:

"I say, my man, you're an original in your way. Yes, I'll stake you for awhile."

Slippery Sam led the way along the docks, keeping in the shadows from force of habit rather than from any necessity, since no member of the police force appeared in sight, until presently he darted quickly to the right, disappearing with his customary celerity. Mr. Mitchel awaited his return with patience and in a few minutes was attracted by a low whistle which seemed to come from beneath him. Looking down, he descried a small boat in the shadow of the dock, manned by two powerful oarsmen, and in the bow stood his late companion, beckoning to him. Comprehending that it was meant that he should enter the boat, he climbed down the rotten sides of the dock and dropped, the men, as soon as he was seated, rowing silently and quickly away.

No words were spoken as they picked their way out into the Hudson, the men avoiding the wash of the great ferryboats with a skill which indicated that they were experienced watermen. Turning down the river, they rowed for more than a mile between the shores of the two cities, the many lights of which make a beautiful stage picture and bewilder one unaccustomed to the night view of the shores so that it would be impossible to locate the spot where they finally stopped and boarded a small excursion steamboat, which itself was moving slowly down the river.

Slippery Sam stood up and threw a rope to a man standing near the rail of the steamboat, and they were hauled up close alongside. Mr. Mitchel and Sam were helped aboard, and the boat which had brought them dropped astern. A few minutes later the speed of the steamboat was greatly accelerated, indicating that no more passengers were expected, and within an hour she had passed out between the great guns of the two forts which guard the Narrows and was riding lazily on the ocean highway between Sandy Hook and Coney Island.

The Siren was one of the many small steam vessels licensed to take excursions from the metropolis to the

many resorts within two hours' sail of the Battery. The captain and owner, being himself a member of the sporting fraternity, had scented a good thing for himself when the sudden activity of the police, due to legislative investigation, had resulted in the closing of the city gambling rooms. He had therefore summoned a few of the professional gamblers and quickly interested them in his venture. They were to "run the games," while he was to "run the boat," as one of the men tersely put it.

To this end the forward cabin had been elaborately fitted up with the necessary implements, all of which, however, were of the portable order, in case of emergency. There were two faro dealers, two roulette wheels and a number of tables for poker. As the boat already enjoyed the advantages of a bar license, liquor could be had on demand. There were many electric lights, but the windows were closely curtained, lest too much of an illumination should attract the suspicion of the harbor police.

Interference, however, was scarcely probable, for the captain had cunningly devised a plan whereby the nefarious traffic was concealed. He had early in the season abandoned all regular trips and advertised his boat to hire for private excursion parties, and so careful was he that in furtherance of his scheme he nominally entertained a different "society" or "club" each night, and admittance was strictly by ticket. By this means it was very difficult for any but the "elect" to get aboard, as the disposition of the "tickets" was solely in the charge of a chosen and trustworthy few.

On this occasion there was really a private excursion party on the Siren. The Burglars' Social Union had chartered the boat, paying a round sum for the privilege of holding a meeting beyond the prying eyes of the police, a part of the agreement being that the gamblers might run their games as usual, the members of the B. S. U., however, being the only players. It was because of the suspicious characters of these gentlemen that the captain had preferred to pick them up in small parties as he slowly worked his way down the river rather than to allow so many crooks to get aboard from one dock, where a stray policeman might recognize too many of them.

When Mr. Mitchel ascended the stairway which led to the saloon and stood for a moment looking about him, he was a little surprised at the prospect. The faro and roulette games were well patronized, and several games of poker were in progress. Yet the quiet, gentlemanly behavior of all in the place made it difficult to believe that he was in the presence of the principal criminals out of prison. His entrance attracted scarcely any attention. Two or three turned and looked at him, but, failing to recognize him, reverted to their games.

"Quite a family party, ain't it?" said Slippery Sam in lowered tones.

"A most extraordinary group, I should say," responded Mr. Mitchel, "provided these men are really criminals."

"Well, we like the word 'crooks' better," said Sam suggestively, "an if you don't mind I'd rather you'd use it."

"Why, certainly, if you desire it," said Mr. Mitchel. "But what is the difference?"

This seemed to be a poser for Sam, who shifted uneasily a moment, searching for a satisfactory reply, which finally shaped itself thus:

"Well, you see, I ain't no scholar, so I ain't good at definitions. I've spent so much time in jail an the prison library, as a rule, is so meager that I might say my education's been neglected. But there's a point of difference that has weight here tonight, an that I can tell you. You see, 'criminals' is what the judges calls us, an 'crooks' is what we calls ourselves. Are you on?"

"Not fully. Make it plainer."

"Why, don't you see, if one of this crowd heard you talkin about 'criminals' he'd twig you in a minute? He'd know you wasn't a 'crook' yourself, an that'd be bad."

"Ah, yes, of course! Evidently the less I have to say the less likely I will be to get into trouble by making mistakes."

"Yes, but don't talk too little neither. If you're too still, they'll be on to you just as quick as if you open your trap too wide. But you was askin if these men are all crooks. Yes, sir, an a more skillful crowd in their way don't exist. Now, there's a man over there by the roulette, the chap with the long tailed coat an the choker. Size him up, an what do you make his total?"

"Do you mean what position in life would I accord to him? Well, that is not an easy problem at any time, and under present circumstances it becomes doubly difficult. Yet I must confess that he seems strangely out of place here, for do you know—I may make you laugh to hear it—I should take him for a Salvation Army man."

"Say, mister, you're a bird, you are, a regular eagle for seein into things. Looks like Salvation Army, does he? Well, that's precisely his lay. You ought to hear him leadin a meetin an takin lambs into the fold. Oh, dear, but he's saved more souls than we've got fingers an toes. But, then, for all that, he's got another business on the side. Give a guess at that. What would you say was his regular profession now? How does he live?"

"Judging by his earnestness at present, he might be a card sharp," ventured Mr. Mitchel.

"Sharp? You're right enough when you speak that word. But not cards, no, sir; he never touches 'em. He's just amusin himself at that wheel, but he'll leave it pretty soon. No, sir; he's a fence an the best known in the city an never been even suspected by the police, much less arrested. Oh, yes; he's sharp! Well, I guess!"

In this strain Sam rambled on, pointing out the various prominent criminals in the apartment and giving graphic details of their careers, so that Mr. Mitchel was enjoying himself hugely and at the same time obtaining quite an insight into the habits of a class which had always interested him—to wit, the uncaptured criminals. Surely among these were those with the greater share of brains.

But the more he saw and heard of the men around him the more impatient he grew to see Preacher Jim, the man who had announced that he would lecture to criminals upon crime.

The Siren had passed far beyond the lights of the city, and Coney Island's thousands of electric lamps made but a bright streak on the horizon, when at last there was a movement which promised the fulfillment of his desire. The card tables were taken away by attendants who seemed to have been drilled to the task, so rapidly did they accomplish it. Camp stools were arranged in rows, and the company found places facing one table which had been left at the farther end of the saloon.

In the inevitable confusion attendant upon this scramble for seats, orderly though it was, Mr. Mitchel was separated from Sam for a moment. Just then some one whispered near his ear: "If you should need help, I'll be on hand."

Mr. Mitchel turned swiftly, but could not be sure of the identity of the speaker. The person nearest to him was one of the waiters, hurrying by with a trayful of empty glasses, while at a little distance back was a man who appeared to be watching him intently. Either of these might have spoken the whispered words, but which? Mr. Mitchel reasoned that it must be this one who was still eying him closely, yet he could not dismiss the idea that the voice, though disguised, was familiar to his ear.

"I wonder if Mr. Barnes is aboard," he thought, and this suspicion for a few moments occupied him so thoroughly that he forgot about the other man until aroused by Sam, who had regained his side, bringing two choice stools with backs to them.

"There he is," said that worthy, with suppressed excitement.

"There is who?" asked Mr. Mitchel.

"Why, Preacher Jim, of course," said Sam. "See! He's takin his place behind the table. He's lookin to begin at once. Listen!"

Mr. Mitchel looked toward the opposite end of the room, and in Preacher Jim he recognized the man who had been watching him but a few moments before. Had he uttered the mysterious message?

A hush fell over the company as the man stood behind the table and gazed about him for several minutes in silence, affording Mr. Mitchel an excellent opportunity to scrutinize the general appearance. Here was one who might have baffled those students who have formulated a physical "type" of criminals. He was a type of nothing unless of perfect manhood. Of medium stature, his symmetrical frame seemed fashioned in the mold which would yield the greatest strength and endurance. A finely formed head, with great brain room, marvelously well balanced between his powerful shoulders, assured of his masterful will power. No wonder that before such a man as this all the other crooks stood in awed admiration. Their silence and their attitudes of eager attention were a tacit admission of the fact that they were in the presence of recognized superiority. They bowed before their master.

"Has this man ever been in prison?" inquired Mr. Mitchel in a whisper.

"In prison? They'd have to catch him first, wouldn't they?" was Sam's scornful reply.

But now Preacher Jim began to speak.

"My friends," said he in a mellow voice of singular magnetic quality, "I have the pleasure of addressing you once more after a lapse of many months. I see around me the familiar faces of a number of friends, but I note others who are unknown to me."

By way of introduction, therefore, I may speak of myself, giving a brief sketch of my past history.

"I am known to you all as Jim, and because of my fondness for speech-making some call me Preacher Jim. Yet, preacher though I am, I am not one of the learned doctors of divinity, nor have I much in common with them, save the earnestness with which I follow the path which I have marked out for myself in this life."

"I was born about 30 years ago. In this matter, from the universal laws of nature which control us all, I was not consulted. I was brought into this world, being myself in no way responsible either for my coming or for the manner thereof. As trite and unnecessary a statement as this may seem to be, it has an important bearing upon what I may call my theme for tonight. Being born, some one decided that I should be known by the name of James, which has been abbreviated into Jim. This name was given to me in much the same manner and for

the same purpose as a name is given to a dog—that I might come when called and be distinguished from others of my kind. And so I came to be Jim. Other name I have not, because my revered father overlooked the formality of marriage with my mother. Later he overlooked both my mother and myself, and we were left to drift on the tide of humanity, and it is a truth, which is strange in the presence of the vaunted civilization of this era, that such flotsam will ever be finally stranded on the barren shores of damnation."

"At the age of 5 I began to steal, not from necessity, but from imitation. I lived among thieves and did as they did. At 10 I was one of the most skillful pickpockets along the Bowery, and at 12 I was at the head of a band of 20 boys any one of whom was a past master in the art of breaking the eighth commandment. One of these, emboldened by success, attempted an operation beyond his power of accomplishment and was detected in the act. He fled and was followed. With a lack of comradeship, for which he has since been punished, he ran into my place and, depositing some of his plunder under my bed, succeeded in evading the officer who had followed him in. I was awakened from what the policeman declared was a sham sleep and taken to the station house, whence in due time I was sent to a reformatory."

"There I remained until I was of age, and during those seven years I received a double education. From the good and pious preacher who officiated in the chapel I first suspected the value of knowledge and then obtained the books from which to acquire it. Being my own teacher to a great extent and interested in my pupil, I absorbed knowledge as a sponge does water. But, on the other hand, from the vast variety of delinquents who were sent to the institution from time to time I also learned the true meaning of the words vice and crime."

"I entered the reformatory a little thief whose main object in stealing had been mischief. I left the place a professional crook endowed with such knowledge as made me self reliant. I felt myself equipped for the battle with the world to such a degree that I was ready to attack it rather than wait and defend myself, and I was eager for the fray."

"Nine years have passed, and I have lived, if not above suspicion, at least beyond conviction. I have never been in prison, and I never expect to be, yet I am a professional criminal."

"Having given you this short sketch of myself, I pass to the consideration of the criminal in general. My friends, we call ourselves 'crooks,' and the world calls us 'criminals.' As crooks we understand and sympathize with one another. As criminals, does the world understand or sympathize with us? Does the Christian, with his creed, 'Love thine enemies,' love us? Yet are we not counted as the enemies of society?"

"Let us consider for a moment the true relation between the criminal and society at large. There seems to be but one doctrine of salvation for the delinquent, and that is punishment. Granting that this theory is a correct one, is it justly practiced? We find that for a given offense there is a specified number of years in prison set down as the proper punishment. Are all men who commit this crime equally amenable to punishment, that all should be treated with equal severity? Are all of these guilty persons equally responsible for their acts? Have all had the same heritage, the same environment, the same examples of conduct and the same opportunities for living without resorting to crime? The answer is so evident that it is amazing that civilization should tolerate such blindness in the Goddess of Justice."

He paused a moment, having delivered the final sentences with such earnest and intense force that his audience was carried away by his eloquence and applauded rapturously. Mr. Mitchel was astounded to find a man of this mental caliber openly admitting that he lived a life of crime. He was more interested than he had ever before been in any man and was impatient to hear more.

"My friends, society has made one egregious, irreparable blunder, and it has fallen into this error from sheer selfishness. The mistake lies in this—the criminal has been measured by the standards applicable to normal men, whereas crime ever has been and ever will be the result of abnormal development or of physical and psychical degeneration. To use a trite simile, 'crime is a disease,' and, as in other diseases, the sufferer is personally responsible for his condition in only a small proportion of cases."

"How differently does society treat physical and moral disease! For the afflicted of the first class we have colleges, hospitals and lazarettos. For the latter we have lawyers, juries, judges, prisons, stripes and hanging."

"In the worst stages of physical disease the individual becomes a menace and a danger to the community. With perfect but nevertheless selfish justice the afflicted one is seized and incarcerated in a lazaretto. Such a fate is sad enough and bad enough, yet it is vastly different from the extreme example of the morally diseased. He endangers the life or takes the life of one of the community, and his life is taken in payment. Thus society as a whole commits the very act for which it deems the poor wretch. If it be argued that society kills, but does not murder, the contention is easily shown to be sophistry, for if a man should kill a convicted and condemned murderer, thus committing the act which society has elected itself to commit, such a man would still be adjudged guilty of murder. Yet if all the facts were considered, including the most important one that all morally diseased are also phys-

ically imperfect and that the two afflictions are interdependent, the world would be grieved to the recognition of its great error, and society would be compelled to admit that it should no more slay the moral than the physical leper. The day will, the day must, come when crime, like disease, will be treated curatively rather than punitively, but that day is not yet, and we live in the present and must meet conditions as they are. How, then, shall we criminals, we 'crooks,' fashion our lives?"

"I have pointed out to you the great error made by society; but, my friends, we ourselves have fallen into the same mistake, and it is of more importance to us than to society. We also overlook the fact that our criminal propensities are born and bred in us, that we are not solely responsible for what we are, that we are morally and oftentimes physically diseased and that we are congenitally so. Yet such is our deplorable condition. Moreover, no helping hand is outstretched toward us. The hand that beckons holds a scourge, and the index finger points the way to prison. The world will not help us. We must help ourselves. How?"

"Why not by co-operation, as in this society? Thus we erect a community in sympathy with our position and condition, and by learning to live in true harmony with all the members of this smaller, diseased community we cannot but progress in ourselves and in our progeny toward a right to claim a place in that wider world which holds us now as enemies—enemies without claim on Christian love."

"In physical disease the most important step toward cure has been made when the presence of the disturbance is recognized and correctly diagnosed. So it must be with crime. Once the individual 'crook' realizes his true condition and the danger he is in because of the unequal warfare which he wages with the world, then surely he is better armed for the fray."

"To make an end of my preaching, then, I will advise the individual as I have advised the whole society present. Let each man, as I have done, study out his own heritage. Let him analyze his birth and birthright and weigh the necessity of his leading a criminal life. Some will find the heritage so slight that it will be not difficult to effect a cure in themselves and to live honestly. These owe it to themselves, to society at large, but more particularly to their children, to strive toward that end."

"The other extreme will be the man whose heritage and whose youthful associations have been such that crime is inevitable. He is the moral leper. Let him remember that not the lazaretto, but the hangman, will be his fate if society should discover his condition."

"There is a law, however, that every man has the inherent right of self preservation. The rule applies to the moral leper as well as to the spotless virgin. The right being his, let him obtain the means. Let him first acquire knowledge, the wisdom of the world, the learning of books and, above all, the knowledge of himself. Let him beware how he commits a crime. If he must defy the law, and it will be inevitable that he must, let him plot and plan, be patient and cautious, cunning and wary, so that, having yielded to the impulse of crime when he can no longer resist, he may yet defy detection and that punishment which blind justice will mete out to him. Let him, in short, live as I live, a criminal by force of heritage and diseased moral centers, a born criminal, yet committing crime so seldom, so carefully and so cunningly that he may escape not alone punishment, but even suspicion. Above all things, let him obey the one greatest duty of his being. Let him not become the father of other criminals. Let his vice die with him. And may God pity such men, as men do not."

He ceased, and there was profound silence. There was no applause, yet it was evident that those present were much moved. They were thoughtful countenances and seemed oblivious of their companions, as though all were preoccupied with introspective speculations.

Mr. Mitchel himself was deeply stirred. He had never met or heard of such a man as this. A born criminal he called himself, yet from all outward appearances a man of culture and refinement. He was a paradox. If he was truly the terrible criminal that he described himself to be, how wonderfully well he had benefited by the advice he had just given to others! He had truly acquired knowledge of the world and of himself, and in his great battle with the world he had armed himself with the best weapons with which to defend himself against suspicion.

Yet if a criminal, guilty of crimes yet unsuspected, what a problem to discover in what he had offended! On the other hand, if his pretense of criminality was merely assumed—if his association with the prison chaplain had made him in some sort a fanatical crank who preached for love of preaching and went among criminals because it pleased him to be one of themselves—then how skillfully he played his part and how well he deluded these men, all of whom undoubtedly would have scoffed at the idea that any man could dupe them.

From either point of view Mr. Mitchel thought that Preacher Jim would be a most interesting study, when he noticed that the man was apparently coming toward himself. He was very much astonished, however, when presently Preacher Jim stood before him and, extending his hand cordially, remarked quietly: "Well, Mr. Mitchel, how did you enjoy the lecture?"

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"To make an end of my preaching, then, I will advise the individual as I have advised the whole society present. Let each man, as I have done, study out his own heritage. Let him analyze his birth and birthright and weigh the necessity of his leading a criminal life. Some will find the heritage so slight that it will be not difficult to effect a cure in themselves and to live honestly. These owe it to themselves, to society at large, but more particularly to their children, to strive toward that end."

"The other extreme will be the man whose heritage and whose youthful associations have been such that crime is inevitable. He is the moral leper. Let him remember that not the lazaretto, but the hangman, will be his fate if society should discover his condition."

"There is a law, however, that every man has the inherent right of self preservation. The rule applies to the moral leper as well as to the spotless virgin. The right being his, let him obtain the means. Let him first acquire knowledge, the wisdom of the world, the learning of books and, above all, the knowledge of himself. Let him beware how he commits a crime. If he must defy the law, and it will be inevitable that he must, let him plot and plan, be patient and cautious, cunning and wary, so that, having yielded to the impulse of crime when he can no longer resist, he may yet defy detection and that punishment which blind justice will mete out to him. Let him, in short, live as I live, a criminal by force of heritage and diseased moral centers, a born criminal, yet committing crime so seldom, so carefully and so cunningly that he may escape not alone punishment, but even suspicion. Above all things, let him obey the one greatest duty of his being. Let him not become the father of other criminals. Let his vice die with him. And may God pity such men, as men do not."

He ceased, and there was profound silence. There was no applause, yet it was evident that those present were much moved. They were thoughtful countenances and seemed oblivious of their companions, as though all were preoccupied with introspective speculations.

Mr. Mitchel himself was deeply stirred. He had never met or heard of such a man as this. A born criminal he called himself, yet from all outward appearances a man of culture and refinement. He was a paradox. If he was truly the terrible criminal that he described himself to be, how wonderfully well he had benefited by the advice he had just given to others! He had truly acquired knowledge of the world and of himself, and in his great battle with the world he had armed himself with the best weapons with which to defend himself against suspicion.

Yet if a criminal, guilty of crimes yet unsuspected, what a problem to discover in what he had offended! On the other hand, if his pretense of criminality was merely assumed—if his association with the prison chaplain had made him in some sort a fanatical crank who preached for love of preaching and went among criminals because it pleased him to be one of themselves—then how skillfully he played his part and how well he deluded these men, all of whom undoubtedly would have scoffed at the idea that any man could dupe them.

From either point of view Mr. Mitchel thought that Preacher Jim would be a most interesting study, when he noticed that the man was apparently coming toward himself. He was very much astonished, however, when presently Preacher Jim stood before him and, extending his hand cordially, remarked quietly: "Well, Mr. Mitchel, how did you enjoy the lecture?"

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