



Driveway entering the grounds of the state school at Mandan and two of the buildings seen through the trees.

# The Honest Opinions of a Thief

What Andrew McLeod, Bank Burglar, Thinks of Courts, Prisons and Men as Told at Bismarck Penitentiary to a Leader Representative

**T**HE judge sits up there like a priest with his long face as hard and smooth as marble and the heart in his breast just the same.

"He says to me, 'Guilty or not guilty?' 'Judge,' I says to him, 'what case are you tryin' me on, now? Are you tryin' me for packin' a gun or are you tryin' me on this record the cops has dug up?'"

"We're tryin' you on the charge of carryin' a concealed weapon," he says.

"Aw, no, judge, I says; 'I look into yer face and I can read it like an open

head and square of chin. The restlessly rolling eyes and an unmistakable drawing down of the corners of the mouth are the only marks of the criminal world upon him.

He referred to these prison mannerisms himself. "I can forget all that," he said, and in an instant that expression was gone and in its place was the face of an honest man. He can speak thoroughly correct English yet in talking of his criminal career he falls into the typical manner of speech of the prison world.

"It isn't necessary to shoot anybody to protect yourself with a gun. The sight of it or the sound of it is enough.

"Ninety per cent of men are cowards. They'll not face a man in a stand up fight with a gun. Policemen—the most of them—are the biggest cowards of all.

"I remember when I was in this state back quite a few years ago. I was with a gang in one of these burgs pulling off a job. I had one of these sawed-off express messenger's guns and was standing on a corner as a lookout.

## THE TOWN MARSHAL WHO HAD A BUSY SESSION

"I heard somebody running and I see the town marshal hot-footin' it down the street toward me. I was standing back in the shadow—see?—and he didn't see me. When he got within about half a block of me I cut loose with this old cannon—over his head, see?"

"Say, you ought to seen this guy! I never saw him turn at all he did it so fast, and he was beatin' it back the other way faster than he come.

"Well, there was a pal of mine back

goats. I dropped into the depot at one of these places in the evening. The waiting room was lighted and there were several people there. When I came in the door the station agent was standing right near by with his back toward the door.

"He didn't hear me at first and then he turned and saw me standing right back of him. His face went white and he looked like he thought I was goin' to kill him on the spot. I watched him standin' there with his knees knockin' together and it made me kind o' sore. I put my hand on his shoulder and felt him tremblin' like a leaf.

"What's the matter, fellow, I says. 'You ain't afraid o' me, are you? I wouldn't think o' hurtin' you.

"Cheer up,' I says, 'you're among friends and everything is all right.'

"Now you know that guy might have run out of there hollerin' bloody murder and thieves and the first thing you know I'd a been pinched an' this fellow would have gone into court and swore that I tried to hold up the station. What chance would I have had? Some smart

**"I have carried a gun all my life, but I've never shot a man," says this six-time loser. "A man doesn't need to shoot to protect himself, because most men are cowards. All murderers are cowards."**

book. These Hoosier cops made me for a five-time loser and your goin' to send me over the road because I got a record. All right, I says; 'go ahead; give me my bit an' I'll do it like a gentleman.'

"One year in the state penitentiary," says the judge."

## THE MAN WHOSE HAND IS AGAINST SOCIETY

The man who spoke substantially as above was Andrew McLeod, confessed criminal, a "six-time loser"—that is, serving time for his sixth conviction of crime—a crook since boyhood—and a good deal of a man at that.

Through the courtesy of Warden Frank Talcott of the state penitentiary McLeod was permitted to hold a friendly conversation with a representative of the Leader. He and the Leader man sat alone together in a waiting room at the state prison and he talked at length of prisons and his own career and life in general seen from a side from which not many men see it, the side of the man whose hand is against the law and its officers.

McLeod is both ashamed and proud of his profession. "Oh, I'm a thief," he said, with the air of a man making a clean confession. He didn't hang his head when he said it. He's not a man who asks any odds of anybody. But there are degrees of thievery, some within the law and some outside of it, some mean and contemptible, others perhaps as defensible and more nearly honest than some that take place within the law.

He is a big man; big physically and not small mentally, a man of clear eye, of deep chest and muscular frame. He is no "low-brow." His head is that of a man of brain and ability, broad of fore-

## BANKERS PAY TRIBUTE TO PROFESSIONAL ABILITY

McLeod is a bank burglar.

"Are you a good one?" the reporter asked him.

He grinned and gestured with open palms in expressive fashion.

"It took me nine years to get by at Joliet with my last bit," he said. "My minimum time was five years. The Illinois Bankers' association kept me there the rest of the time. They wouldn't let the pardon board turn me loose."

McLeod told some scattering details of an eventful life, something about his ideas of prisons and gave a glimpse of his code of honor. It is at least the code of a bold and rugged spirit, a will unbroken. Reference to the offense for which he was arrested in Fargo a few months ago caused him to refer to the matter of physical courage.

"I carry a gun for self protection," he said in answer to a question. The next question he anticipated.

"I never killed a man in my life. I never even wounded a man. I never have shot anybody. That doesn't mean I haven't used the gun. I have shot it plenty of times.

in the next block and this scared guy ran right toward him. When he got nearly there my pal cut loose with his gat and this fellow whirls around and comes back in my direction again. It was gettin' so good that I had to blaze away again just to see what he would do.

"Well sir, we kept this fellow beatin' back and forth until he was nearly ready to drop before we faded away. We didn't want him to die of fright and be accused of murderin' him.

"It was right here in North Dakota, too, that another thing happened that shows how easy it is to get some people's

guy would have dug up my record and then what would my word have been worth? A good respectable citizen against a thief.

"You never can trust a coward. They're the most dangerous people on earth. It's the coward that murders people. The coward kills to get even with somebody or he shoots just because he's scared.

"Of course, I've been in tight holes, and I've used my gun, but never to kill. Few men will face a burglar with a gun in his hand.

## THE HONEST THIEF'S CODE: "GIVE A MAN A CHANCE"

"I believe every man ought to have a chance for his life; I don't care whether he's a burglar or a respectable citizen. The man that shoots at you behind your back is a coward.

"Of course, the law says it is all right to shoot at a crook, no matter how you play it. I've been shot at a hundred times, I guess, by men that wouldn't dare to face me in the open.

"One time when I was just a beginner (Continued on page 18.)

**"Treat a man like a dog and he's going to get even if he can, whether there's anything in it for him or not. Treat a man like a man and you've got a little better chance that when you turn him loose he'll have a try at goin' straight."**