

TEN YEARS OF CRIME

Henry Lysing

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Civilization has faced crime for centuries—ever since man existed, in fact. And during all that time, crime and the criminal were two of the most perplexing problems that faced man. When you fought wars, one side or the other won, and then there was peace, at least for a while. When floods came; or drought; the calamity was over, and things went back to normal. When anything out of the way occurred, it lasted for a definite period of time, and then things assumed their old routine.

But not with crime and the criminal! That was a battle that was never ended. If you caught one criminal, prevented one crime, there was another criminal to take his place, or the same criminal repeated. It was an ever-growing monster; every time you cut off one part of him, he grew another part.

Not until recently has crime been tackled in modern, scientific manner. The United States has been the leader in this field, and our methods are now being copied all over the world because these methods have been found most successful. In a country that is expanding, that continues prosperous, that is made up of so many different nationalities and races, crime finds its most fertile field. Despite this, however, the forces of law and order in this country have done a better job than has been accomplished anywhere else.

One look at the record will prove this statement. Since the Federal Bureau of Investigation has been keeping records of crime all over the country, the tendency has been consistently down, despite depression conditions which are usually a source of increased crime. Accurate records have been kept from an appreciable number of cities for the past ten years, and in this period, practically every crime on the calendar has shown a decrease.

Murder has dropped about twenty-five percent; negligent manslaughter has dropped almost fifty percent. In these two crimes, the United States leads the world, probably because we live at a faster pace than any other country. But the sharp decline in them shows what effective measures can do.

Robbery has also shown a drop of almost fifty percent in the last ten years. During the past ten years, there was probably more cause for robbery than ever before, because of the strained circumstances forced on people because of economic conditions. The fact that robbery has shown such a marked decline speaks well for the police of our country; they were aware of what might happen, and took the proper precautions.

Auto theft, one of the most fertile fields of crime in a country that has an abundance of cars, has shown the steepest decline. There has been approximately sixty percent drop in this field, despite the fact that the number of cars on the road has shown an increase.

This great drop in auto thefts is a fine example of what can be accomplished in the fight against crime when everyone co-operates. Better methods of locking cars, devised by manufacturers, have served well. Arousing the public to the fact that cars, when parked, should always be locked has helped keep down the number of thefts. Better systems of police patrol, better methods of motor-car registration, and such devices have also helped, since they made the sale or transportation of stolen cars more difficult.

Standing out among the list of crimes during this period of time, burglary continues to hold up to its level, showing only a light drop. The reasons for this are many, foremost of which is the fact that this is one particular crime which cannot be so readily prevented by the police. It is impossible to patrol the streets of any city so thoroughly that burglaries could be prevented—impossible, that is, if the taxpayer is to be considered. Because burglary is a crime depending upon darkness and "the back way" in most cases, the average patrol officer runs only a small chance of spotting the burglar.

The greatest reason for the lack of decrease in this crime, however, is the lack of co-operation on the part of home owners. Preventive measures are simple, yet very effective, but all these must be taken by the home owner, not by the police. In other crimes, where police can take part in preventive measures, the total has decreased.

Probably the fact that our home life has changed so radically has helped burglars. When families are away

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from their homes for entire evenings, or for days at a time, that home is an easy prospect for the burglar. And notes to milkmen and other delivery men usually serve as open invitations to burglars to come in and help themselves. If the public would give the least bit of co. operation to police, this crime, too, would show a decline.

Another point which stands out in the records as compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation is the fact that cities which have ample police protection have a much smaller portion of crime than those which try to economize in this respect. Cities in which the police department is entirely detached from politics stand at the top of the list in crime decreases and, incidentally, show the least proportionate expense for their departments!

The past ten years in this battle have been highly successful. If it is true that nothing breeds success better than success itself, the next ten years should prove ten terrible years for the criminal, and the record should reflect even a sharper decline in the list of crimes. Every citizen of this country should make it a point to play his part in this battle.