

# PROBLEMS OF THE AMERICAN TRAMP

## HOW SHALL VAGRANCY EVIL BE CHECKED?

### Laws of Various States Have Proved Unequal to the Task—Elaborate System for the Cure of Habitual Idleness in Force on the Continent of Europe—A Striking Contrast to the Futile Efforts That Have Been Made Here in the United States.

**N**EW YORK.—The course of the vagrant's life in this vicious city is. Almost everywhere, the report of the street park, cheap lodging house, court, jail, strait jacket, court, city, etc., so it goes from month to month from hand to mouth, from city to city. More accurately stated, the vagrant's course is spiral and downward, with occasional moments toward demoralization, disease and death. Along his road are certain "rescue stations"—charitable societies, missions, workhouse breadlines, industrial homes, personal visitations in alcoholic wards.

These are efforts to extend the help, and to switch the vagrant from the circular track to the "straight ahead line." But generally the momentum is too great. Pathetic as are the recorded facts in excess of even imagined successes writes O. F. Lewis of the Charity Organization Society in the New York Times.

When we seek, by imprisonment, to deal with the individual "vag," what do we find? Generally ineffective, inadequate, unjust methods of punishment, so futile as to be ridiculous, were they not tragic. We find correctional methods in jail that, instead of correcting, brace methods as vagrant as are the prisoners. We believe that each man who is able should contribute his share of the day's work. Nature abhors a vacuum, and the community in general abhors the constitutional idler. If the drunk were not, neither should we. We believe that crime should be punished. Vagrancy is a crime under the law. Punishment is generally and justly inflicted by the restraint of liberty, within a penal institution. Vagrants are imprisoned generally in jails or workhouses.

But how? What are the conditions of American jails? Do they check vagrancy? Do they punish justly? Do they reform? ANSWER has recently been made public which is a fair statement of conditions in a great majority of American county jails, all the more startling in view of the case made after a careful investigation by a committee of the National Congression, which does not cast aspersions on the vagrant. Photographs are almost random quotations from the report.

It is the only or chief portion of jails were to keep wild beasts in cages adapted for this purpose. . . . The conditions of the cell are such that the inmate is obliged to lie on the floor, and in his lack of attention to his person, he is obliged to wear a coat, as are described by the report of the committee, which Prof. Charles R. Henderson of the University of Chicago was chairman. What chance, above all, has the delinquent or suspect, held in the jail for his term, and who is not given a cell until he is proven guilty? What chance has he of not suffering con-

stitutional, where misdemeanants of the vagrant or drunk are confined, the industries maintained seem to be far more largely carried on as sentences than as chances to earn a living.

What, then, shall we say regarding the treatment of vagrancy in the United States? First, that at present it is thoroughly inadequate. As statistics and the accompanying diagrams make plain, the commitments to penal institutions are to county jails and workhouses in which the conditions are often exceptionally deplorable. Second, that more than half the commitments during 1904 to penal institutions in this State, States and Territories, were for offenses the county jails and workhouses, to which the large majority of offenders are committed, offer practically no reformatory treatment. More serious crimes, such as burglary, robbery, assault, forgery, etc., are reformatory influences and, in which latter institutions, some reformatory influence is felt.

This brief resume of the present conditions inevitably leads to the necessity of a material change in our system of combating vagrancy. In this connection it is of special interest that within recent years has been drafted in New York state providing for the establishment of a State Prison for the detention of vagrants, which differs so essentially from our present methods as to be staggering at first to the imagination. It is a new system of law. In New York state the man with no money, no work and no visitations of his relatives, or vagrant, that such a man in the process of trying unless the case is aggravated by other factors, is not the fault of the law, so to speak, but is due to the unwillingness of magistrates to commit the unemployed homeless, or to the indifference of the authorities. But in Belgium the state, of its own accord, home, no money) is not a crime, unless there is added to that the state of intentional idleness.

What do the reports of chiefs of police show? The writer recently received extended reports from 59 chiefs, representing as many different cities, representative of large and small municipalities. The letters showed that in most instances vagrants are committed to jails, less frequently to workhouses, and in a few instances to the penitentiary. In Lowell and other Massachusetts towns report sending some vagrants to the State Prison, where they serve a six months' sentence. In these jails and workhouses the labor required when there is any, consists generally of breaking stone in quarries, making roads, roadmaking, chairmaking, chairmaking and farm work. This work is done in the jail or in a separate farm made for being reformatory influences to bear on those serving short sentences or to teach a trade. Even breaking stone in quarries, where the workhouse conditions are far better than in most correctional

**PRISONERS COMMITTED IN THE UNITED STATES DURING 1904.**  
The table classifies the principal offenses, showing total number of sentences for each offense and percentage of each class of offenses to total number of sentences, 149,691.

100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300
400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400
500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500
600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600
700	700	700	700	700	700	700	700	700	700
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MANY of the cities use the Bettison system of identification measurements. One chief reports asking the "what questions," another the "name and address" as though a vagrant's name and address would be of value. What a contrast is this to the elaborate Bettison system for the identification of vagrants, which centers in the "cahier centrale de vagabondage"—a general identification bureau at Brussels that London draws the names of an arrested vagrant is spread and thorough. As soon as the police arrest a vagrant, they communicate by telegraph with Brussels. Within a few hours there is sent back from Brussels by telegraph a full description of the vagrant and of his condition. If anything of the prisoner is not as per the following morning the magistrate, who is a graduate of the Bettison system, has before him a complete memorandum about this particular vagrant to enable him to enter an adequate judgment in the case.

Compled with this carefulness and completeness of investigation, registration, and adequacy of judgment is the Bettison system of identification of vagrants, which differs so essentially from our present methods as to be staggering at first to the imagination. It is a new system of law. In New York state the man with no money, no work and no visitations of his relatives, or vagrant, that such a man in the process of trying unless the case is aggravated by other factors, is not the fault of the law, so to speak, but is due to the unwillingness of magistrates to commit the unemployed homeless, or to the indifference of the authorities. But in Belgium the state, of its own accord, home, no money) is not a crime, unless there is added to that the state of intentional idleness.

### NO PLEASURE IN THIS WORK.

Spectacle Peddling Evidently Employment to Be Evaded. "The meanest job of my lean days," said a man, "was spectacle peddling. I still bear the scars of it. I look, I still bear the reproachful looks which that work brought down upon me."

"It was at the seashore I had a case of spectacles for every age from 45 up. I paced the beach and the beach was my market. I had a few interested eyes. One said, 'would you like to buy a pair of spectacles?' I showed him the best of the old spectacles on the market. This pair would be the best for you. 'Lady, why do you try these 55-year ones?' 'They reddened and the man told me with an oath to move on. I was holding her hand. A sea breeze stirred. Of course they hadn't liked

**LET** when Belgium does count a vagrant, this was to the liberty of the individual. In Belgium, the vagrant is to a depot de mendicite for from two to seven years. The depot de mendicite is at Merselas, a great industrial colony with accommodations for about 5,000 prisoners. Here there occurs a classification, the worst elements being at night placed in solitary confinement and otherwise punished under strict discipline. Intensive labor is carried on, the work being graded according to the physical ability of the individual inmates.

The Belgian treatment of vagrants brings out prominently several facts. In the first place, Belgium believes in getting vagrants off the streets and highways. Some years ago the minister of justice declared that there was no vagabondage in Belgium. This statement needs interpreting. There is probably fairly little vagrancy along the highways, because every vagrant must be apprehended and made to show cause through his parents or by the absence of a record at Brussels, why he should not be sent to the depot de mendicite. The fact that Merselas contains about 5,000 inmates, and that the average period of detention is 18 months, and that the majority of the inmates are returned to Merselas for succeeding offenses under the absence of a record at Brussels, why he should not be sent to the depot de mendicite. The fact that Merselas contains about 5,000 inmates, and that the average period of detention is 18 months, and that the majority of the inmates are returned to Merselas for succeeding offenses under the absence of a record at Brussels, why he should not be sent to the depot de mendicite.

The Swiss colony of Witzwil, which Mr. Edmund Kelly has recently described in his book on "The Elimination of the Tramp," shows that in a certain proportion of cases the inmates committed to a compulsory labor colony do not reform and rejoin the ranks of the unemployed. The trained English investigator stated:

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### LET'S SHOW MUCH CUNNING.

Some of Their Work-Known to Have a Scientific Value. Some of the inventions of the insane are of scientific value. A patient at Villejuif invented a "pauflification machine" by combining a bottle, a plank and small metallic tubes, which he had fitted together, being set up his machine, he produced leaves of bread the size of a man's head. The bread was good—so good that it was decided to make a machine known. One day when it was in action the doctor suggested taking a photograph of it. The inventor watched him as he put the camera up, then he fell upon the machine, wrenched it apart and trampled it under foot. The inventor, exceedingly useful one—was lost, because no one had seen him make it, and no one is able to bring on a further attack. Most inmates, no matter how contented they may be, generally cherish a futile longing to escape. They col-

## Real Estate Exchange

OF WHITEHEAD & MITCHELL  
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The following is a partial list of Farms, City and Village Lots, and Real Estate generally which we have for sale. As our list is constantly changing, we request that parties will write us if they do not see what they want in this list.

1. Elegant house and lot 160 feet front and 200 feet deep, with 12 rooms, 2 baths, 2 porches, and a large garage. Price \$12,000. Call on Whitehead & Mitchell.

2. Beautifully furnished house, 10 rooms, 2 baths, and a large garage. Price \$8,000. Call on Whitehead & Mitchell.

3. Two-story house, 12 rooms, 2 baths, and a large garage. Price \$6,000. Call on Whitehead & Mitchell.

4. Single-story house, 8 rooms, 1 bath, and a large garage. Price \$4,000. Call on Whitehead & Mitchell.

5. Large lot, 100 feet front and 200 feet deep, with a house and a garage. Price \$15,000. Call on Whitehead & Mitchell.

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