

# The Birmingham Eccentric

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## What's Wrong With The Right People?

(Condensed From Harper's Magazine)  
By JACK BLACK

Recent efforts to suppress crime have survived four penitentiaries and look as though society were trying to out-gang the gangster, and out-shoot the shooter, without pausing to ask whether it won't result in simply pyramiding violence.

Is there any justification anywhere, in any time, for believing this method will work? I don't find it. I do not pose as an authority on crime. My testimony is that of a bystander—a guilty bystander, if you like, for I have

offenders the doctrine of "shoot, and shoot first."

Besides being wrong myself, I have known, in and out of prison almost five thousand wrong ones. They had wronged society, and society, not a day's rest, had wronged them back—with interest.

The vicious circle that leads from one penitentiary to another had begun. All their stories could be hooked together on one thread: hatred of the police, contempt of the law, and fear and mistrust of the whole legal machine.

My own case is typical. Up to the age of 15 I thought a policeman was a hero, a person to be looked up to and trusted. Then one evening I was mistakenly "picked up, taken down, and thrown in jail for no reason."

Every subsequent contact for 25 years strengthened those impressions, and it has taken me the best part of a lifetime to learn that the cop is a victim of the same machine which makes the criminal.

I know hundreds of reformed prisoners, and I don't know one who was reformed by a policeman's night-stick, a severe sentence, or prison cruelty. A brutal flogging in a Canadian prison, and, years after, three days in the murderous strait-jacket on a dungeon floor in California, certainly did nothing to turn my thoughts toward reformation.

Attempts to "throw the fear of God into them" always fail.

For the past 15 years I have been feeding and clothing myself instead of letting the tax-payers amount to nothing more than a policeman's order to "move on."

"Drop him before he drops you in action by a lot of nervous citizens who want the crime wave stopped overnight. They recommend more laws, more punishment, when the experience of all the ages has shown its futility. They insist on the hue and cry against "molliedoodie" criminals, and restrict parole, probation, and pardon—the only measures that permit a criminal to reform.

Governor Clifford Walker of

Desperate men bereft of hope are potentially violent men. Laws which, like the Baumes law, prescribe a life sentence for a fourth conviction, destroy hope and breed violence. At best they amount to nothing more than a policeman's order to "move on."

The result—a dead policeman here, a dead citizen there, a dead stall pigeon somewhere else that will give you that chance."

Wrong ones and right ones are much alike when their backs are to the wall. Both are apt to get panicky. The crime-doctors, faced with an appalling increase of crime, are crowded into hasty action by a lot of nervous citizens who want the crime wave stopped overnight. They recommend more laws, more punishment, when the experience of all the ages has shown its futility. They insist on the hue and cry against "molliedoodie" criminals, and restrict parole, probation, and pardon—the only measures that permit a criminal to reform.

The right people are all for bigger police forces, for "lengthening the arm of the law." I will go them one better. I am for bigger and better police forces. A bigger police force with the present system would only multiply the evils which the right people are trying to correct.

Recently a country boy appeared in the dock of a New York police court charged with vagrancy. He told the judge that he had a job and asked to be released. The judge was doubtful. "When did you get the job?" "Since you've been arrested?" "Yes," the boy replied. "The policeman who arrested me got it for me last night."

The judge complimented the policeman for "lengthening the arm of the law." A reporter present saw a "story" because it was news.

What would happen if it weren't news, if all policemen acted that way?

Our police force needs men with a less punitive and more scientific attitude toward crime and criminals. Such men are not to be had for the wages paid by most municipalities. The Philadelphia police scandal shows that the men who are paid salaries which are almost an invitation to graft: What legitimate inducement is there for ambitious young men to go into the police department? Handicapped by poor pay, ridden by politicians, and surrounded by an atmosphere of graft, what chance is there for good men to do intelligent, humane, and constructive police work?

What, in a nutshell, is my case against the right people? I contend that more laws and more punishment will mean nothing but more crime. What we need is more science; emphasis on prevention rather than punishment; more attention to juveniles. The right people are working on the wrong end of the problem. If they would give more attention to the high chair, they could soon put cowboys on the electric chair.

They lay too much stress on what the wrong people do, not on why they do it, on what they are, instead of how they get that way.

Danny Ryan's mother said it all when she held out her arms to her son in the cell next to mine and cried:

"Danny, boy, how come you so?"

## RESIGNS



— PHOTO BY ARNOLD GEORGE TOWNSEND

Mr. Townsend, whose resignation from the village police department took effect last Friday, is manager today of the new Taxaco Service Station at Frank and Woodward avenues. He served as patrolman in the Birmingham department for three years.

Georgia lifts a calm voice in the clamor for revenge: "The extreme crime-wave reformer," says the governor, "should try to frighten human nature into submission. Crime cannot be prevented by fear of punishment, or given a fair trial. There is no crosscut to the transformation of the delinquent."

It is safe to say that if every voter in America could be forced to witness a hanging or an electrocution, capital punishment would be abolished. Certainly no one who has lived through one of those black Fridays in prison could doubt that evil walks with the hangman. As the day draws near the prison becomes a smoldering volcano. The convicts gather sullen and short-tempered; guards are cursed and assaulted. The surgeons are filled with unbridled prisoners "boiling up" with hatred. In the stone quarries at Folsom men threw thousands of dollars' worth of valuable steel tools in the canals and smashed with sledge hammers pieces of carved granite which they had worked on for months. In a blind, helpless surge of revolt they destroyed whatever they could get their hands on. In the "dinner" hall hungry men hurled their food to the floor, refusing to eat the damned hangman's stew.

Of one thing the right people may be sure: no prisoner's thoughts are turned toward anything good on such a day.

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During this unusual event the following rates will prevail:

All Sales Cash!  
All Sales Final!  
No Exchanges!  
No C. O. D.'s!

**L. E. Davidson**  
**BIRMINGHAM DEPARTMENT STORE**  
Birmingham's Foremost Store

A Sensational Climax to Our Great  
**JULY CLEARANCE SALE**

## THREE DOLLAR DAYS!

Thursday - Friday - Saturday -- July 25th, 26th and 27th

New seasonable merchandise in Men's, Women's and Children's Apparel and Accessories and Household Things. Items as high as \$29.50 will sell at \$1.00. The following is but a partial list of merchandise included and the

## UNHEARD OF SAVINGS TO BE HAD!

### FOR THE HOME

- 29c Stevens Crash, 6 yds. \$1.00
- Up to \$2.50 Pequot Sheets \$1.00
- Up to \$12.00 Bed Spreads \$1.00
- Up to \$10.50 Blankets \$1.00
- 49c Dimities, 3 yds. \$1.00
- 29c Prints, 5 yds. \$1.00
- 29c Rumson Percales, 5 yds. \$1.00
- Up to \$18.50 Rayon Voiles, 2 yds. \$1.00
- 18c Muslin, 7 yds. \$1.00
- Up to \$12.00 Luncheon Sets \$1.00
- \$1.95 and \$2.95 Curtains, pr. \$1.00
- 39c Cretonne, 4 yds. \$1.00
- 65c Cretonne, 2 yds. \$1.00

### FOR WOMEN

- \$11.00, \$18.00, \$21.00 and \$29.50 Silk Dresses \$1.00
- Up to \$25.00 Women's Coats \$1.00
- Up to \$8.95 Wash Frocks \$1.00
- Up to \$3.95 Smocks \$1.00
- \$5.95 and \$6.95 Silk Skirts, with bodice \$1.00
- \$2.95 Blazers \$1.00

### FOR MEN & BOYS

- Up to \$5.95 Straw Hats \$1.00
- Up to \$6.00 Dress Shirts \$1.00
- Up to \$8.50 Men's Bathing Suits \$1.00
- \$1.50 Neckwear \$1.00
- Up to \$7.50 Men's Pajamas \$1.00
- 75c Phoenix Socks, 2 pr. \$1.00
- 1.00 Phoenix Socks, 3 pr. \$2.00
- Up to \$8.95 Men's Sweaters \$1.00
- Up to \$8.95 Dutchess Trousers \$1.00
- Up to \$8.95, wool and linen Dutchess Knickers \$1.00
- Up to \$3.95 Golf Socks \$1.00
- Up to \$4.95 Boys' Sweaters \$1.00
- Up to \$6.95 Boys' Wool Knickers \$1.00
- Up to \$2.95 Boys' Linen Knickers \$1.00
- Up to \$4.00 Boys' Bathing Suits \$1.00

### Kotex . . . 3 for \$1.00

- \$2.95 Beach Longies, also Beach Coats \$1.00
- Up to \$4.95 Linen Riding Habits \$1.00
- Silk Underwear \$1.00
- \$16.50 Purses \$1.00
- Up to \$7.95 Bradley Sweaters \$1.00
- Up to \$4.95 Silk Scarfs \$1.00
- Up to \$5.95 Costume Jewelry \$1.00
- Up to \$1.00 Flowers, 2 for \$1.00

### FOR GIRLS

- Up to \$12.95 Girls' Dresses \$1.00
- Up to \$3.95 Girls' Sweaters \$1.00
- Up to \$3.95 Camp Togs \$1.00
- Up to \$3.95 Girls' Hats \$1.00
- Up to \$15.00 Children's Coats \$1.00
- Up to \$37.75 Children's Bathing Suits \$1.00
- Up to \$5.95 Infants' Sweaters \$1.00
- Up to \$2.95 Organdie Bonnets \$1.00
- 35c Infants' Socks, 4 pr. \$1.00
- 55c Infants' Socks, 3 pr. \$1.00

### Bathing Suits . . . \$1.00

- Up to \$7.95 Boys' Bathing Suits \$1.00
- Up to \$4.95 Boys' Wash Suits \$1.00
- Up to \$4.00 Boys' Bathing Suits \$1.00

### OPEN EVENINGS

Daily until 9:00  
Saturday until 10:00

**FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE**

**L. E. Davidson**  
**BIRMINGHAM DEPARTMENT STORE**  
Birmingham's Foremost Store



## Even the Woolworth Building

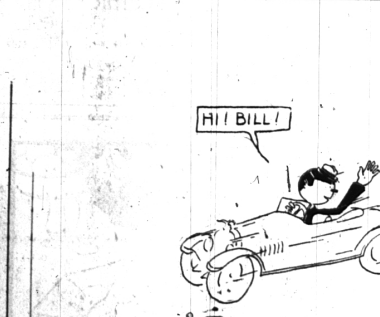
as great and as magnificent as it is, is made up of little things—of bricks, stones, girders, and almost countless comparative trifles.

It's the little savings that make the big—the steady, persistent, systematic deposits that will shape your life for the better.

Start soon building your own success structure.

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