



Criminal Types

Col. Vincent Myron Masten

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Very much in the printed page has been aimed wide of the mark alike of the prevention, the deterrence, and the reclamation of the pedral felon. It is intended that this semi-technical volume shall help to call the truly reformatory turn. Also, the intention is that the subject matter of the book shall at once amplify and reënforce conclusions reached in *The Crime Problem* and *Stop Thief!* the author's previous publications. A distinctively scientific treatise on crime and criminals is not essayed by the writer, for the very good reason that such a treatise is not, at this moment, to any man's hand. This, because human society seethes in the most fateful transitional state of all time up to this time; because human expression is more complex and varied than during any other period of human history; because material values change with constantly changing conditions; and because the criminal picks his tools and plys them agreeably with the pressure upon him of objective influences germane in those conditions of change. The crass criminal presents no psychic problem. He is much as he was, impelled much as he was, when cavemen carried clubs. Having, usually, but mediocre mental equipment, and being crowded out of the big games of life, he has recourse naturally either to individual force, or to crooked cunning with which to match the throws of his better-equipped brothers. By and large, the issue with the low-grade habitual forager is a very simple one; in the final analysis, he leaves society no choice other than to fight him with the like of his chosen weapons. There will be isolated and sporadic exceptions to the general rule given; but as to the grand majority of marauding criminals, they must be met, both in and out of prison, with force more impressive than that which they employ; palpably so, else penal codes might as well be pigeon-holed for containing meaningless proscriptions. It is as all would like it when the force can be confined to educative measures so ordered for sustained averages as to encourage the imprisoned to help themselves; but when they won't help, just won't, then steps must be taken which will make it practically impossible for them further to filch from their fellowmen. If a thief will have it no other way than to be a thief, then control of him, and not his social rehabilitation, must be the desideratum. Circumstantial felons there will be so long as social circumstance makes for them. Always a certain percentage will go down under the pressure of a closely competitive social scheme that recks but little of moral weaklings, and less of physical slackers; but such bear serious relation to criminal statistics in the sense only that they are dragged down to habitual crime appreciably by criminal recidivists; by repeating felons who forage on society by choice, who make no bones about it, who shout stout defense of it, and who glory in it.

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