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John Landesco

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REFORMERS? WHY NOT?

JOHN LANDESCO¹

Penal Institutions Did Not Reform

Four prison terms and four parole periods under supervision did not reform Eddie, the Immune. Organized society, the society of decency and law and order, through its institutions and functionaries, never confronted him with a clear-cut situation of right and wrong. Its front was bedlam, a confusion of avowals, ideals and purposes with disjunctive rather than corresponding actions through its institutions and functionaries. Such confusion would not produce the internal conflict or the crisis which would lead to reformation.

The Crisis

Once in his life this question of reform confronted him in a very genuine way: when Miss ——, the woman for whom he cared, wanted him to reform, not on the basis of good and evil, not for the sake of righteousness, but because she loved him and had suffered for him, because she wanted him to be secure. She wanted him to forsake his racket and his underworld, go away and start a new life in a new locality in a new business.

Then he wavered, but could not forsake his past. Why?

“When I returned (from prison) she insisted on separating me from my friends, and on settling down. She wanted to help me start in any business. I had some money. I cannot say that I did not have plenty of chances, but I liked the excitement of the racket, the politics and the fixing,—the successes and the failures.”

Skill and Mastery

“Not once out of a thousand times does the victim catch on to himself while I am still there. Yes, there is some skill and mastery in this racket, but practice makes the average man perfect. You see, there are enough of them working this racket. Some men fail—they start out to be ‘the wire’ but turn out to be ‘stalls,’ because they cannot support a mob.” He was the wire since the second day of his career.

¹ Division of Pardons and Parole, Springfield, Ill.

A Good Mob Boss

As a leader and employer of men, he takes pride in keeping his "mob" partners for long years and tells why.

"You know, I kept my men together longer than anybody. I never lost a man. Of my mobs I was the only man ever convicted. I've got the record in the country for that. I never had any trouble disciplining the men,—was always fortunate in it. A bad egg lasted one day. There were plenty of other applicants that would say, 'Let me know as soon as you have a place,'—always about eight or ten of them."

Thus, he was a master of the craft, the "modus operandi," he was a good commander, he took the dangers and kept his men safe, when in trouble with the law he never turned state's evidence or "dropped" any information, never "squealed" or "leaked" about his partners. He was known as a good master and men wanted to work with him.

Intimacy

There was solidarity and charity in the underworld and between them and their allies of the police force. Retaining the confidence of his fellows he can start over again as crook after any "fall."

The Humor

There was humor in his contacts with his fellows which to others is horse-play.

"I could tell many little anecdotes of the day's business which are laughable. For instance:—

"Pig McNally and I were on a Chicago Avenue Street car one day when a Jew came along and boarded the street car. We touched him for his purse which was an old style 'tweezer' (open at the top with a clasp). We were passing the Montgomery Ward bridge. It was Sunday, and there were many on the car, when the Jew discovered his loss and began to yell, 'Oi! Oi! what will I do? What will I do?' McNally, in his tough way, ordered him to jump in the river,—and the Jew jumped!—which made more excitement. And I take and I touches more. One night, twenty years later, I was in Riley's saloon and an inspector of police came in and sat down to drink with us, and told this story to the crowd."

"And here is another story.

“The first land lottery was taking place at Bonesteel, South Dakota. We touched a negro for \$1100. When he complained to the police it turned out that he was himself an absconder.”

Why Convictions Did Not Reform Him

From his four convictions he learned that it is unfortunate to victimize the official of a large and powerful corporation. For example, you can usually get by with your racket through political influence and money for decades unless you are the storm center of an expose in the conflict of faction against faction when the enemy faction commands the machinery of prosecution; or, if you are a factor in elections when the enemy faction is in command of prosecution.

Would Force Him to Turn Traitor

The institutions of criminal justice through its functionaries tried to force him by dire threat and imprisonment to violate the only code of honor of his society, to betray his allies on the police force and his faction. He was punished for staying staunch.

Not Punished for Crime

He operated widely over the United States, but in Chicago he received punishment. What is his attitude? “I have had my worst luck and my best luck in Chicago. My bad luck came all through politics. If I had never stuck my nose into politics I could have squared 'em (the cases).”

He feels he was punished not for his crime but for politics.

Not Bitter Against Prisons

He received special consideration and many privileges during his prison terms and paroles wherever and whenever the long arm of his faction could reach out to him.

And he bears society no spleen for his incarceration, in fact, quite the reverse is true.

“The prison terms have not been hard on me. A drinking man's life is prolonged by a jolt in prison. I can thank my jolts for a long life and good health. I know about seven fellows in the racket who are about seventy years of age. They are getting around like men of 35.”

A Clever Company

After his last Joliet sentence, when he was turning 60 years, he said with some sentiment: "The interest in my old underworld connections still holds me. Last night, I was to a party to a man 'coming home.' Blumenthal and Evan were there. They robbed a bank disguised as bank examiners. Another fellow was there who, disguised as a priest, was going into Joliet Penitentiary with a car filled with dynamite, firearms, and ammunition in order to spring Midget Fernekes (the scientific safe-blower). Of course, that was tipped off" (explaining away the failure).

Temperament

The soubriquet "The Immune" was given Eddie Jackson by the press when he became a storm-center of factional expose. His mob-partners and even other "wires" never achieved this stellar role of news interest, though they were even more immune. He loved the mixing, treating, and conviviality of the politics of his day and became a factionist. It was because he was identified as a staunch factionist that he suffered the "bitter" and enjoyed the "sweet" of the faction. His cases became crucial and were treated as felonies; otherwise picking pockets is only a misdemeanor here and elsewhere as observed in the records of pickpockets. Others were satisfied to look upon the racket as a business, to go home after the day's operations, to leave the mixing and fixing to others or to buy their privileges by "laying it on the line," to save their money and retire to "legit" life. He needed the excitement of it all as he needed and loved to gamble. He could not leave it.

He was the "wire" because he was slight of build, fast and alert. Others were "stalls" all of their lives.

Such differences of personality in the variety of ways in which each works out of the same situations can be ascribed to differences of temperament.

Has Not Repented

Nor did he repent his passion, "Gambling was and is the supreme passion of my life. If I had it today, I would gamble. After fifty years I stand loser at the gambling table,—yes, but I like to gamble."

He still has his eye to his racket. With the eagerness of a man who has suffered prolonged idleness, he said only recently, "Today

the territory from Madison to Adams and from the Northwestern Depot to Clark Street would be worth \$1000 a week to a pick-pocket mob."

Status

He could not leave the racket in the underworld because he enjoyed his status. He never violated the code of the underworld, he suffered long years of imprisonment rather than endanger that status. In his underworld society he suffered no stigma as convict or ex-convict. He was esteemed for his criminal character. In it he readjusted himself quickly after each "jolt."

Eddie Jackson's Criminal Operations from 1900

The professional criminal of established status comes out of prison into an organized occupational and social world in the criminal underworld. He is welcomed home and treated with charity and sympathy by it while he is rehabilitating himself. He easily enlists new "mob" personnel, re-enters his old fields of operation or finds new fields for the same racket.

Going "Legit" Is Hard, Dull, and Drab

Jackson's parole period was bona fide. He worked long hours at legitimate work. It was not only hard work, but dull and drab as compared to the colorful, exciting life of the circus, the race-track, the bull-fights, the fairs, and the winter resorts we are about to present.

During this parole period, the only twelve months of legitimate labor in the whole life-history, the hard weeks were offset by the gay Saturday nights at Bob Duncan's which Eddie calls, "a resort for people of my class." There were music and dancing and drinking, roulette, faro, poker, and women.

Here he was treated with charity and sympathy.

"No one looked down on my \$22.50 per week. A man 'coming home' is not a piker. On a Saturday evening it would be nothing to get \$30 or \$40 handed to me. No one would allow you to pay for drinks."

A New Mob and the Circus

"I made up with two of the boys and on the very day that I got my final discharge we made up a new mob,—myself, a New York boy with quite a record and three or four convictions and an

English boy, who had a record in London in the '90's. After the celebration on the day of my discharge when I got drunk, we began to operate the following day."

This mob travelled with a circus. Jackson tells of the grafting circus, corrupting private police and the "fix," when caught by the uncorrupted railroad police, through the "sure-thing" gamblers who have local "connections."

"We first followed Ringling Brothers' circus for three months up to their southern tour. The south was poor pickings. We did Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, and left the circus in Montana. They were then going into Texas. Business is poor there because people haven't got it.

"We fixed the watchman, a private copper, whose name was Flanagan. The circus was held responsible for the protection of the town until after the afternoon performance. We did not operate until after 4 p. m. Flanagan was getting \$10 per day from us. The town sheriffs didn't know nothing. We followed this circus off and on for five seasons,—and were picked up twice in five years,—the first time by a Northwestern Railroad copper. His name was Varley.

"Most of our graft was riding the excursion trains in with the crowd and getting them again at night while they were leaving the circus. On the train we had no fix in advance.

"This arrest was in Iron Mountain, Michigan, and we got the fix in by one of the gamblers in town. We were picked up by the same copper twice and turned loose in both instances. You could arrange the fix through some of the 'sure thing' gamblers that are connected with the circus. When arraigned, there is no evidence, —no prosecuting witnesses. This Varley knew my face from the show-up in the old Central Station.

"Ringling's was not a grafting circus. The grafting circus has a mob of sure thing men with them,—the ticket sellers are all short-change men. One of the managers sits right in the ticket wagon all the time from opening to closing to prevent the ticket-taker from holding out on him. There is no salary for the ticket-takers,—they depend on graft. They work on a percentage of the whole take. All the money handlers are short-change men, including the popcorn, the lemonade, the side shows and all. All the games are crooked,—there is no chance of winning. The circus fixes it in advance with the sheriff and the prosecutor. A grafting circus

never comes back to the same town a second year. They skip it for a year or two.

"We quit this graft because the work was too hard and we had to sleep in the daytime. We spent our money in saloons and we could buy anything in the privilege car of the Ringling Brothers' circus. Flanagan fixed that. His \$10 was big money to him because his pay was only \$100 a month and expenses. If we could make no connections to catch up with the circus the next morning we rode right in the privilege car."

The Race Tracks—In Chicago and Elsewhere

"Aside from the downtown shopping district we always worked the race tracks in racing season." (Here and in a later reference to Pinkerton's he leaves some doubt as to a "connection" with them.)

"At the tracks there are Pinkerton's,—yes, many in uniform,—ushers and attendants. The plain clothes are too few. Generally they are at the entrance. We would go through the carriage entrance and beat them that way. Here in Chicago, at Washington Park, we were put off the track every day. No complaints were made to the city coppers because they have no use for Pinkerton men. There was no fixing with Pinkertons. Nine out of ten men on the track, Pinkertons, are ex-pickpockets who know most of the old timers. They are men ready to retire. They know just how a mob works and maneuvers. Around Chicago we paid no attention to Pinkerton. We knew we could out-manuever him and there were no grudges against Jackson. (He implies he was friendly with Pinkerton men.) We used to call Pinkerton to find out if he had the track or the fair—then keep away. We used to try to sneak on them and do a little gambling, but we would be ordered off the track."

The Bull Fights

"In the West we followed the bull fights at El Paso. We worked these bull fights fifteen different times (seasons),—mostly the trains. All trains were crowded,—the people trying to get away with stopover tickets,—usually had seven or eight cars. How nice that used to be!"

The Winter Resorts

"We worked the coast in the winters,—always rode the cushions. I only rode one freight in all my life. We stopped in Denver usu-

ally—but on these long western trips we never worked the trains going west, because we couldn't work them and be riding on them. We made the Utah State Fair. We were held in Salt Lake City once and in San Francisco we were picked up twice in twenty winters.

"Yes, we had a fix to a certain extent, a Senator —, a state senator. In San Francisco we worked the ferries and the railroads, and paid no attention to the coppers. As long as they don't know you, you have got them beat. The pickings were fine. We played the tourists, not the townspeople, and we could tell the tourists by their travelling bags. On New Year's day we would leave San Francisco and go to Pasadena for the Floral Day. We always lived at the same address in Frisco, the same one for nearly 12 years. The landlady knew we would always be there before Christmas.

"It was pleasure and business both. We spent the evenings mostly gambling out at Sutro Beach—high grade gambling. There was ninety days of racing at Oakland and we worked the races. The Pinkertons only put us off the track occasionally.

"We had one 'fall' at Los Angeles,—and were turned loose. No evidence."

Widely Travelled—Chicago In Between

"We worked Chicago between trips. We would make other trips for a month at a time. There is no town over 20,000 in the U. S. I haven't visited, though I have not been east for 25 years, except one time as far east as Buffalo. In these towns we would make two or three trains and saw to it we got out on one of these trains. We worked the depots and we worked at the gate going in, but made our observations at the ticket window where they open their purses and show their money. We made carnivals, state fairs, and county fairs. Wisconsin used to be a good state.

"If you don't have trouble it don't take long to get on your feet. Within two months after my discharge I had money. I know I had \$1,000 because we had put up \$1,000 apiece with Bob Duncan—'fall money.' We sent him a certain amount every day. No man can touch this money unless he is in trouble.

"In our business, tickets and railroad passes, diamonds, bonds during the war and after the war (Liberty bonds and others not negotiable) are among the principal loot of value. In the early days ticket scalpers did business quite openly, selling to travelling men. They bought from us. Saloonkeepers were the main fences for

diamonds. Frequently a saloonkeeper would order stones, studs, or pins in advance, describing the size of the diamond.

"There is one thing about professional pickpockets and that is that they never destroy valuables that are of no use to them. If we find a name in the purse we mail back checks, notes, or other articles."

Personnel

The personnel of the mob operates together in the same mob for long periods of time. There is a certain mortality in the occupation or racket; some reform, some die, some degenerate. When he returned from Pontiac, Carlson, who had been instrumental in making a pickpocket of Jackson in 1886, was living with Rose, the brothel keeper, and seems to have retired from picking pockets. "Roy Tracey had a political job for the West Parks, and quit the racket for good. He had always been a home man, and today he has property out west (in Chicago). He reformed. Even in the days when he was in the graft he would stay out until about 11 or 12 o'clock at night and go home. One night a week he would get drunk."

Immediately after his discharge from parole Jackson formed a new mob with Billy O'Keefe and Ed Jones. "O'Keefe and I were together for 13 years. When he died I sent him back to New York. Jonsey was with us only three years and Al Dennis took his place. Jonsey quit; had enough money, retired and bought a piece of property in a Canadian town, which was used as a pest-house. The rental paid for it in three years. He was a periodic drinker. On a drunk he would drink for a month straight, and then never touch it for three or four months. He is probably dead now."

In the three years of freedom between the first and second Joliet sentences the principal event in his criminal occupations was the reorganization of the mob, and here Jackson points with pride to his record as mob leader.

Detroit—The Seven Fat Years

"The mob was Chris Carter, originally from Indianapolis, Frank Bremmer, a Detroit boy now doing three years for selling narcotics, although he is not a dope nor does he smoke or chew or drink, and myself.

"Marcus Julian, for years our fixer in Detroit, continued to be

our ally. Occasionally I was picked up and he fixed. I was also picked up in Cleveland and dismissed.

"The racket was good at this time, best in the world. I came back to Chicago in February, 1919, and stayed around here drunk for three weeks, celebrating my final discharge.

"I lived in Detroit from 1918 to 1924. Yes,—the war was going on and all the money seemed to be east of here. We could leave Detroit Friday nights and be in different parts of Ohio and Pennsylvania to operate during the week-end. The pickings were good in Detroit. On Saturdays we went to Cleveland. The foreigners in ammunition plants and ship yards had the money and carried it all with them. Around the ship yards there were mostly Slavs. Also in Cleveland and around the government nitro plants at Youngstown and Altoona,—we also worked Pittsburgh,—the workers in the ammunition plants were nearly all foreigners. I was picked up only once in Cleveland, once in Youngstown, and twice in Pittsburgh (two months apart).

"I have had my worst and my best luck in Chicago. My bad luck came all through politics. If I had never stuck my nose into politics I could have squared 'em (the prosecutions). I came back to Chicago in 1924 with \$42,000 made picking pockets. What I made in the saloon business I spent. This was the richest period of my life. At this moment I was 53 years of age and rich.

"During these good times my savings consisted of diamonds and Liberty bonds. Whenever we touched some diamonds, the mob would bid for them and I often purchased the swag. When Liberty bonds first came out they were \$32 for a fifty, and \$64 for a hundred. The hundreds are now worth \$103. A little later I often paid as high as \$65 and \$70 for a 100. I sold them for \$95 and \$97, when they went up that high.

"If I found that the bonds were registered I often sent them back by mail. But very few of the Liberty bonds we touched were registered. Business men would register them but the ordinary laborer who was under compulsion to buy bonds did not register them."

The Fix an Institution—The Fixer a Fixture

"In these travels around war time, I found the 'fix' in every town to be the same old-timers. And they are all still there today. In Cleveland we had Boyd, in Detroit we had Julian, in Youngstowns we had Strong, in Altoona we had Titus, an ex-councilman,

and in Pittsburgh we had Dolly Deagan of Allegheny, now a part of 'greater Pittsburgh.' Dolly is now retired, rich, in Pittsburgh, and is worth a million or more. In Milwaukee we had the Moran boys who were cousins of the chief of detectives. They owned a saloon a block and a half from the St. Paul depot.

"In Chicago the same lawyer and his bondsman fixer have operated since the World's Fair of 1893. There has been some change or police reorganization in the treatment of pickpockets which did not destroy the business.

"Gorman and Webber get the bulk of the pickpocket business right from the police."

Police—The Pickpocket Detail

"The pickpocket detail first consisted of two men. Now the two men in charge have under them about eighteen men. They are supposed to know all the pickpockets and pick them up every time they see them,—evidence or none. They get a certain number of points every time they made an arrest. There are advantages and disadvantages for the pickpockets in this special detail. It is easier to get along as a pickpocket when there is a special detail assigned. They have them in other cities, too. For instance, in Detroit the pickpocket detail is an auto detail. In Chicago they are on foot."

The racket, viewed as an occupation or business, operates wherever business is profitable. The adventurous and enterprising pickpockets will go wherever great concourses of people are gathered, arrange concessions or take their chances with the provisional, temporary structures for law and order set up for a short and glamorous event. Those who follow the racket as a permanent occupation know how to accommodate themselves regardless of the shifting locale and the personnel to be dealt with or reckoned with.

Some men prefer the security of accustomed and familiar places; others thrive on the excitement of travel and develop a need for this roving, adventurous life. It holds them. Some events, like horse races, excite and develop passions which reach their climaxes at the great racing events. Men may become crooks and dupes at the same time. Following the racket may become a lesser motive than following the interests, excitement, and passions of the event.

Organized Crime

The study "Organized Crime in Chicago," published as part III of the Illinois Crime Survey, is of necessity largely devoted to the

central rackets of Organized Crime, Gambling, Vice, and Booze. It may appear that these can be organized in opposition to the law because each of these vices has a large following and clientele among citizens in legitimate life; and that these rackets can be carried on systematically because of the sentiment or even the revolt among large groups of the public against laws regulating morality. When gang wars break out, they engage the nationalistic and communal sentiment of their respective communities. When gangsters enter the field of organized labor, introducing characteristic methods of violence, they involve the sentiment of the class-struggle. In contrast with these rackets picking pockets is a nefarious business abhorred by all classes of citizens. But this case of Eddie Jackson, the Immune, presents a history of the continuous and systematic operation of the pickpocket racket for the last half century. In it is to be observed identically the same basic relation to politics and protection that has been presented in the other forms of organized crime. This is the value of a marginal case of pick-pocketing as a form of organized crime.

APPENDIX

BUREAU OF IDENTIFICATION RECORD OF EDDIE JACKSON

- Oscar Jacobson — 1894—November Term—no bill larceny.
 Eddie Jackson — 10-16-96—10 d Co. Jail P. P.
 Eddie Jackson — 1-12-97—Pontiac Reform. No. 2502—robbery.
 Eddie Jackson — 9- 5-99—Paroled.
 Eddie Jackson — 9- 6-01—Arrested at Waupun, Wisc., P. P.
 Oscar Jacobson — 2-24-02—P. P. Dis.
 Edward Howard — 7-31-02—Arrested New York City—P. P. dis.
 Edward Ford — 1-15-04—Arrested at Indianapolis, Ind.—fined \$10
 and costs.
 Eddie Jackson — 12-18-06—Not guilty larceny P. P.
 Eddie Jackson — 12-12-08—Arrested at Milwaukee, Wis.—60 d. H of
 C—vagrancy.
 Eddie Jackson — 3-20-09—Joliet No. 1509—larceny P. P.
 Eddie Jackson — 11-30-10—Paroled.
 Eddie Jackson — 7- 5-11—Discharged.
 Oscar Jacobson — 10-11-11—Fined \$100 and costs, disorderly conduct.
 Ed Jackson — 2- 6-12—Disorderly conduct—discharged.
 Ed Jackson — 5- 2-12—No bill larceny P. P.
 Ed Jackson — 6-15-12—3 mos. C. Jail, contempt of court—case
 appealed.
 Eddie Jackson — 1- 9-13—Joliet \$3000—larceny P. P.—in case of
 McArty complainant.
 Ed Jackson — 3-27-13—Sentence affirmed—taken to Co. Jail.

- Ed Jackson — 6- 9-13 — Stricken off larceny P. P.
 Ed Jackson — 6- 9-13 — Joliet—larceny P. P.
 Ed Jackson — 6- 9-13 — Stricken off—larceny.
 Eddie Jackson — 6- 9-13 — Joliet \$3000—larceny accumulative.
 Eddie Jackson — 6- 9-13 — Other charges stricken off.
 Ed Jackson — 9-14-18 — Arrested at Cleveland, Ohio—suspect P. P.
 Eddie Jackson — 9-25-18 — Paroled.
 Eddie Jackson — 10- 6-18 — Wanted violation of parole.
 Edward Howard — 2-19-19 — Arrested at Detroit, Mich.—disorderly
 conduct.
 Eddie Jackson — 4-19-19 — Special discharge.
 Eddie Jackson — 7-15-20 — Stricken off—larceny.
 Eddie Jackson — 7-28-20 — \$200 and costs, violation section 2012—
 Judge Holmes.
 Eddie Jackson — 8-26-20 — Fined \$90 and costs—larceny—Judge
 Richardson.
 Eddie Jackson — 9-23-20 — Bonds forfeited larceny.
 Eddie Jackson — 10- 4-20 — Bonds forfeited.
 Eddie Jackson — 1-21-21 — Larceny P. prisoner picked the pocket of
 H. C. Faucett, 2823 W. Van Buren St. at
 Madison & Racine Ave., about 8 P. M.
 and obtained his pocket book and \$18.00
 —caught in the act and money returned.
 Eddie Jackson — 1-24-21 — 1 yr. H of C and fined \$10 and costs—
 Judge Caverly.
 Eddie Jackson — 5- 3-23 — C. J. \$25 larceny—Judge Newcomer.
 Eddie Jackson — 12-31-23 — Bonds forfeited—larceny—Judge Steffen.
 Edward Jackson — 1-15-24 — Larceny P. P. Held on \$1500 C. C., Judge
 Eberhardt.
 Eddie Jackson — 1-21-24 — Joliet Pen. No. 8997—Larceny verdict,
 Judge Steffen.
 Eddie Jackson — 4-19-24 — Out on writ of supersedeas.
 Eddie Jackson — 6-24-24 — Reversed and remanded by Supreme
 Court—larceny.
 Edward Jackson — 7- 5-24 — Disorderly conduct P. P. dis., Judge
 O'Toole.
 Edward Jackson — 7-17-24 — Bonds forfeited—larceny—Judge Wells.
 Eddie Jackson — 8- 2-24 — Dismissed by Supreme Court—reversal.
 Edward Jackson — 10- 4-24 — G. J. \$2500—larceny—Judge Sullivan.
 Edward Jackson — 12-12-24 — Joliet Pen. No.—larceny verdict,
 Judge McGoorty.
 Edward Jackson — 1-16-25 — Joliet Pen. No. 9564—larceny verdict,
 Judge Wells.