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Crime, Violence, and Suicide

Lucy E. Parsons

January 7, 1906

Under the heading of “Crime and Violence in 1905,” a capitalist paper of this city gives some very interesting statistics:

The record of homicides and of deaths occurring from various forms of violence during 1905 is not an encouraging one. . . . The approximate number of such deaths during the year now closing was 9,212, an increase of 730 over 1904. The most discouraging feature of the report is the continued increase of murders committed by burglars, thieves, and hold-up men. The number in 1905 was 582, as compared with 464 in 1904.

It will be seen that crimes committed in the attempt to get possession of other people’s property (illegally) are on the increase.

Is this fact, sad as it is, without a cause?

Conditions make the man, not the man the conditions. Some day, when society has grown wise enough and just enough to make conditions pleasurable for her children, they will not be possessed of those low, brutal propensities which cause them

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to imbrue their hands in their brother's blood, but those who say these things are sneered at as "cranks and dreamers." So let it be; let the dreamer dream on—his dream will be realized some day, and then that generation will look back at us of today, their ancestors, as a lot of barbarians. It was ever thus: The dream of one century, if it contained truth and justice, became the actuality of the next century.

But the year 1905, with all its boasted prosperity (for the few), has a still sadder picture to present than the above. This is her suicide list:

Suicide also continues to increase, the number of cases in 1905 being 9,982, as compared with 9,240 in 1904. The percentage of women who have committed suicide has increased. Last year there were nearly three times as many men as women, but this year there have been a little less than twice as many. It is appalling that suicide increases so rapidly. Despondency is the one great cause—despondency from sickness, life-failure, non-employment, bad luck, fatigue of living, and sometimes the conviction that life is not worth living.

Life, the "best boon to mortals given." To be, to feel the inspiring, vibrating currents of beautiful, bountiful Mother Nature playing all around us, through us; to feel oneself a part of a grand, magnificent whole, an entirety: Who could wish for more? Yet there are thousands (one every eighteen hours, our coroner informs us) out into the Great Unknown because they cannot longer endure the conditions of what ought to be a pleasant abiding place for man, but in his greed he has made it a veritable hell!