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## Putting a Crimp in Crime

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## *Putting a Crimp in Crime*

**N**EW York's new method of dealing with habitual criminals, under what is known as the Baumes Law, has proved so effective that it has aroused the interest of lawyers and law-makers throughout the nation.

*The Record* is indebted to Mr. W. Felder Cook for the following newspaper clipping which gives a brief account of the origin, provisions and operation of this much-discussed New York statute:

*Newburgh. N. Y., March 23.*—A small-town lawyer—first name Caleb—living 60 miles up the Hudson river here in what the supercilious metropolis refers to as the "tank town" of Newburgh, has first outwitted, then subdued and finally terrorized the slickest criminals in the wild and wicked city of New York.

This quiet gentleman, who wears a closely cropped mustache, has a streak of gray at each temple and gives one the general impression of the meek schoolmaster and bookkeeper that he once was, is Caleb H. Baumes.

He is the author of the famed Baumes law that has effectually snapped the backbone of crime in Gotham.

Other states now are planning similar laws.

### *Crooks Begin to Move Out*

Baumes drafted his famous laws in January, 1925, when the New York crime wave was at its peak. He spent a year investigating the causes of crime and then laid down his code before the legislature. It was adopted almost in its entirety and soon the habitual crooks were moving out of New York.

Why? For the simple reason that under the Baumes law if they are pinched again it means life imprisonment.

"The gist of the laws," the author is explaining, "is simply this: Professional criminals are picked up by the nape of the neck and planted in Sing Sing for life with no probation, no years off for good behavior.

"Under the new code, one who commits a felony while armed has five to 10 years added to the regular sentence; second offender, 10 to 15 years; third offender, 15 to 25 years; and fourth offender gets life.

"Sentences are mandatory. A judge is compelled to impose a life sentence for a fourth offense.

### *Cease Sobbing Over Crooks*

The appellate division of New York supreme court (in affirming life imprisonment for two men who on their sixth offense broke into a house and stole a radio) stated, "We think there has been too much leniency in dealing with the criminal. We believe sentences of this sort will be a deterrent."

One asks this keen-minded man who has such a kindly look in his eyes if he ever regretted the laws he had framed; ever thought of the daily increasing number now in Sing Sing for the rest of their lives on his account; ever feared the consequences of the underworld into whose haunts he brought such havoc.

"I think only of the results," he answered. "Citizens are safer. Cigar store robberies dropped 96 per cent; bank messenger stickups, 50 per cent; fur and silk robberies, 70 per cent; jewelry robberies, 70 per cent, and so on.

"Sob sisters weep over the constitutional rights of the criminal. It's time someone gave thought to the constitutional rights of law-abiding citizens.

"I fear for the smaller towns now that we are driving dangerous men

and women out of New York. I think in time life sentences for hardened offenders will be common in all states of the Union."

And in this connection, the following editorial from the Saturday Evening Post for March twenty-sixth will also be of interest:

*More Testimonials*

Every month brings a fresh crop of unsolicited testimonials in praise of the effectiveness of the Baumes laws. These statutes and amendments were adopted by the legislature of the state of New York less than a year ago; but even in the short time they have been in effect they have brought about a marked decrease in the number of crimes of violence and have exercised a material influence in causing criminals of the predatory type to seek happier hunting grounds in other commonwealths.

Police Commissioner McLaughlin, of New York City, reports that during the year 1926 the cases of assault and robbery decreased 20.9 per cent; burglaries about 18 per cent; grand larceny cases 15 per cent, and homicides more than 6 per cent, as compared with 1925. Even more striking are the figures for January, 1927. During that month there was a reduction in the number of assault and robbery cases amounting to 53 per cent, as compared with the first month of 1926.

After praising the deterrent effect of the Baumes laws, Commissioner McLaughlin goes on to tell of the practical results achieved by the adoption of stricter measures governing admission to bail: "Between April 16, 1926—when the new bail law took effect—and December 31, 1926, six individuals committed crime while out on bail. For the same period—approximately eight months—prior to the time the law took effect, sixty-four individuals charged with crime were arrested while out on bail."

Since time out of mind, easy bail and the evils of bail shopping have been a reproach upon the administration of criminal law in the Empire State. Apparently no difficulty was experienced in coping with these conditions when they were resolutely attacked. Other states which still tolerate similar abuses can end them if they have the will and energy to do so. The particular statute which may be studied for guidance is known as Chapter 419 of the Laws of New York, 1926.

No less significant than Commissioner McLaughlin's report is the declaration of Mr. E. M. Allen, vice president of a bonding company which does business all over the country. According to this official, losses of surety companies from theft and burglary since the Baumes laws became operative have decreased 25 per cent. So firmly does this corporation believe in the salutary effects of these statutes that it has sent out a circular letter the purpose of which is to urge its ten thousand agents to take active steps to stimulate local interest in a general tightening up of the criminal code by the introduction of corrective legislation in the backward states.

Self-interest should contribute to the success of this project, for communities a thousand miles from New York are bound to feel the effects of the presence of daring criminal groups which have been driven out of the metropolis and have journeyed west and south. California and two or three commonwealths in the Mississippi Valley have already given the matter serious study and it is not unlikely that drastic measures may be adopted before their respective legislatures adjourn. It is only a question of time when a growing need for self-protection will translate idle talk and procrastination into decisive action.