

MY APPRENTICESHIP TO CRIME

To the Memory of my
Autobiography

Grace Stella Fredern.

-by-

ARTHUR HARDING

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In 1890, a young Irish girl named Beatrice Desmond met and married a young gangster named Dai Churchill in Chicago. She was very young, some fifteen years, also fresh from Ireland, knowing little of the young gangster who was only twenty-one years.

Beatrice Churchill was a very beautiful girl with golden hair. Her life with her gangster husband was very short and not too happy, and when she heard the news that her young husband had been killed in Arizona while attempting to rob a train, she did not die of grief for his death. After some years of happy widowhood, she met another American gangster, in the person of a man named Eddie Guerin, who lived in Chicago in the year 1900.

Beatrice Churchill became the mistress of Eddie Guerin and helped him in his criminal activities.

During the early years of the century they were living in Paris, where they took part in a burglary at the office of the informed the police of Guerin's presence in London. Eddie Guerin

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The gang separated and Eddie Guerin and Chicago May (as she was then called) were arrested whilst attempting to escape from France, but the police released the woman and let her leave France with the loot, which she had concealed on her person. Chicago May arrived in England and hid the loot in a safe deposit vault.

She returned to France with some money for the defence of Eddie Guerin; she was arrested by the French police for complicity in the robbery, convicted and sentenced to five years. Eddie Guerin was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment on the penal settlement called Devil's Isle. On the completion of her sentence, she was deported from France, reaching London some time towards the end of 1906.

At this time, Eddie Guerin had also arrived in London after escaping from Devil's Isle. This escape from the dreaded French penal settlement was one of the most dramatic prison escapes ever recorded. Guerin and two Spanish convicts made their escape in a small boat through shark infested waters. Many miles from land, when picked up by a ship in the Atlantic, only Guerin was the sole survivor.

Chicago May, fearing Guerin's vengeance over the loot, informed the police of Guerin's presence in London. Eddie Guerin

was arrested and detained in Brixton prison, while extradition proceedings were begun by the French Government.

This was the state of affairs when a new actor appeared on the scene in time to take part in the drama that was drawing to its inevitable climax on the streets of London. Charlie Smith arrived in London from South Africa, 1907, where he had been serving a sentence of four years at Cape Town, where he was known as "Cubine Jackson". He was some six feet tall, slim, fair complexion and athletic. He was a native of one of the Southern States of the U.S.A. Cubine Jackson had been deported from South Africa and had made his way to England. He soon became known in the West End clubs which led to his being arrested as a suspected person, taken to Vine Street police station, where he gave his name as Charlie Smith from Nowhere.

So during the rest of his stay in England, he was known as Charlie Smith. Officially we will call him Charles Smith.

He appeared at Bow Street police court, charged as a suspected person, was remanded for a week for inquiries in custody.

While in Brixton prison he met Eddie Guerin who he knew by reputation. They became friendly and exchanged confidences.

Charlie Smith and his lady friend Chicago May were During the week's remand, Guerin told Smith of Chicago May's treachery, of the loot which she had cached away in some

hiding place. Smith was confident he would have the case against him dismissed, so he promised Guerin to visit him in Brixton and find out more about the case. When Smith again appeared at Bow Street, the case of the suspected person was dismissed. Smith immediately kept his promise to visit Guerin in Brixton prison and find out more of the story about Chicago May. Soon after visiting Eddie Guerin in Brixton prison, Charlie Smith located Chicago May and they became friends; the lady no doubt with her eye on the possibility of Eddie Guerin regaining his liberty she would have someone to protect her. Charlie Smith was attracted by the charms of the lady and also by the loot she had possession of. The day arrived when Eddie Guerin proved he was of British nationality, having been born of an Irish father. The court gave him his freedom. This was the signal for Smith and his girl friend to take alarm, which led Smith arming himself with a gun and declaring war on Guerin. Soon afterwards Smith and Chicago May met Guerin in Russell Square. Charlie Smith fired six shots at Guerin, one shot striking him in the foot. This was 1907, not 1967. Charlie Smith and his lady friend Chicago May were promptly arrested by two uniform P.C.s. Both were charged with attempted murder, sent for trial to

the Central Criminal Court. Some weeks later, they both appeared before Mr. Justice Darling in No. 1 Court, indicted for attempted murder of Eddie Guerin, escaped convict from Devil's Isle. Both defendants were found Guilty. The police were in possession of their criminal records. Mr. Justice Darling sentenced Charlies Smith, alias "Cubine Jackson", also known as "Yankee Smith" to penal servitude for life. May Churchill, alias "Chicago May", was sentenced to fifteen years penal servitude. Both defendants were to be deported at the expiry of their sentences.

May Churchill served her sentence at Holloway prison and on her release went back to Chicago, where she wrote her life story for a newspaper. Charlie Smith was released in 1921, having served some thirteen years, mainly through the good offices of Lady Nancy Astor, M.P. He went back to the U.S.A. Eddie Guerin remained in England, that is London, where he mixed with all kinds of criminals. I remember he got a year's sentence under the Prevention of Crimes Act. He wrote the story of his escape from Devil's Island. He was never able to give a coherent account of the disappearance of the two Spaniards from the boat with which they escaped.

The facts of this story of crime and hate were related to me by Charlie Smith at Parkhurst, where I worked with him as my mate. All the details are correct. Throughout my

friendship with Smith I had to be extra careful not to offend him. He hated England with a deep hatred because of the severity of the sentence.

Eventually I quarrelled with him and assaulted him in front of a crowd of warders and convicts. Compared with the modern thug, Charlie Smith was a gentleman. The last news I had of him, he was working for a newspaper.

Some years before the 1914-18 War, a man calling himself Trubitch Lincoln joined the Liberal Party and during the time he was a member of the Liberal Party he successfully contested the parliamentary seat of Darlington and became a Member of Parliament.

Members of Parliament did not receive a very high salary and he was compelled to find a part-time job as a secretary to Mr. Cadbury, the chocolate king, who employed Lincoln at a fairly high remuneration for his services.

While a Member of Parliament, he seems to have got attached to the Admiralty, where he succeeded in stealing the Naval secret code book which he betrayed to the German Secret Service for whom he worked.

Lincoln escaped to the U.S.A. where he was arrested on a charge of forgery. He was extradited to England on an extradition warrant for forgery of a cheque while acting as secretary to Mr. Cadbury.