

MY APPRENTICESHIP TO CRIME

An
(To the memory of my
Autobiography

Grace Maria Treadwell.

-by-

ARTHUR HARDING

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CHAPTER 30.

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as a rival to the other pretenders to the throne of King of the Underworld.

Some years ago, it may be some eighteen years or so ago, the crime reporter of The People introduced to the readers of The People the at that time unknown King of the Underworld, one Billy Hill, the uncrowned King of London's gangsters. Since his story was published by the People his name has cropped up whenever crime and gangsterism was the subject of discussion in the press and courts.

Speaking for myself, I had never heard of the man, but on making a few discreet inquiries I did discover he was a West End gangster, one of many who infested the Soho district; he was no worse than others of his kind who had collected a few

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The crime reporter of The People newspaper and Billy Hill paid to a certain lady for her life story was a scandal which had a conference and it was decided that Billy Hill should write his life story for the benefit of the paper's readers. So the reporter and Billy Hill created the British Al Capone of modern London.

A large sum of money was paid for this autobiography by a little blackmail from her victims.

The People newspaper to Mr. Billy Hill and the reporter who wrote it. Graphic stories were vividly told of this highly successful good feature story for its readers, and having inside information gangster, what he did to his rivals and their henchmen. Every

week this putrid poison was printed and swallowed by every would-be gangster in the country. The West End of London, that part which starts to live when the lights come on, began to ask, "Who is Billy Hill?" It was not long before Billy Hill began to reap the rewards for of his publicity; before he realised it he was firmly established as a rival to the other pretenders to the throne of King of the Underworld. So he set about being a worthy King of the Underworld. Since his story was published by the People, his name has cropped up whenever crime and gangsterism was the subject of discussion in the press and courts.

It is on record that when this self-styled gangster went on a cruise to Australia with a lady friend, the Australian emigration authorities refused him admission.

The Press Council have stated they are against the glorification of crime and gangsters. The large sums of money paid to a certain lady for her life story was a scandal which caused much speculation whether or not it was an inducement for others to follow her mode of living in the hope of notoriety.

The same notorious lady has been induced to write her story again by the scandalmongers who are hoping for rich pickings and a little blackmail from her victims.

Now for the Sunday Chronicle, which was also looking for a good feature story for its readers, and having inside information

inside information that the Billy Hill series had been highly successful in drawing in the readers, they looked around for a bigger villain than Billy Hill. Now it happened that a certain Aldgate Jew by the name of Jack Spot had been before the court for a violent assault upon the crime reporter of the People for writing the story of Billy Hill. So he had shown his displeasure at the Billy Hill series by the time-honoured way of bashing in the face of the man who wrote the story.

The result of this assault was that Jack Spot was convicted and fined for assault. He was afterwards sued in the High Court for damages. The People reporter was awarded a fairly substantial sum against Jack Spot.

It must be remembered that this preliminary skirmish was the prelude to the publicity that heralded the sensational disclosures of the one and only public enemy number one and only "Jack Spot".

During these early years of the 1950s, two Bethnal Green lads were making a name for themselves at the Repton Boxing Club; they were the Kray twins; even as teenagers they were vicious in their conduct towards others who were their neighbours if they were offended for anything.

During the years before the war, I was friendly with their father, Charlie Kray, who was a wardrobe dealer and many times we would work the same districts together. Their grandfather,

old Jim Kray, had the next stall to mine, but he did not have anything to do or say to the twins. He used to say, "They take too many liberties." Charlie Kray was a good father and worked hard to bring the family up. The eldest son Charles was also a wardrobe dealer; he worked by himself always round West Wickham, Kent. At this period just before the war he was a nice quiet lad, not in any way a trouble-maker.

During this most dangerous period in the lives of these Kray Twins, we find a responsible Sunday paper named the Sunday Chronicle publishing the most poisonous propaganda on behalf of a notorious gangster, which could only lead these teenagers to emulate the deeds of the recognised true King of the Underworld. So our hero Jack Spot had every right to claim the title of the biggest villain in London - or shall we say, he thought he was.

So with the press announcement of the revelation of underworld crime by the well-known villain Jack Spot, all the young and ambitious gangsters looked forward eagerly to see what they could learn from the new King of the Underworld.

The Sunday Chronicle placed their posters all over the country, especially in the poorer parts of the great towns and cities where one would expect to find many promising recruits to the ranks of the gangsters.

The first instalment of the disclosures dealt with Jack

Spot's life in the streets and alleys of Whitechapel and Aldgate. He was the son of a poor emigrant Jew refugee who had sought refuge in England from Russian oppression. Jack Spot soon became mixed up with the gangs who infested Aldgate and Whitechapel, a leader who terrorised the southern race tracks. I suppose he gave a very vivid account of how he got a chair leg and had it filled with lead by an old Jewish cabinet maker, then to prove what a tough guy he was, went to Aldgate and smashed in the head of a man who had never even spoken to him, but whose crime was that he belonged to a political party he did not agree with. He spoke with pride of how the people of Aldgate and Whitechapel regarded him as a hero for the brave deed. He really believed he had done something deserving of praise. His varied adventures were narrated with the same putrid bragging. Can you wonder when the kids read this stuff, knowing that the law had never interfered with him, knew as he did that the law had stood by while he terrorised the race tracks. He told his readers how he got rid of the Sabini gang, the Italian mob of gangsters from Clerkenwell who had terrorised the race tracks and gambling clubs of the West End. The Kray These gangsters, such as the Kray twins watched him strut about with his retinue of gangsters from the East End; they watched him on familiar terms with the law. Can you wonder why

the gangs have become a menace to every decent citizen?

I have just read a book written by a top man from Scotland Yard. Forty years of catching crooks, smashing race gangs, etc. Not one word of our friend Jack Spot, King of the Underworld, the gang leader who terrorised the southern race tracks. I suppose our friend from the Yard never came into contact with him, or did he?

The public read the story of Jack Spot and Albert Dimes and wondered at the farce that was played out at the Central Criminal Court while the law stood by helpless to put these people behind prison bars. Clergyman of the Church of England put into the witness box to perjure himself so that a gangster like Jack Spot could go free to prey upon law-abiding people. I forecast then that this legal villainy would be the pattern for future use to copy. A priest looks good in the witness box, speaking on behalf of some villain whom the police will not let alone to carry on his villainy.

1967 saw the same thing repeat itself at the Central Criminal Court. the now notorious Kray twins were on trial for demanding money. The defence called an important witness to testify - yes, a clergyman of the Church of England. The Kray twins were acquitted.

1969. Same place, same defendants, different indictments. Murder. Different police officers in charge of the case, also a

different clergyman, Church of England, called as a defence witness. This time the verdict was Guilty.

Yes, the future historian will have plenty of material to explain the "Decline and Fall of Britain".

CHAPTER 31.

Agent Provocateur.

Jonathan Wild, 1682, hanged 1725. Was an English criminal; blackmailer, police informer, receiver of stolen property, and an agent provocateur.

The Agent Provocateur

One of the most despicable of criminal activities today is the agent provocateur. This man usually works by himself. He frequents the cafés and clubs used by teenagers and worms his way into their confidence, then by the promise of large sums of money the youngsters are induced to steal lorry loads of saleable goods. The loads are then sold to a greedy tradesman for a quarter of their value. The thieves get their share,

but the agent has other profitable business.

He phones the squad office at the Yard, gives his call name, for certain police officers who he is working for, then

he gives the information, where the stolen goods have been taken. So the squad visit the tradesman, recover the stolen property and the lorry load of goods go back to the owners. Now a load of tea or cigaretten could be worth £5,000 or more.