

DETROIT IS AS BAD AS PAINTED, REPORTER FINDS

Booze, Women, Gambling All Flourish—Police Wink at Violations.

By Paul Harrison

NEA Service Writer
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DETROIT, July 30.—The American Social Hygiene Association recently issued a voluminous report declaring that Detroit is the "blackest, vilest city in the country so far as vice is concerned."

Saloons, gambling houses and vice dens run unchecked, it was charged, without fear of police interference. The city is known in every underworld in the country, it was said, as a place where vice can operate unchecked.

I came to Detroit, a stranger, to see for myself if conditions are as bad as the association has charged. And after a long night during which I passed through blind pigs, disorderly houses, gambling dens and speakeasies without number, I can say:

"They are."

Seen in One Night
Publication of the association's report has raised a storm in the city's official circles. Police vice and prohibition squads have been reorganized; officers have been shifted and civic leaders declare that the city will be cleaned up. Perhaps, I am only concerned with presenting an account of what I saw between dusk and dawn on a Saturday night.

A dingy sort of bar room was my first stop. A fish-eyed, shirtless little man stopped me as I started in and said:

"Well?"

"Well, yourself," I replied. "I want a drink."

It's Saturday

"What day is it?" he asked.
"Saturday."

"Well, if it's Saturday, you'd ought to holler 'Saturday.' Now, if it'd been Thursday, you shoulda said 'Thursday.' Won't you guys ever learn nothing? We gotta be careful here."

So I was admitted. The room, with a bar along one side and six tables in the center, had only a few patrons. It was early. Behind the bar were rows of bottles bearing whisky, gin, vermouth and absinthe labels. The beer, at 25 cents a glass, was good. So were the whisky and gin. All the liquor came from Canada—across the river, I was told.

I went on to another bar, picked at random. A man stopped me and asked:

"Name's Smith," said I. "You ought to remember me."

"Oh, one of the Smith's of De-

Real as Well as Reel Romance



"Well, don't bother me," said the bartender. "Let 'em in."

Two uniformed policemen entered, drank beer and left.

One of the city's best cabarets is located in the basement of a big downtown block. Strains of raucous music filled it, mingling with the babble of many voices. There were sheiks and shebas without number.

Ladies of the Night

Cigaret smoke made a murky haze over tables and dance floor. Hip pocket flasks appeared everywhere. Diners hailed newcomers, clear across the room, with what's car-ryin' tonight?" Unnoticed, I watched the whirligig of legs and colors.

So I entered Detroit's tenderloin. It extends five blocks east and west of Woodward Ave., between Adams and Charlotte Sts. In all this district, it seems, there are none other than "ladies of the night."

Lots of Police

Oh, yes—and policemen. There are dozens of them. Perhaps they are

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there to prevent traffic law violations. I passed a girl talking to two of them. She came over and accosted me.

There are women everywhere. Five, ten on every sidewalk. Desirous, ominous, pleading, they go about the business of "Hustling." In one section live the "window tappers." A woman's face is pressed to every window pane, and as one passes there is an insistent tap-tap tap.

The Gambling Houses

I left the vice district and made my way across town to the gambling houses. A "capper" on the curb offered to take me into one. I went.

We went to an upper floor in an elevator. Through a peep hole we were eyed carefully before the door opened. In the ante room sat a

man with a grim looking shotgun.

We were searched for weapons, passed through a corridor by another guard, and admitted to the game.

All these precautions against a police raid? Oh, no. The police worry these people not at all. What they're afraid of is a raid by hi-jackers. Armed thugs often swoop down on a gambling hall, hold everybody up

and get away with many thousands of dollars.

Two big craps games were in progress. Young and old, rich and poor, stood about two deep. Blackjack and faro games were going on at other tables. Money was changing hands rapidly.

The games, it seems, are all "on the square." The house doesn't need to be crooked. The percentage is

all in its favor. And if you lose all of your money they will give you cab fare home; if you make a clean-up, you will be given a bodyguard until you are safely away.

It was almost dawn when I finally walked back toward my hotel. But women still walked about and men stood on the corners. Part of Detroit never goes to bed.

And that is Detroit as I saw it.

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