

EDITORIAL

THE LATEST CRISIS CRASH.

By DANIEL DE LEON

“HE was a Grand Juror, Justice, and strong in the granges and the church and socially” is the description given of Kerrill Kimberly of Goshen, Conn., now in prison under a bench warrant charging him with a number of burglaries, several of which the prisoner has since confessed. The description of the man is not complete as given above. A statement made by Kimberly himself is necessary to understand him. The first thing he said when the prison gates closed upon him was: “I felt an irresistible impulse to steal, against which my mind was a feeble combatant. It’s all over; it’s a great load off and I am glad.” This is not the language of a kleptomaniac, nor is burglary a kleptomaniac manifestation. Kimberly’s social standing, his burglaries, and the man’s account of himself depict him a specimen victim of social conditions.

A farm-hand, working hard from early dawn to dusk, and attending, when not at work, merely to his own physical and immediate necessities, may become brutified. The narrowness of his own horizon allows him no peeps across other borders. Such a man may break out into some outburst of brutality. This was not Kimberly’s case. He had opportunities for mental expansion. His horizon extended beyond that of his own private economic status. As Grand Juror he had many an opportunity to “look over the fence”, so to speak, into the yards of a variety of other people with different economic statuses. His office of Justice widened the opportunities. His activity in the granges, in social circles and in church organizations extended his scope of vision still more. The more Kimberly saw the worse it was for him. At all turns he must have bumped against fraudulent practices of some kind or other. With a mind unenlightened by the lamp of Socialism, in fact, with a mind carefully kept dark by bourgeois journalism, the conviction must have slowly crept upon him that the path to affluence was the path

of theft, provided the criminal practices were so conducted as to keep the perpetrator undetected. The late crisis must have given Kimberly's mind its last impulse. He saw brigandage practiced upon a large scale; he saw it practiced by "Pillars of Law and Order"; he saw more, he saw the perpetrators lauded as "social saviors", as "public spirited patriots". To a mind like Kimberly's the social alternative became sanctimonious burglary, or ruin. Under the crack of that lash he chose the former. That he acted under compulsion his own words prove.

The criminal is society, because society is the criminal-breeder—wherever there be a criminal. Capitalist society bred the Grand Juror, Justice and active granger and church man Kimberly burglar. The crisis ripened him into public notoriety. When Kimberly landed in jail, the rattle of the jailor's keys as they turned the lock on the prisoner, recorded the latest, in its way, the most distressing of the crisis crashes.

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Uploaded January 2010

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