

Our Crime Land Excursion

CRIME LAND! It is not discernible upon any pictorial globe, or in any popular atlas. Yet it is in either hemisphere, on every continent, and reached directly by the express trains of volition. It appertains to domains of moral, but not of physical geography. Its latitudes are limitless. Its territory is boundless. Its zones are generally either frigid or torrid, but seldom temperate. Few have nativity within it. Its mass of population is naturalized, and no particular forms of naturalization are prescribed. It is without government, and codes of law are its people's abhorrence. Few travel within it to return as lighthearted as they were on first entering its queer domain. It has no customhouses for duties, and it exults in freedom of transactions, commercial and professional. It does not use passports. But, of all lands, Crime Land is the most heavily taxed!

It is approached by many channels. A principal one reminds us of that one through which Ulysses sailed when, with courage little known to this day, he asked to be bound to the mast lest the Sirens should decoy him. Another channel recalls the passage between Scylla and Charybdis. All the channels separating Good Land and Crime Land are, however, very narrow. On occasion of this our excursion we visit it so as to land on its pleasantest and quit it on its worst coast.

Our excursion party is headed by Mr. Clergyman, Mr. Detective, and Mr. Attorney. They are the licensed guides to Crime Land. No legislature deprives them of their free travel passes. And so—on board of the regular ferry-boat, of reckless speed, and called “Temptation,” we take passage through the Siren channels. And drowning conscience for a short time in some of the reckless draughts with which that steamboat-bar abounds, we bid *au revoir* to the shores of Good Land, and, almost before thought can find expression, we near the coasts of Crime Land.

On arriving, Mr. Attorney, who loves to play Sir Oracle and open his mouth often, remarks “that Crime Land is properly divided into Vice-Province, Misdemeanorshire, and Felony-Dominion.”

We have landed at the principal pier of Vice-Province. As yet our baggage is safe. “Riches are the baggage of virtue,” says Bacon. And that kind of baggage is always safe upon the pier in question. Farther on in the journey it is that the baggage of virtue becomes diminished.

“Surely! Mr. Guide,” cries one innocent young traveller, just from a freshman-class in college, “this is not the beginning of Crime Land. Its shores are much like those we have left. Here are the same kind of cosy clubs, the theatres are only a trifle more meretricious, the newspapers are only a little more sensational, and the gambling is with fifty-two pieces of cabalistic card paper instead of with the fifty-two pieces of railway shares in the Good Land left behind.”

But the other travellers are too much fascinated in looking around at the novelties of Vice-Province, that seem, at first sight, so innocent and proper, to hear Mr. Freshman's talk. They indeed look desirous of lingering and exploring. But Mr. Detective blows his warning whistle, and he looks at Mr. Freshman as if to say “thine eye-teeth, oh youngster, are not yet sharpened,” while he tells him, in strong but concise language, “look well out for your pocket-book.” We are all about to take passage in the accommodation train, and leave Vice-Province, with its seductions, behind.”

“Ah!” says Mr. Clericus, nudging Mr. Attorney, who, if not theological, is practical; “how true is it—and herein lies the danger to guideless travellers—that the first shores of Crime Land are so similar in appearance to the termination beach of Good Land; that the ferry voyage, from that fact, becomes often fatally deceptive to the traveller who had determined never to quit the latter.”

A motley crowd of passengers, who have bought regular, as well as commutation tickets, are waiting at the station. Some, as they examine our passes and excursion tickets, shrug their shoulders, and exchange mysterious glances with each other. Many of them are seeking the interior because a sojourn in Vice-Province has left them penniless. Others have been back from the more distant stations in Crime Land for a visit, and to renew the fascinations of earlier days.

Mr. Clericus is fain to address them; but Mr. Detective says another time will do, and Mr. Freshman thinks it were better to lock them temporarily in the station-house, and allow the train to go without them.

Some of the motley crowd *do* remain. In Crime Land there is, happily, *locus penitentia* as well as locus penitentiary.

How slowly the train moves at first. We all seem to think that it is perfectly easy to jump off at every crossing. But why is no warning-whistle blown? See, already a spendthrift, heedless of his danger, has been run over. The landscapes are certainly beautiful. Charming villas line the road. Suppose we get out and wander in yonder seductive groves, or while away hours beside the murmuring fountains.

“Remember Ulysses,” cries Mr. Clericus.

“You'll never get back in time,” says Mr. Practical Detective.

Loudly laughs Mr. Attorney, but then soberly whispers, “*C'est le premier pas qui coute.*”

It is not long before the train increases speed. We are entering a warmer latitude. Vice-Province has been in temperate zone. We are evidently approaching the boundary of Misdemeanorshire. The brain feels giddy; the blood throbs quickly.

There is a sudden stop.

“What ho, Mr. Detective; what's the matter?”

“Only a sub-station, sir, in Misdemeanorshire. Come to this window, gents, here's a party getting out to have a prize fight.”

“There they go with all their absurd paraphernalia,” calls out Mr. Clericus.

Mr. Freshman gives signs of joining; and incoherently mutters something about “first claret,” “one on the nob,” “orator's trap,” “peepers,” and the like.

“You young rascal,” vociferates Mr. Attorney; “where did you learn all that?”

“Why, from a family newspaper—surely a prize fight worth reporting in every daily is worth seeing or knowing about!”

Here Mr. Clericus makes a note for a sermon. Mr. Attorney murmurs a delightful sentence about liberty of the press, as away we speed, with a shriek, and a roar, and a rattle.

Soon the road slightly roughens. So does the landscape.

Look well to your seat, 'tis like taking an airing
On a corduroy road, and *that* out of repairing;
It leads one, 'tis true, through a bit of a forest,
Grand, natural features; but then one has no rest,
You just catch a glance of some ravishing distance,
When a jolt puts the whole of it out of existence.

There is a sub-station at every quarter mile. Assault-and-Batteryville seemed to be the largest one. We see the common scold and the virago—and she was no village editor, either. We look upon the Billingsgate fishwoman whom Dr. Johnson knocked down with a pronoun. We see the patient, and often-fibbing wife, whose brutal husband's life is a daily perjury to his marriage oath of protection. The men who hourly rhymed “muscle “ with “tussle,” are upon one platform. At one sub-station the riot act is being read by a Derbyite, who thinks a century of Irish wrongs can be put down by an act of Parliament. A George Francis Trainite in our party is only saved by Mr. Detective from a hopeless interference. There are coarse-featured bystanders, whose cruelty to animals is the theme of an indignant and eloquent remonstrance from Mr. President Bergh.

Jeremy-Diddlerboro has a large depot. The crowd of passengers here is large. An enthusiastic hotel proprietor in the excursion-car is anxious to get out and pay his respects to a well-known gentleman of the J. D. brand of social champagne, but Mr. Detective restrains him, as well as several shop-keepers, who are intent upon the like diversion. A picturesque crowd of gift enterprisers and rafflers and confidence men throng about the brakeman.

At another station—where thick woods darken and swamps and morasses surround—Mr. Attorney points out knots of men and women intent upon malicious mischief, or exercising their ingenuity to inflict nuisances upon their neighbors, libels on their enemies, and conspiracies upon their business or holiday friends.

At this stage of the journey, Mr. Clericus grows didactical. But he is instructive. He has been reading for a short time (as well as the jolting would permit) one of Mr. Attorney's guide-books of the route written by one Blackstone, and he hands it back, and says, as he draws from his bosom the volume that we all of us first saw reverently laid upon childhood's holy altar—a mother's knee—and significantly tapping it, Mr. Clericus says:

“The Crime Land of to-day, Mr. Attorney, is all mapped out in Deuteronomy. There appears to be no station hereabouts which is not known to the Mosaic law. Even the riot and conspiracy

sub-stations were known to the Jews. 'Nothing new under the sun,' quoth King Solomon; and his apothegm applies hereabouts."

"We give 'em new-fangled names—that's your sort," adds Mr. Detective.

And Mr. Attorney—who loves to give an opinion, whether he's paid for it or not—opines that every travel book written by lawyers who visit Crime Land is but an amplification in detail of the words spoken from Sinai, which is the great landmark known and feared all through the country we are now in.

But the whistle of our engine grows hoarser, and fairly sounds melancholic. The brakes are oftener applied with a dull, thudding sound. The traveller's brain grows chloroformed, and his blood runs more sluggishly.

It is the half-way station of the journey that we approach, and at which Intent and Design are the mental deities, to whom shrines are erected at every milestone. Thoughtlessness, rashness, and cowardly malice or puerile passion have been the deities of Crime Land which we have passed.

Indeed, Intent and Design are the deities whose shrines divide Misdemeanorshire from Felony-Dominion. And it is on the borders of the latter that the half-way station lies.

"Heigho! Hark! the return accommodation train is about to pass."

We step upon the half-way platform, and behold here are the return groups bound on a foraging expedition to the Good Land which we quitted.

Mr. Detective's quick eyes are brought into service. Mr. Clericus looks more thoughtful and compassionate than ever. Mr. Attorney recognizes many familiar faces, and coolly nods. All the excursion party look interested.

Yonder is Mr. Embezzlement, who has been beyond to visit at Larcenyville some acquaintances whom he ought long ago to have cut. There is a large business in Good Land awaiting his return—in the good land where farmers till its honest soil. Mr. Embezzlement will also attend to the till; but his soil will not be honest. He has lingered in Vice-Province as he went through, and has learned the music of the Sirens, and has broken the Ulysses chains and forgotten Penelope. He has learned to handle the ribbons behind fast horses, and to burn the midnight oil, not for the benefit of the head, but for the allurements of the heart. Poor Mr. Embezzlement, he will soon be watched for by Mr. Detective—not in the Siren channels, but where the monster Scylla bellows and roars over the hidden rocks.

Yonder, too, is Mr. and Mrs. Pickpocket, and Mr. and Mrs. and the Misses Shoplifter. They are all first cousins, and have been down on a visit to old Fagin, and Charley Bates, and the Artful Dodger. They, too, are going foraging into Good Land, among the innocents, who wear watches and diamond pins with shoddy recklessness, and in the shops where the agile greenback has jumped over the slow shilling of pristine times. In their company is Mr. Dummy and Mr. Stall, and a host of stragglers who wear the wicked uniform of the confederates of Crime Land.

Here, too, is Bill Sykes and Toby Crackit. We know them at once, for they are celebrated by their biographer, Dickens. They have their baggage under their arms. No need of concealment here. They know Mr. Detective to be off duty; and they have never made the acquaintance of Mr. Clericus. What a beautiful piece of polished cold steel Bill has! What a flexible pocket-lantern Toby holds in his grasp. The diamond in the shirt-frill of one will ornament linen to-day and cut a pane of glass tomorrow. What thin-soled boots they wear. What delicate silk handkerchiefs for muffling use. What small pistols in their belts!

“I must watch them covies when we get back to Good Land,” whispers Mr. Detective, “for old Miser Blunt, Esq., of Wall street, has taken to keeping bonds in his bedroom, and his servant-girl has been in communication on that subject with Nancy Sykes; I saw them together yesterday.”

“Excellent logic,” adds Mr. Attorney, *sotto voce*. “Let householders take more care of their servants than they do even of bars and bolts; and, above all, of the insinuating young vedettes who love to visit the kitchen when the family are off at the opera.”

Not far off is Mr. Garroter. He is not so strong, and lusty, and cunning as he used to be. He is the gorilla of Crime Land. “Happily, many Du Chaillus have investigated his species, and told us all about his habits, so we have in Good Land traced him to his lair and learned how to avoid him,” says Mr. Attorney.

But Mr. Detective adds, “that so long as there are felt shoes for a noiseless approach, and stupid, absent-minded men who will stay out late, or walk in suspicious neighborhoods, and until 'Journals of Health' and manufacturers of steam men alter the configuration of the human throat, there are likely to be many members of the family which takes its name from Don Spinalis Medulla Garote, the Spanish executioner.”

Just here the joint whistles of the engines blow, and the passengers bound into or out of Crime Land, at this felony half-way station, having wet their own whistles after the most approved dyspeptic style in modern travel, are respectively under way.

Mr. Clericus has shown decided symptoms of somnolence, when he is touched upon the elbow by the stereotype book peddler of the cars. He looks over the literary budget, and instantly awakes into a fit of indignation. “Take them away! take them away!” he cries. “Your leaves are leaves of the Upas tree. The finish of your illustrations, and the superficial perfume of the style, exhale their poisonous influences beyond these confines of Crime Land, and infect even the social circle. Some authors are concoctors of immoral narcotics. There's a literary dissipation in vogue, and boys and men alike stimulate their mind with the strong drink of distilled rhetoric, until they get to be craving morbidly, like the physical drunkard, and until it can be said of each one, by gradual steps he is brought to death's door by a mental dyspepsia, or suffers under an intellectual *mania a potu*.”

There is general applause by the excursion party, and Mr. Attorney raises his pedantic voice.

“Crime Land has its peculiar literature; but even in England, where the liberty of press is as great as in any part of Good Land—even in England, where the laws are supposed to be flavored with

a verberna extract of Established Church—no Parliamentary committee has dared to define by statute the line at which literature begins to be demoralizing. It is a difficult subject to deal with. Legislator A. would put the line at freezing point. Legislator B. might place it at temperate. Legislator C. might mark it at boiling point. So it has to be left to the shifting, unsatisfactory discretion of Mother Common Law— whose life had many immoral as well as ethical interludes—so that, as the law practically stands, what one shall be allowed to read, or be forbidden to read, is left to the arbitrament of social taste.”

Mr. Bookpedler is glad to jump off at Larcenyville, and Mr. Detective, with his guide-book in hand, informs the party that we are approaching Bigamyboro, where we shall see a perfect colony of social confidence men, and some very wretched women!” It's very odd,” says he, “that when leap-year comes as often as a Presidential election, there are so few women who voluntarily settle at this 'ere place. The settlers are called men, and they dress like them. But in my opinion they are descended from the old serpent who went into the apple culture in the Garden of Eden. Look out of the window there, as we stop. The most scoundrelly of the group is Mr. Marmaduke Davis, yonder. Everything is false about him, and, as is fashionable among gamblers and bigamists, he dyes his whiskers. His cheeks are full of plumpers, and so are his promises. Mr. Attorney here knows how he was twice convicted, when Marmaduke ventured into Good Land. Says I to the judge, don't send him to prison. His worst punishment would be a condemnation to live with each of his six wives. 'Poor and unjust logic,' quoth Mr. Judge, 'for why should we make the women wretched.’“

Another train of foragers bound to Good Land whistles by. The rails here are appropriately laid of steel—and highly polished. The closer one gets into Crime Land the smoother appears the travel.

“How many of them will come back, I wonder,” asks one of the excursion party. “Tis only a matter of guess work. The foragers are more ingenious than they used to be,” responds Mr. Detective. “There's no copyright or patent-office in Crime Land, but there might be, under the number of criminal inventions and designs, which are so cunning and original now-a-days. Honesty gives hints to dishonesty, and Crime Land shares in the history of progressive civilization.”

“If these inhabitants, hereabouts, would give to honesty half the skill and patience which they award to its opposite, what useful citizens of Good Land might they be,”—this from Mr. Clencus, But I suppose there's a fascination in perversity as there is to the eyes of the snake when even the mocking-bird ventures into the morass.”

“It is less true than it used be,” continues Mr. Attorney, “that murder will out. Yet it is curious how the forces of Providence often combine against matured cunning. Or how often, like Achilles, the greatest hero of Crime Land finds there is one vulnerable circumstance to destroy his security. That hero gets to his wit's end. Just as Mephistopheles said to Faust: 'Here we are again at our wit's end already, where the thread of sense, with you mortals, snaps short. Why make a partnership with us if thou canst not carry it through? Wilt fly, and art not proof against dizziness?’“

“True as preaching,” says Mr. Detective, with heightened interest. “I know all about the opera of Faust. The rogues used to go always to hear it. I don't know why. It's a wonder to me how such heavenly music can be allied to such a devilish plot—'tis especially true as your preaching, Mr. Clericus. Now, I was in the celebrated Webster case, helping work up that job. There was that poor misguided professor, who went to church all serene, who toyed with his family in their happy home, evening after evening, self-confident and self-reliant in his atrocious plans of concealment. But all the while, at every bed-time, as the song writer said of the educated Eugene Aram,

Guilt was his grim chamberlain,
And lighted him to bed,
And closed his curtains round-about
With fingers bloody red.

Yes, all the while Dr. Parkman's false teeth lay uncalcined, but peculiarly moulded, in the ashes of the chemist's furnace, to become the means of the murderer's final discovery.”

“Now,” cries Mr. Detective, “we are nearing Forgery Dale, which is a very important station in Crime Land. Its inhabitants are mainly cultivated and educated people, who contract an unfortunate mania for autographs and stampcollecting, which produces great confusion in bank accounts. They are usually excellent actors, and are marked with bumps of imitativeness. Did they keep their autographs for curiosities, no harm would come to the commercial interests of the land; but the mischief is that they sell them and at the same time sell their fellow-citizens.

We pause at this station of Forgery Dale many minutes. There is much industry all about. At other stations there has been idleness. At other stations the inhabitants of Crime Land seemed to be giving each other that remarkably lucid definition of a verb which occurred in Lindley Murray—a word signifying to be, to do, to suffer. Crime Land travellers live emphatically to do others, and to make others as well as themselves suffer.”

This from Mr. Clericus, who, it was evident, had caught up a Bar book of manuscript pleasantries.

Yes! hereabouts were great marks of business. Paper-mills were hard at work. Professors of penmanship, with classes, abounded. Pen-makers, copper-plate engravers, and bank-note printers industriously plied their trade. “Never say die” was no motto here. To “die “ was one of the very branches of Forgery Dale industry. Then, beside the station, was the banking-house of the great National Bank of Cheek, whose circulating notes were unlimited, and not even secured by the bonds of iniquity.

Mr. Detective has a valuable hint to offer. “The forgers who went foraging on the banks of Good Land, who generally took trains thitherward which left at 5:20, 7:30, or 10:40,” he said, “were wonderfully increasing. If the whole brotherhood of banks would agree to force depositors to use check-books that were composed of paper bearing water-marks peculiar to each bank, the chances of frauds on bank accounts would be lessened ninety per cent. No one but we detectives knows how large is the forgery profit and loss account. Where one forgery is made known, or

apprehension occurs, five more, out of motives of pride and policy, are concealed from all except the police and the stockholders.

But what is this new sensation? The inhabitants of Forgery Dale have suddenly left work and are rushing stationward, to surround and greet two splendidly-dressed travellers from our train, who have been sedulously engaged in smoking. Perhaps smoking is their occupation. One of them is dressed in a suit of clothes whose texture is in all colors. Surely he must be a tailor's chameleon.

This illustrious and evidently popular chameleonic stranger to us, is no stranger here; and, by the by, we recall that several times upon quitting the train he was similarly welcomed by the inhabitants of Crime Land, as if he were a victorious General, or a dispenser of internal revenue patronage, or monarch of the whiskey ring. What a diplomatic and impenetrable face he has! Those features never mirror an emotion. He looks like an actor of the severely dramatic school.

Mr. Detective solves our curiosity. "The illustrious gentleman is General Alibi. 'Oh, Samivel, Samivel, why wasn't there an alibi?' cried old Tony Weller, after the Bardell and Pickwick trial. It was of this very General the assaulter of Ebenezer Stiggins spoke."

Listen: the inhabitants have brought out the brass band. They are firing salutes in his honor. Is he not one of the great preservers of Crime Land? He has fought, and bled, and sworn, and all but died in behalf of its liberties in a thousand court-rooms. Besieged often by the forces of cross-examination; beleaguered anon by stubborn facts, and sometimes utterly discomfited and forced to dishonorable retreat, nevertheless General Alibi never loses his pluck or his faith in the peculiar time-pieces of Crime Land.

But who is his fellow-stranger—he who shares somewhat in the ovation. He looks careworn and nervous. He is scarred. He appears not to wholly like his reception, and moves as if stern necessity obliged him, rather than choice controlled him, in serving often the behests of Crime Land. His pendent seals are large and well worn. One of them shows, cut upon it, the talismanic words, *Magna Carta*. Another seal looks like the one current in the reign of Charles II.

This time Mr. Attorney solves our doubts.

Stranger number two is Habeas Corpus, Esq., born on the plains of Runnymede, and who, thanks to British roast beef and American toast, is still in an excellent state of preservation.

Now that we know his name we understand his nervous looks and his seals. We recognize, too, his long legs, for what quick running he does! We understand the picklocks at his waistband. It is his legal mission to set the captive free! And, appreciating his many virtues and goodnesses and services, in Good Land, we are sorry that Mr. Habeas Corpus ever prostitutes his services, and sometimes gets into bad company, in the country through which our evening travel lies.

General Alibi is going down to pass a week of relaxation at the castle of the Receiver of Stolen Goods. The receivers of stolen goods pet him very much. In fact it is they who mainly support him, and dispatch him hither and thither, and keep him in spirits. Mr. Fagin has many villas and stores, too, in Crime Land. Sometimes he calls himself pawnbroker, and puts up his gilt sign of

cabalistic and Venetian birth—a sign which algebraically means x top ball divided by $y z$, bottom balls equals the unknown quantity of stolen goods, that it's two to one it is never found.

But how bright the lower rim of horizon beyond, and how dark the upper lines. What is this? “Sympathetic reflection,” cries Mr. Detective. “Far away in Good Land there is a warehouse burning. *We* are now flitting through Arson manor and Incendiaryshire. Its horizon is ever a mixture of reflected flame and shadowed smoke.” And he draws from his pocket one of the magic mirrors that Sir Walter Scott gave to Aunt Margaret in *Chronicles of the Canongate*, and we gaze breathless on the surface.

Night. A city wrapped in slumber. Now and then the tang-tang of the police club. Sentinel stars in the sky, which for Crime Landers to see, would make them feel that a mysterious watch was over them set. In the City's business heart a tall warehouse. How ghastly the garish marble looks through the gloom. Hark! cautious footsteps that quicken as the tang-tang of the club diminishes its sound. A muffled man stops before the ghastly building. He draws a key. It fits the lock. He enters quickly with half the air of one who belongs there if his errand is good, but who should be stranger if his visit is for ill.

Breathe on the magic mirror and the picture changes. Interior of the warehouse. Somebody stumbling through its gloom. Krah-f-f-f-f. There is a match drawn. And a candle has been lighted. What a face it discloses for a Pre-Raphaelite artist to paint. There are the good impulses of a lifetime, and the bad ones fresh born of despairing pride fighting for mastery in that upper lip. Its owner goes into the office. He opens a safe with its own key. He secrets papers in his breast. He looks out one of the books, and opens it. Bankrupt is written on it in dim, shadowy letters. The sight nerves his pride like strong drink. He leaves the safe-door open. He explores the building. The hands that in boyhood built houses from blocks on the happy nursery floor, now fashions in every part guilty piles of combustibles. How the veins lash his temples, like whip-cords. How his heart throbs as he bends. How white his face grows as a curious and innocent mouse crosses before him. How his wrist oscillates—'tis like the wrist of a twenty-year old dram-drinker lifting the cordial cup—as he touches the candle here and there, and thither and hither, and dropping it in his flight, noiselessly escapes by the alley entrance, and reseeks, with night key, the palatial residence where a few hours before he had gone to sleep, had risen, and now goes to sleep again—with the sky crimsoned, and a thousand men out to the magnetic cry of “Fire, fire!” as the great bells peal over the startled city.

Sleep! Partial sleep will give its repose to the wet sea boy, but it will deny it to the new-crowned Arson King of Crime Land.

Mr. Detective shrugs his shoulders as he pockets the magic mirror; and we ask him who he is, and where he lives, and whether the merchant was insured, and what he made by his crime, and all about it.

“Dead men tell no tales—nor burned down buildings, either, when the job's well set—and the characters of them as owns them, is it not?” Mr. Detective whispers hoarsely, and relapsing somewhat into his substratum lingo.

“But don't be quite disgusted yet,” he adds to Mr. Freshman, who looks like a young sawbones for the first time at a clinical lecture. “We are almost at our journey's end. When you look into all the guide books of Mr. Attorney there, and count up the stations of Vice-Province, Misdemeanorshire and Felony-Dominion, thus far past, you see at once it is about time that we were entering the dreadful domains of Murder. I take no account of killing short of that. Crime Landers kill and cut and stab, more or less, of the sudden impulse, at every station. But the station of Murder Wood is all alone by itself. Even the men and women who own lands about it shun it. No Asiatic jungle or African solitude can surpass it. The most horrible and singular of all geological formations surround and compose it. Avarice, revenge, and grudge and hate, infest it in the form of wild beasts. Of all the wretched Crime Landers who wander through its precincts, the poisoners are the wickedest.”

Down came the window blinds on every side, as Mr. Clericus stopped, emotionally, for want of breath; on every side, and except at one corner, where sat the artist and reporter of an illustrated newspaper, who were of the excursionists, and who shut not eyes or ears to this, the last station. The last station of Crime Land!

The scream of rage, the groan, the strife,
The blow, the gasp, the horrid cry,
The panting, throttled prayer for life,
The dying's heaving sigh.
The murderer's curse—the dead man's fix'd still glare,
And fear and death's cold sweat—they all are there.

The artist and reporter had no time to sketch laboriously, for, with a slow, grinding, wheezing, crackling sob of all the brakes, the train came to a sudden stop. We knew by the dreadful precipices and cliffs on every side, and by the frowning prison walls, and scaffolds on the distant islands in a boiling, seething channel beyond, that we were on the other confines of Crime Land; toward the Scylla and Charybdis Straits, through which the fugitives and Crime Landers in their flight were wont to make exit from whatever station on the route they fled.

Take our Court-house ferry-boat, quoth Mr. Attorney, as the party stood reflectively shivering in the damp air that hangs about these confines of Crime Land. That is a ferry-boat which will insure your safety. It will take you to the steps of those temples of justice that frown across the water on Crime Land as the Crime Landers frown on them. Through these temples you will find a dignified and proper entrance again into your various and happy homes of Good Land.

The Galaxy, January 1869