THE GANGSTER UNDER VOLSTEAD.

The distinctive feature of the prohibition era in the United States has been the rise of the gangster. A new criminality, widespread and successful, has been born with the eighteenth amendment, and has been nourished by the Volstead act. In pursuit of the rewards which prohibition has offered crime the gangster has used murder and corruption. He has grown wealthy and has attained a sort of sovereignty. He has stormed the administration of criminal justice and obtained immunity. He has degraded politics and pushed it down to lower levels.

Crime in the United States has become a spectacle of disorder observed everywhere abroad as an indication of a fundamental weakness in the American republic. Murder, kidnapping, and other crimes have become so common that it appears as one of the American social processes. Police have been corrupted and federal service has lost its reputation for inviolability. The liquor traffic has become one in murder as well as in intoxicants, and the American gangster with new made wealth rides across the American scene as its dominating figure.

This condition of affairs is the result which ten years of prohibition have given the country. It is the direct consequence of granting the federal government the police power to stop the trade in intoxicating beverages. It has not suppressed the trade, but has only changed its character from bad to worse and added the new criminality to it.

Both the cities and the country districts of the country are appalled by the conditions they know exist and cannot change. Chicago has been given the worst reputation, but every city in the country has the same evil, and no other has attacked it with so much determination.

Lawlessness in liquor offers such great profits that eager gangsters step at once into the shoes of murdered gangsters and their killings recruit rather than reduce the ranks of the killers and corruptionists. The communities have learned to expect no relief from extermination and they have not been encouraged to believe that any will be had from law.

Cause and consequence are hooked together and with the one continued the other must follow. The Volstead law is the mother of this criminality and the two will endure together. The act makes the crime of murder and willing to risk his life, and the money it will give him and the public official willing to risk his reputation and his liberty. If the remedy were in the situation itself some proof of it would have been given by now. If criminality were a phase through which prohibition might be expected to pass before it reached a firm foundation it would now be out of such difficulties or would be seen to be coming out. The contrary is true. Each year the criminality becomes worse and people perceive more clearly than ever that they cannot avoid the source of infection untouched and be relieved of the illness.

The cause is federal prohibition, which states as law something which is not enforced as law because it lacks the general acceptance required by law. The Volstead act is a wealth producer for organized crime of criminal gangs and depend upon it. They could not exist without it. Crime in American cities is fed and protected by it.

The relation of the crook to the cause is being perceived more clearly every day, and that explains the rising protest, reflected in political action against a continuous disregard of government control in this field of social regulation. The experiment has been made. The results are apparent. There are riots, shootouts, and other criminal actions. They do not believe in it.