

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

A Psychologist Studies Frank's Case.

That a murder as atrocious as was that in Atlanta of the child MARY PHAGAN, especially as it had followed several similar crimes there, should have greatly excited and enraged the inhabitants of the city, that it should have made them insistent that the police promptly find and the courts promptly punish the man who committed the horrible deed—all that would have happened anywhere and is easily understood. And the mystery of this affair is not that the guilt of the first man arrested was for a while taken as proved, so far as public opinion went, for the natural presumption was that the police and the prosecuting authorities had made out a prima facie case against him.

What is mysterious, however, is that the people of Atlanta, when they found out that the only evidence against FRANK, a white man of upright life and spotless record, was given by a dissolute negro of known criminal tendencies, they did not soon suspect, and not long afterward realize, that a grave mistake had been made, and did not show the inclination, so prevalent all through the South, to dismiss as worthless evidence from such a source when directed against such an object. Instead, they, or at any rate the effective and articulate majority of them, not only demanded a conviction from the jurors, with threats of violence if it were not granted, but not even yet have they expressed a trace of the doubt, and more, of FRANK's guilt that is so strongly felt all over the rest of the country, South as well as North.

In another column of THE TIMES there is printed today an article from American Medicine, in which this strange problem is presented—one cannot call it elucidated—in the terms of the expert psychologist. And though the writer of the article in effect confesses his inability to answer the questions he asks, he is able to emphasize and confirm the belief, so often expressed by ourselves and shared by so many, that in all probability the negro CONLEY killed MARY PHAGAN and in all probability the white man FRANK did not.

The practically conclusive reason for this belief is that such crimes never are the result of sudden change in a man's character and conduct, but are always one of numerous evidences of abnormality—of under-development or of degeneration.

An Urgent Need for Money.

Indications only too convincing that this Winter will be one of unusual hardship to the poor continue to reach us from many sources, the most important being those which come from the experienced "social workers," connected in one or another capacity with the various organized charities. All of them already foresee the not remote exhaustion of their resources if their appeals for additional funds do not meet a generous response from people who are willing to give, or who, having already given, are able to give again.

Latest of these communications to reach us is one from the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor. It incloses a note from Mayor MITCHEL, expressing the conviction that conditions will soon be serious, the hope that the systematized relief agencies will use their best efforts, and the desire that those to whose notice the situation can be brought will make unusual sacrifices to mitigate its severity.

The "A. I. C. P.," we are informed, is making extraordinary efforts to meet the unusual needs, but its income will fall short of the known demands upon it by \$125,000 unless further contributions not now in sight come in. The best help of all, of course, is paid employment, for it is lack of work that has led to the depletion of savings and the compulsion of many to ask aid who have never sought it before. The making or keeping open of places where earning power can be utilized is therefore highly desirable, but until the expected revival of business and industry, now both depressed by the European war, shall arrive, "charity" will be needed, and it can be best and most safely given by the organized bodies.

Those who select the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor for their distributing agent should send their contributions to its Treasurer, R. S. MINTURN, 105 East Twenty-second Street.

Old News Still Withheld.

Newspapers in the United States, thanks to the fact that what one of the military censorships of Europe will not pass another gladly gives out, have not suffered quite as much as has the foreign press from the official attempts to suppress information about

the war. The papers here, however, have felt the restrictions imposed on them quite enough warmly to sympathize with the indignant protests which the London journals are making, and fully to agree with their assertions as to the inutility and the unreasonableness of the suppressions in not a few cases.

Perhaps the most exasperating grievance of the London editors is the obstinate and prolonged refusal to let them say a word about the sinking of the battleship Audacious. That disaster—or achievement, if viewed from another standpoint—has been fully described, not only in this country, but in Germany, the only country from which the British censors might have an excuse, though a poor one, for concealing it if they could. And of course the facts, or the story as told, must be known to a large minority, if not to a majority, of the people whom it would sadden most. But the London papers and those in the "provinces" are still forbidden under dire penalties to disclose or comment on the loss of the ship.

Naturally they are resentful, both on their own account and on that of their readers, whose ability to bear bad news with fortitude the suppression denies. The English papers have no desire to give out information that even possibly could be useful to the enemy, but their loyal docility is hard tried when they and their readers are treated like whimpering children.

His Offer Is a Safe One.

Some of our neighbors are trying hard to cause excitement and controversy by exploiting the convict in Auburn Prison who, according to seemingly correct report, has offered himself as a "subject" for experiments to determine the question whether or not cancer is contagious.

The question is in itself both interesting and important, and some progress might be made toward answering it if the fellow's offer were accepted and utilized, but he is credited with having, when sober—as of course he is now and for some time has been—more than the ordinary criminal's intelligence. Therefore does he know perfectly well that he runs no risk whatever of having his proposal accepted, while there is a chance that by making it he may gain some notoriety and even some privileges otherwise beyond his reach.

One commentator on the episode has said, logically enough, that society would be better justified in using a live man in the way suggested than in setting him up to be a target for cannon, but modern sensibilities, though they still, with more or less reluctance, tolerate war, would not endure an attempt to infect even a convicted murderer with the most dreadful of all maladies.

Nobody could stop the doctors from learning about cancers by experiments on themselves whatever they cannot discover by experiments on animals, but they wouldn't be allowed to use other people for such a purpose, if they wanted to do so—which of course they don't.