Men of Action

What is to become of our favorite men of action after Repeal? After the Senate investigates them? An appraisal of the character and cunning of these men, which warns of their survival, is made by Joseph Driscoll, one of New York's best police and crime reporters and author of "Dock Walloper."

By Joseph Driscoll

FOR years communists, anarchists and nihilists have talked of the virtues of direct action, but the real practitioners of direct action are our own American-bred gentlemen of the rackets. By direct action they have risen to their present eminence, and by the same they will do or die in the coming post-prohibition struggle for power. As long as they have a bomb, or a machine gun left, our racketeers will continue their offensive against the country's dreamers and dawdlers, the public and the public officials.

In a land of sentimental misconceptions and myths, our gang gentry have distinguished themselves as super-realists. They know what they want, and they take it, and that's that. Until we understand their personalities and their methods, we are helpless to cope with their unrestrained efficiency. It is time to stop regarding gangsters as boogey men or tabloid heroes, and to study them for what they are—successful, hard-as-nails business men who, in common with most business men, think that the end justifies the means, but who, unlike the more timid souls engaged in commerce, practice what they preach.

The personalities of our representative racketeers are especially interesting insofar as they reflect heredity, environment and strange ambitions and ruthless deeds by which the ambitions are realized. In studying the racket breed, there is no necessity to attach either synthetic glamor or false indignation to their goings-on. A racketeer can be a racketeer without resembling a movie idol or a monster, although some lean toward monsterdom.

A fact to be noted is that, with one or two exceptions, the pattern of our racketeers' lives follows the accepted Horatio Alger tradition—Poor boy; no early advantages; takes his chances in the Big City; by dint of serious application to his tasks waxes rich; becomes renowned. Substitute the modern bootlegger for Alger's bootblack, and the gun moll for the sweet choir girl, and the Algerian outline is complete. Perhaps, if dear Mr. Alger were with us today, he would be writing underworld epics. Instead of "Sink or Swim," we might have "Squeal and Be Shot. You Dirtv Rat-a-Tat-Tat."

In this age of autobiography, we have had the frank life stories of bankers and statesmen and dock wallopers, but our gentlemen of rackets, upon advice of counsel, have refrained from trusting their whimsies and deeds to paper which might prove incriminating evidence. Nevertheless, our direct actionists are worthy of the thoughtful writing customarily accorded to people who have succeeded in their chosen profession.

Without further fuss, let us now put the racket specimens on the operating table, and take them apart and find out what makes them tick:

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ALPHONSE CAPONE. *Our First Gangster.* A natural leader of men. A master salesman. A genius at organizing and consolidating. Would have gone far in Wall Street. If he had stayed in New York, he would have merged Owney Madden, Waxey Gordon, Dutch Schultz and Augie Pisano into one syndicate—or died in the attempt.

Mr. Capone is a product of the slums. Born in Brooklyn; parents were poor and presumably honest Neapolitan immigrants. Drafted during World War, he learned machine gun technique that afterward proved valuable in civil pursuits. Capone is called Scarface Al because of scars on left cheek — bayonet wounds, Capone explains, but others blame flying beer bottles.

A roly-poly young fellow, Capone looks like an overstuffed capon. He was a Five Points gangster and dance-hall bouncer in New York until he moved to Chicago at the dawn of prohibition. Showed versatility at all rackets: hard liquor, high-powered beer, gambling establishments, disorderly houses, dog tracks and labor unions.

A big money man is he. Profits of Capone gang exceeded $75,000 a month, and Capone accumulated $20,000,000, according to government investigators. Sprinkle salt on these figures and divide by five, and you still see a lot of lucre.

Alphonse Capone is a paradox of barbaric cruelty and oafish tenderness. For his friends he dons an apron and cooks spaghetti; his enemies he rubs out with Napoleonic nonchalance.

Ruthlessness and good humor run riot in Capone, but never both at the same time. His wit would make him a welcome toastmaster at Kiwanis luncheons; his intolerance would compel him to bump off those listeners who laughed at the wrong time. A man of sure instincts, but scant imagination. He acts impulsively without detailed planning. Has been known

to blunder, but, like a doctor, he buries his mistakes. Can't bear competitors or traitors; rewards loyalists with diamond belt buckles.

Suspected of several score murders, Capone has been convicted only of toting a pistol and cheating Uncle Sam of income tax. Served a year in jail in Philadelphia, at his own request, and is now in his second year at Atlanta where he is teacher's pet. Has eight more years to go, but good behavior and political influence should help him out. In the meantime he receives visitors and heavy mail and keeps in close touch with his Chicago interests; so close that he has been indicted for conspiracy to fix prices in the fields of soft drink, dyeing and cleaning, laundry and linen supply. Not even a prison number (40,886) and a gray denim uniform can submerge this business personality.

Mr. Capone is good at epigrams. He will be remembered for:

"They've blamed everything on me but the Chicago fire."

"Newspaper men have ice water in their veins."

"Once in the racket, you're always in it."

"I want peace and I'm willing to live and let live."

"I don't want to die, shot down in the street like an animal."

"I have a wife and a boy that I idolize."

MURRAY LEWELLYN HUMPHRIES. Fancy a gangster with a triple-decker monicker like that. He hasn't a nickname to soften the blow. But he's as competent a gunman as any guy labeled "Spike" or "Doggie" could be.

Mr. Humphries comes of good old Anglo-Saxon stock. The black sheep of a respectable family, he is in his early thirties, good-looking and a neat dresser. When Capone had to go away to Atlanta for a little while, Humphries succeeded Scarface Al as front man and mouthpiece for the gang in Chi-

cago. As such he became Public Enemy No. 1 on the police list.

A youthful desire for easy money and excitement put him where he is. His aggressive labors as union business agent and slugger brought him to the attention of the Capone mob which dominated Chicago's South Side, but was having trouble in the North Side with an upstart outfit headed by Mr. Bugs Moran. Humphries was assigned to exterminate Bugs' Army and he executed his job with such dispatch that Moran found himself a gangless gang leader, exiled to Wisconsin.

Filling the Capone shoes has not been easy. With the great Al imprisoned, the gang lost prestige, and when beer was legalized the gangsters concentrated on food and labor rackets, drawing a heap of indictments down upon their heads. Charged with conspiracy and with income tax evasion, and convicted of carrying a concealed weapon, Humphries "took it on the lam," became a fugitive from justice. He never wanted to be a gang chieftain, anyway; he values his life.

Humphries lacks Capone's flair for publicity. Capone talked too much anyway, his colleagues felt. Humphries is more discreet. He breaks his silence occasionally to insist that he is somebody else.

IRVING WECHSLER. In business as Irving Wexler, alias Waxey Gordon. Most acquisitive of racketeers. Has the Midas touch. Owns breweries, hotels and shows. Least liked and most feared of current Broadway bad boys. Pudgy, porcine, powerful.

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Mr. Wechsler is a middle-aged problem child, a graduate of New York's East Side ghetto. His nickname of Waxey is a corruption of Wechsler and a tribute to his slipperyness. Leaving school at an early age, he went to work picking pockets, and before he learned the ropes, he saw the inside of reformatories. His long criminal record is significant as showing he was punished while an unimportant thief and that he enjoyed immunity when he became a major menace with ample funds to spread where it would do the most good.

As a member of Dopey Benny Fein's gang, he acted as strongarm escort for striking garment workers. He was tried for murdering an innocent bystander, and was acquitted.

Before prohibition, he was in the laundry racket. Then he opened two real estate offices in Times Square, importing and distributing realty in case lots. With the profits, he bought half a dozen outlaw breweries in Newark and New York. When beer was legalized, Wechsler pulled strings and got government permits for his plants. He is not particular where his money goes, so long as it brings huge returns.

He is an able business man, and his outstanding characteristic is greed.

The man has a weakness for shows and showgirls. He has been the angel for several Broadway musical comedies, the latest being "Strike Me Pink," starring Jimmy Durante, Lupe Velez and Hope Williams. He invested $200,000 in that production, and when Hollywood was reluctant to lend Durante's services, the angel's helpers threatened to kidnap the comedian. Fortunately, Hollywood came across. During a performance Wechsler stands in the wings, watching his girls, and counting the house.

Life has been good to Wechsler, and yet he longs for a polish and refinement that can never be his. His own education having been gained in prison, he considers nothing too good for his son and heir; sends him to military school and gives him horses for Central Park gallops.

Wechsler is one gangster who reads books, or at least buys books. In quest of culture, he expended $2,200 for a combination bookcase and bar for his town house.

This Croesus of racketdom lives in simple style with his wife, son and daughter in a $6,000-a-year West End Avenue apartment, containing ten rooms, four baths and four servants. Also has a summer home at Bradley Beach, N. J. His suits are made by Al Capone's New York tailor at $225 a suit, and he buys twelve suits of silk underwear at a time at $10 the suit. He had net income totaling $1,616,690 during 1930-1931, according to an indictment for tax evasion recently slapped against him. There can be no doubt that he is an authentic Big Shot.

Since Wechsler was indicted, witnesses against him have been turning up in ditches, silenced by bullets. Wechsler should consider himself lucky if convicted and sent away to a safe prison *a la Capone.*

Waxey is on the spot himself and knows it.

MAX HOFF. Boo Boo to you. Philadelphia's favorite boogey man. In the hey-day of Pre-Repeal Philadelphia claimed its liquor traffic catered to more of the United States than did New York, but that may have been an excess of civic pride. A special grand jury reported of Mr. Hoff:

"Unquestionably one of the leaders of the liquor organization in this city."

But the grand jury did NOT indict.

Hoff has less to fear from the courts than from unfriendly gang torpedoes. He wears bullet-proof vests. Buys the vests in wholesale lots and makes presents of them to his friends who might need them. The soul of generosity. Gives turkeys to cops at Christmas, and at other times is said to pay the police to forget certain things and to escort his alcohol trucks.

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Boo Boo was a pal of the late Max Hassel, brewer of Reading, Lancaster and other Pennsylvania points. Hassel (until shortly before he was slain) was a pal of Waxey Gordon, of Newark and Broadway, who was a business associate of Owney Madden, of Manhattan, who is respected by Johnny Torrio, of Brooklyn and Chicago, who gave Al Capone his start in the Windy City. To complete the circle, Boo Boo has entertained Capone in Philly. Thus we see the system of interlocking directorates which rules our rackets. It's rule or ruin with them, and when pals fall out, the fireworks begin.

A diminutive, shrinking violet, Hoff is not a one-racket man. When liquor is legalized, he can still be a politician and boxing promoter. He was both when he chiseled in on the Philadelphia bout in which Gene Tunney defeated Jack Dempsey for the world's heavyweight championship. In a suit based on a mysterious deal on the eve of that battle, Hoff sought to collect a fifth of Tunney's ring earnings, but Tunney won out by disowning the Boo Boos of pugilism. It's men like Hoff who force boxers like Tunney to write for a living.

HARRY FLEISCHER. Leader of Detroit's Purple Gang, he was sought for months in the kidnaping of Charles A. Lindbergh, jr. When he finally surrendered, there was no evidence to hold him in that case, although other charges were not lacking.

Fleischer is a product of Detroit's ghetto. His gang was one of the first to kidnap bootleggers, bookmakers and other underworld frosting who were easy victims of the ransom racket because being lawbreakers themselves, they were in no position to complain to the authorities. From this, the gangs branched out until they were abducting respectable men, also women and children.

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HENRY SHAPIRO. A lesser member of the Purple Gang whose sole distinction was that he put himself on the spot. A gunman for years, he feared retribution, and so he committed suicide, setting a precedent for all on-the-spot men.

WILLIAM P. COLBECK. St. Louis' pride and joy. Born into a God-fearing family, he served his country as a soldier and his community as a plumber. Then politics tempted him and he became a city committeeman and boss of the booze and gambling rackets. Had he a larger field to work in, he might have excelled Capone. His gang, the Egan's Rats, sent trained alumni to the underworlds of Chicago, Detroit and Cleveland. Colbeck and his lieutenants happen to be in prison at the moment because they added hold-ups to their activities and made the mistake of tinkering with the mails. Now he and Capone are buddies at Atlanta. Capone likes spaghetti; Colbeck's favorite dish is corned beef and cabbage—hence his nickname of Dinty.

CARL SHELTON. Patriarch of the Shelton Brothers gang, Southern Illinois country boys who made good in a larger sphere of usefulness, East St. Louis. Convicted of mail robbery and barely squirming out of it, they concentrated on liquor, gambling and such without hindrance. They have not announced their plans after repeal.

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GEORGE MORAN. Mr. Bugs is a lucky fella; no metal can touch him. His Moran-O'Bannion-Weiss-Drucci-Zuta-Aiello gang was shot from under him in a fierce vendetta with the Capone South Siders, but Moran still lives to hunt ducks and to wise-crack.

Bugs is the General Custer of Chicago gangdom. Unlike the valiant General, Bugs has escaped scalping. His Little Big Horn was a public garage. He is haunted by the memory of that St. Valentine's Day when seven of his men were lined up against the wall of the garage and were executed by a firing squad of four men, two of them in police uniforms. That slaughter was the greatest in point of numbers and the most cold-blooded in all Chicago's gory history. The garage was a distributing point for beer and alcohol that the Moran gang wished upon North Side speakeasies.

Affable, oversized, Moran served three prison terms before he got smart. He was questioned in the murder of Jake Lingle, *the reporter who knew too much.*

"Who killed Lingle? Santa Claus, I'd say," wise-cracked Moran.

When Capone swiped his lieutenants and customers, Moran retired to the life of a country gentleman at his Wisconsin estate. Wearing high boots, leather jacket and carrying a shotgun, he is prepared to meet ducks, or Capones. He sleeps with a pistol under his pillow.

He made a comeback in Chicago as head of cleaning and dyeing industry. Also dabbles in stocks. Arrested for vagrancy, he won acquittal on the ground that no man who owns 100,000 acres of Florida land and 56 shares of A. T. & T. could be a vagrant.

His philosophy: "I never accused anybody of anything in my life. I never made peace with anybody that fought me."

Explaining his fondness for shotguns, Bugs says: "I am a lover of outdoor sports."

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ARTHUR FLEGENHEIMER. This Bronx (N. Y.) beer baron, his promising career interrupted by 3.2 beer and income tax trouble. With gangsters dying all around him or being interned in Atlanta, Mr. Flegenheimer went away to parts unknown for the sake of his health. He always takes it on the lam when bullets or indictments whiz about his homely head. His discretion has kept him alive where more valorous hoodlums have had gorgeous funerals. Yet he is a genuine big shot; government officials rated his gross income at $1,500,000 a year, derived from beer, narcotics, slot machines and the Harlem policy games.

Herr Flegenheimer is a swaggering, bull-necked, bashed-nose young fellow who chews tobacco, splits his infinitives, goes in for double negatives and wears oyster-colored caps with powder blue suits. Police regard him as a dangerous man with a gun, but not noticeably courageous when disarmed, and they recall that after one shooting scrape with detectives he was just a bundle of nerves and begged them for a sedative.

Historians of the Bronx beer trade record that Schultz entered the racket in a humble position, starting as bottle washer and working his way up through the grades of truck loader and driver, collector and gunman, attaining leadership through the violent deaths of Legs Diamond, Vincent Coll and others who blocked his path. Flegenheimer is a competent executive; does not take all details upon his own shoulders, but delegates them to trusty, straight-shooting subordinates. His weaknesses are women and rye.

For reasons of his own, the beer boss detests his family name of Flegenheimer, preferring Schultz—it fits

easier into a headline. As a callow lad, he served a term for housebreaking, but since then he has been arrested many times on charges ranging from larceny to homicide and invariably has been turned loose. Flegenheimer says he is a victim of police persecution, but the evidence seems to be to the contrary. Once a desk sergeant obligingly lost a package of evidence against his policy game collectors; another time the police gave $18,645 back to Flegenheimer, although the Federal authorities had a lien against the money. His political connections are such that he obtained a pistol permit and honorary appointment as deputy sheriff, despite his criminal record.

Behind Flegenheimer, backing him with dollars and sense, observers

JOHN TORRIO. Johnny to his friends—but who are his friends? The nearest approach to a commuting gangster. His is a crimson tale of two cities. From obscurity in Brooklyn, he flashed to power in Chicago with the aid of his apt scholar, Kid Capone, taken along for his machine-gun ability. Nearly fatally shot in 1925, Torrio abandoned his Illinois empire to Capone and sought peace in Italy, later sneaking back into Brooklyn and obscurity.

Now with Capone in prison, and many of his enemies under the sod, Torrio emerged again as head of a bail bond company in association with his latest protege, Dutch Schultz. Unfortunately, the company failed. What next?

(continued)

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ANTHONY CARFANO. Known for better or worse as Little Augie Pisano, a ghostly figure in Brooklyn's bad lands. Booze, slot machines, ponies and politics interest him strangely. Said to have supplied political clubhouses with bootleg beer. Was questioned in murders of Frankie Yale and Vannie Higgins, but has no prison record. A dapper dandy.

"I'm not what you think I am," says he, denying all rackets. He races a stable of twenty thoroughbreds at Saratoga and Florida tracks, and says the horses are his, not Capone's.

"Know Capone? Sure, but only in a social way. We grew up together."

ROGER TUOHY. A fat young man who heads the Tuohy Brothers gang which dared to challenge the Capone crowd in the liquor and labor rackets. Aside from the three Tuohy boys, the gang is made up mostly of ruralists recruited from as far away as Oklahoma. A prison record is a necessary qualification for membership. These plebian gangsters wear overalls and drive flivvers. They are too crude to last long. This year they took up the kidnaping racket, which is something no smart racketeer would touch.

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RALPH CAPONE. Bottles, for short. Elder brother of Scarface Al. A case of nepotism. Never would have amounted to much on his own merits. Climbed on his brother's silk shirttail.

FRANK NITTI. Silent, elusive cousin of Capones. Secretary of finance in Capone cabinet. Served prison term for dodging tax on $742,000 income over three-year period.

Lost his faith in Chicago law when policeman shot him in the liver in a raid on his Loop office. Cop then shot self in left arm and cried out that Nitti shot him. Nitti's faith in American justice restored when he was acquitted and the cop was convicted of assault.

Mr. Nitti is getting old and sanctimonious.

"I have never committed a crime of moral turpitude," he protests. "I have never done anything condemned by society as morally wrong."

LOUIS POPE. Up in Westchester County, N. Y., Mr. Pope has

a real estate office and automobile salesroom and gets written up now and then as a philanthropist who supplies food in abundance to the 100 most destitute cases in his community. At Christmas he impersonates Santa Claus and gives $1,000 to each of his many relatives. His luxuriously furnished farm house boasts a hand-carved staircase with a newel post containing a coat of arms.

But Mr. Pope is a bad man, according to such an authority as former Police Commissioner Edward P. Mulrooney, chairman of New York State's liquor board and a likely prospect for national liquor control administrator. Pope is not his right name, Commissioner Mulrooney says. The state board has barred him from the beer business as an undesirable. He was understood to have been interested in a Brooklyn brewery in the years when beer was beyond the pale, and rumor persists that he retains an under-cover equity in the business now that the government has whitewashed it with a permit to operate at a 3.2 frequency.

In Westchester Pope is a legendary figure. He has been arrested only once, although it appears to be common knowledge that he has a hand in supplying liquor throughout the suburban area. He was taken in custody in 1932 in connection with the seizure of $250,000 worth of liquor, a steam lighter, six trucks and four smaller automobiles at a Stamford, Conn. pier, but somehow the case against him was dismissed, and he resumed the role of philanthropist.

WILLIAM O'DONNELL.

Klondike is his nickname. He is boss of Chicago's O'Donnell beer clan. Headed old O'Donnell-Saltis bootlegging, murder and slugging combine. A veteran of the wars of 1920-33. A competent gunman.

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JOHN WHITE. Three-Fingered Jack is one of Chicago's ranking public enemies. He and O'Donnell are helping Murray Lewellyn Humphries to fill Al Capone's shoes.

JOHN McGURN. Machine Gun Jack is his trade listing. Real name is Vincent Gabardi. Indicted as participant in the St. Valentine Day Massacre, he has developed a fondness for outdoor sports. His last arrest came as he was competing in the Western open golf tournament, and it threw him off his game.

EMANUEL STREWL. Manny is Albany's example of a racketeer who should stick to his last. A bootlegger primarily, he got mixed up in the kidnaping of John J. O'Connell Jr., with unhappy results to all concerned.

WILLIAM LILLIEN. This New Jerseyite and his slain brother, Alex, were known as master smugglers, but perhaps their greatest contribution has been in the field of wireless communications. Their radio rendered Rum Row obsolete. Their syndicate operated a chain of wildcat radio stations along the New Jersey and Long Island shores, and had large vessels bringing liquor from Canada and Europe and snippety speedboats which met the mother ships and lightened their wet cargo. Being in constant communication with the land forces and advised of coast guard movements, the rum boats darted in and out without detection. Thus the stationary, easily watched Rum Row was killed by the march of science.

The syndicate enjoyed priceless advice from lawyers and bankers. Banks were supposed to have financed its operations, and a story is told of the syndicate directors holding their sessions in the director's room of an im-

portant bank. The radio headquarters were in a fortress-like mansion at Highlands, N. J., formerly owned by Oscar Hammerstein, jr., the theatrical producer. The Government charges that the syndicate took in $2,000,000 in six months. Since Alex Lillien was murdered in the gloomy mansion, brother William has not been happy.

The rum radio code referred to wet goods as "potatoes" and "bananas," and to the law as "Tom Mix."

OWEN VICTOR MADDEN.

Known to his familiars as Owney, a Liverpool cockney with an eagle-like profile, steely blue eyes, chalky complexion, fine clothes and open purse. He has attained the distinction of inspiring a book, being the lively original of Knucks McGloin of *"Rackety-Rax."*

Brought to this country by his parents when he was eleven, Madden, at eighteen, was leader of the Gopher Gang in Hell's Kitchen, New York, which makes him one of the last of the old-time gang leaders who used fists and dornicks instead of machine-guns. As a youth, Owney had his troubles with the police, and the desk sergeants likened him to a "banty rooster out of hell."

Prohibition made Mr. Madden a master racketeer, as it did all intelligent gangsters. Owney is *intelligence plus.* He was late in discovering about prohibition as until 1923 he was doing time in Sing Sing on the theory that he had arranged the demise of Little Patsy Doyle, a rival gangster. Madden maintains that was one crime he was not guilty of, and he seems miffed that out of forty-odd arrests, he should be convicted on the wrong charge.

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Paroled from prison on condition that he seek honest employment, Madden worked up interests in night clubs, breweries and boxers. He was associated with Big Bill Duffy in the Carnera trust, and with Big Bill Dwyer and Waxey Gordon in the Phoenix Brewery. Madden's No. 1 lager was the creamiest in town.

The spiteful press had Madden's parole revoked, but after spending another year in Sing Sing he is back on Broadway, with only income tax trouble to cloud his horizon. Having got religion in prison, he has turned over a new leaf and entered what he calls the real estate business.

Warden Lawes praised him as a good influence. As a racket kingpin, he is on the constructive side, opposed to useless murder. He has a temper, though, and can be aroused. Vincent Coll, the Mad Dog, who made a nuisance of himself kidnaping Broadway boys, was ambushed in a telephone booth a few blocks from the $5,000-a-year penthouse where Madden raises fancy pigeons. Owney likes pigeons; they mind their own business.

The philosophy of easy money was never better summed up than by Mr. Madden after he had invested his savings in a Brooklyn wet wash laundry and received nominal dividends.

"Legit rackets," he said scornfully, "there ain't no sense to 'em—you've got to wait for your dough."

WILLIAM J. DUFFY. Big Bill owns a large piece (a share) in the earnings of his very large protege, Primo Carnera, heavyweight boxing champion of the world (by courtesy of Jack Sharkey.) When the mountainous Venetian came to this country to exhibit his great strength and puny skill, Duffy took charge as manager, trainer and second and directed the barnstorming tour in which Carnera

bowled over one set-up after another, winning glory for himself and money for his management.

Mr. Duffy is an inspiration to all second-story workers, who wonder what to do upon quitting prison. A black-browed, stone-jawed Irishman who started life crudely, Duffy acquired polish and perception while doing a bit in Sing Sing. He rose to head of the prison's mutual welfare league and then built up a patronage system which still functions. Any man with Duffy's endorsement is the better for it in prison, and when he comes out it is to Duffy that he looks for employment or references. His fatherly advice and encouragement has saved many a burglar for a better racket.

"Big Bill" is a patron of the fine arts. Aside from possessing Carnera, who is a complete Alpine landscape by himself, Mr. Duffy took over an illustrious New York chophouse, renamed it Ye Olde English Tavern, made its bar a rendezvous for artists and writers. Even prohibition agents like Big Bill. When they had to raid the premises, they compelled patrons to pay for their steaks and chops before fleeing into the night.

When not on tour or swinging a towel in the prize ring, Duffy lives on Long Island with his wife and children. All successful racketeers are good family men. There's a moral there.

WILLIAM VINCENT DWYER. This "Big Bill" has been called entrepreneur of bootleggers, commodore of the wet navy and, of course, king of rum runners. If any man ever deserved kingship, Dwyer did. He operated in the grand manner

in the years when Rum Row stretched invitingly along the Atlantic coast, first at the three-mile limit and later at the twelve-mile mark. He also owned the best brewery in town.

Mr. Dwyer was the backbone of Rum Row. With coast guard men and police in his pay, with his fleet of eighteen ocean steamships and his swarm of speedboats, Dwyer brought $40,000,000 worth of liquor into the United States. For penance he passed a year and a half at Atlanta. Stomach ulcers earned him a parole.

Big Bill is a business-like, bespectacled man of middle age, mild and shy, who speaks softly out of the southwest corner of his mouth. He is the most decent and honest of all who engaged in the liquor racket. His friends say it is unfair to dub him a racketeer; they point out that he was never a gangster, that he was engaged in legitimate business before prohibition, and will be after prohibition. A group of big financiers, knowing Dwyer as a man of honor, backed him in his liquor importing.

A discerning biographer contends that Dwyer did more to bring about repeal than any statesman ever achieved by mere words; in the dark, dry years the Dwyer direct action not only slaked thirsts, but kept alive the American tradition of revolt against tyrannical laws. Therefore, we are told, the Dwyers must be revered as patriots and martyrs to the cause rather than as crass commercialists.

Moreover, William V. is a sportsman. He has a racing stable, owns race tracks in Florida, Ohio and Canada, is proprietor of a hockey club and had a professional football team for a time. He pioneered in professionalizing hockey. He mingles with the 600 Millionaires at Madison Square Garden, and has more money than most of them. He has salted away considerable coin, and would have much more were it not for his generosity to lawyers and panhandlers. Devoted to his wife and children, he has a Long Island estate with spacious lawns, alert police dogs. He provides an automobile for every member of the family.

He has done well for a boy who was reared along the Chelsea docks and chopped tickets at the Grand Opera House before the golden sun of prohibition awakened his ambition. Yet, biting the hand that fed him, he says:

"I wish I had never seen a case of whisky."

Mr. Dwyer avoids publicity, except on his sport activities. "Let the others talk themselves to death," he says.

Men in General

The foregoing personality sketches constitute a roll-call, a memorial service for the men of direct action, the gentlemen of the rackets, who prospered under prohibition and who (we hope) may not be with us much longer, certainly not in the same old style and at the same old stand. Through studying these representative racketeers and appraising their background and accomplishments, we may arrive at some understanding of how a racketeer is born, how he manages to get along in the world. Heredity, environment, education, ability, politics and public sentiment are factors in the problem.

We see that racketeers and gangsters are not confined to any one race or class. In racketdom you will find Anglo-Saxons and Celts, Latins, Teutons and Semites and every conceivable blood strain. There is no nationalism in crime, just rugged individualism. Many racketeers spring from respectable families, many more are crooked in the womb. A few, a very few, stem from the wealthy and educated class; the majority are slum products, children of the tenements, the street corners, pool-rooms, speakeasies and reformatories. Our slickest racketeers acquired their smoothness in prisons which, as the phrase-makers have it, are nothing but schools for crime.

Before prohibition beckoned, our modern racketeers were small-shots at pocket-picking, lush-rolling, porch-climbing, safe-cracking and other forms of misappropriation of property; likewise adept were they at slugging, strike-breaking and all around mayhem. We must remember that these avocations are always open to them; if our bootleggers can swallow their pride and return to their menial pursuits of yesteryear, repeal will not usher in the millennium.

Likewise available are some newer rackets that have not been repealed, such as bootlegging of gasoline to escape heavy taxes, a rapidly growing

racket that costs the states millions of dollars. The idea of muscling into labor unions and trade associations is another racket spreading from coast to coast.

Right now the racketeer is passing through a period of stress and strain, and craves our sympathetic consideration. Prohibition which converted petty larcenists into what the headlines call millionaire booze barons is vanishing like a bad dream, and conceivably our big-shots may have to go back to purse-snatching or shop-lifting to support the wife and kiddies. The humiliation of all this can be imagined, for the liquor racketeer's prestige and social standing were perhaps even more precious to him than money.

However, the leaders of our old rackets are likely to be leaders of our new rackets, whatever form the new schemes will take. The quality of leadership will not long be denied expression. The rabble subjects in the rackets may starve or turn to honest work, but the kings will carry on.

After all, we've always had racketeering, and doubtlessly we always shall. Racketeering is a new word in the dictionaries, but the extortion and violence it stands for date back to the beginning of man and property. Therefore, let the text for today be: Words change, but conditions remain.

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