

THE SCIENCE NEWS-LETTER

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SCIENCE DID NOT INSPIRE CHICAGO MURDER, UNIVERSITY RECORDS SHOW

The killing was done "in the cause of science!" So Nathan E. Leopold, Jr. and Richard Loeb declared when they confessed slaying young Robert Franks.

Yet investigation by Science Service at the University of Chicago where the two youths were students, fails to show that their criminal tendencies or erratic tastes were suggested in any way by their university work. Neither Leopold nor Loeb made science a specialty. Leopold was taking law and Loeb majored in History

Data obtained from the office of the recorder of the University of Chicago show that Leopold spent one year at the University of Chicago, then attended the University of Michigan for two years, and then returned to the University of Chicago for another year. The records show he obtained a smattering of elementary science in high school and at the University of Michigan, but that he did not take a single scientific course at the University. He specialized on language, studying ten different tongues, but studied no ornithology. His professed knowledge of psychology is based on only one elementary course and one experimental course.

Loeb's record of two years at Michigan and two at Chicago shows that he studied no science except one elementary course each of geography and physics.

The Italian book Leopold claims as his inspiration is a collection of fifteenth century tales called "Irazionamenti" or "The Reasoning" by Pietro Aretti. It is a story of faithless wives, courtesans, royal immorality, and Boccacian murders, but the book has nothing whatever to do with science or psychology and was not suggested by any of his instructors.

Leopold's three law professors say they knew the boy only as a name on class list and that nothing in his studies could have encouraged morbid studies. They admit Leopold's brilliance but express joy that he never passed the law course. What the boys know of physics and chemistry is superficial. Before Leopold confessed he was asked if he knew that typewriting experts could trace the ransom note. He said that he did not and became uneasy. On Sunday the police dragged the lagoon with an electro-magnet to pick up the hidden portable typewriter. Leopold said it was of no use because the machine was in a leather case and when police informed him the magnet would work despite leather he seemed ashamed of his ignorance.

The boys brought hydrochloric acid to mutilate their prospective victim only to find later it did not burn his face enough. They spent a day trying vainly to remove blood from the automobile robe, then tried vainly to burn it, and finally buried it.

Leopold claims to be an ornithologist, and he has a room full of birds,

mostly owls, ducks, and other large birds, but many if not all of them are specimens of commercial taxidermy. Bird study was Leopold's pastime, not a scientific study. He does show a fair knowledge of birds superficially, but only a nature lover's knowledge and not a scientist's. He is reported to have taught three classes in ornithology and one of these was at a woman's club. These had nothing whatever to do with the university. He probably merely tutored on the outside. Aside from his hobby of bird study, Leopold knew no biology.

Doctor Krohn, the alienist, says that Leopold invalidates his own argument by clearly indicating that he knows he did wrong. Furthermore, Leopold told reporters that he merely spoke thus to make his deed and arguments consistent. He repeatedly asserts that the killing of any animal is repulsive to him but during a meal he brazenly asserted that human flesh was one of the few raw meats he had never tried. He says our tastes in eating are merely matter of habit. In all this big talk and conceit he is simply fighting his conscience and his captor. A taunting reporter ridiculed his notorious epithet of intellectual giant so Leopold began a discourse on mentality and called the five divisions of the brain by their scientific names, thus showing a superficial knowledge. His friend, Miss Susan Lurie, says that he was fond of analyzing emotions and that his usual conversation had morbid tendency.

Loeb, who was obviously a follower not a leader, had an intense interest in crime, according to Miss Lurie and other students. He spent quite as much time on his gin-drinking escapades and on reading the several detective story magazines to which he subscribed as on his studies.

Three university officials, whose names are withheld, attribute the crime to lack of home discipline and religious training rather than to any scientific studies.

FRANKS SLAYERS CALLED RECOGNIZED ABNORMAL TYPES BY ALIENIST

A rational psychiatric explanation of the acts of Nathan E. Leopold, Jr., and Richard Loeb, brilliant and youthful slayers of Robert Franks, would result from a study of these two youths. This is the opinion of Dr. William A. White, noted alienist and superintendent of St. Elizabeth's Hospital for the Insane, a government institution in Washington, D. C.

Except in their anti-social aspects, the acts of Leopold and Loeb do not differ in grotesqueness and peculiarity from thousands that occur every day and may be observed in institutions for the insane. It is to be expected, Dr. White declared, that when studied their acts will be found to fall into one of the various standard categories of mental disorders.

Noting that both Leopold and Loeb were brilliant young students, and that Leopold allowed his intellectual activities to expand over a wide range, Dr. White called attention to the fact that such intellects that border on genius often go to smash shortly after adolescence.

Land crabs, which are a nuisance to truck growers in Florida, may be exterminated by dropping a small quantity of carbon bisulphide in their burrows.
