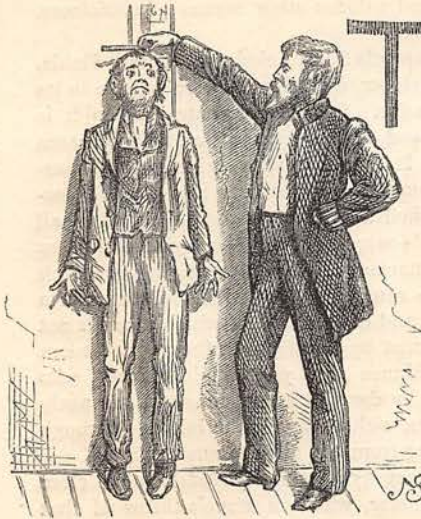


POLICE 'PRENTICES.



THE gathering of candidates for employment in the Metropolitan Police Force, to be found in an obscure little apartment at Scotland Yard every Tuesday morning, is a particularly motley one.

Amongst three hundred men enlisted during four months recently, there were no less than about eighty trades and occupations represented. There were tailors and greengrocers, painters and poulterers, bricklayers and barmen, clerks and cooks, servants and sawyers, bakers and butchers, farmers, footmen, gamekeepers, grooms, coopers, carpenters, waiters, woodmen, warehousemen, and some score of others. These were the accepted candidates; it may easily be imagined, therefore, that the weekly gatherings from which they were selected are usually of a very heterogeneous character.

The number varies materially with the season of the year, the state of the labour market, and so on; but whatever it may be, the first test to which all are subjected—the simple measurement of height—invariably weeds out a considerable proportion of them. No man is admitted to the Metropolitan Police who stands less than five feet seven inches without shoes or stockings, and it is rather amusing to sit by and quietly watch, as one after another they come up to the standard. One is conscious of a good couple of inches to spare, and stalks up with a dignified self-complacency; the next evidently has his doubts about it, and comes forward with a face full of anxious concern. He stretches up his eyebrows, purses his under lip, sticks out his thumbs with painful rigidity, and finally endeavours to make a little use of his toes. This won't do, however. "Turn up your toes," is the stern mandate, and down he drops, perhaps a quarter of an inch below regulation height. If with the toes turned up there seems to be any doubt about the heels being fairly on the ground, a slip of paper is put underneath, and lightly pulled. The raising of the heels will of course liberate the paper.

It is evident that many of the candidates regard this punctilious adherence to rule with supreme dissatisfaction, and, well knowing their own shortcomings, place themselves under the standard with an air of sullen indifference. Five-and-twenty per cent. are often

rejected in this preliminary test, and notwithstanding that the requirements of the force as to height are most explicitly stated in a printed sheet sent to every applicant for employment, it is not an unusual thing for a man to come from a distance of fifty or a hundred miles, to be measured and found wanting.

The educational test comes next. Every policeman must be able to read and write, and those who have failed in the first stage of the proceedings having been dismissed, the others are requested to seat themselves and fill up a printed form. This is manifestly a particularly tough piece of business with many of them. There is a deal of tongue-rolling and elbow-squaring, and one or two of the biggest and burliest are evidently cudgelling their brains most cruelly in their efforts to keep pace with their more practised fellows. The slowest man beyond all comparison is the biggest, and there is a little quiet merriment at his expense, as he plods desperately on long after the others have finished. The standard here is not a very exalted one, and failure is comparatively rare. Every man, however, who joins the force is required to attend the divisional education classes until he receives from the instructor a certificate of proficiency. For this schooling the regulations of the force require him to pay twopence a month.

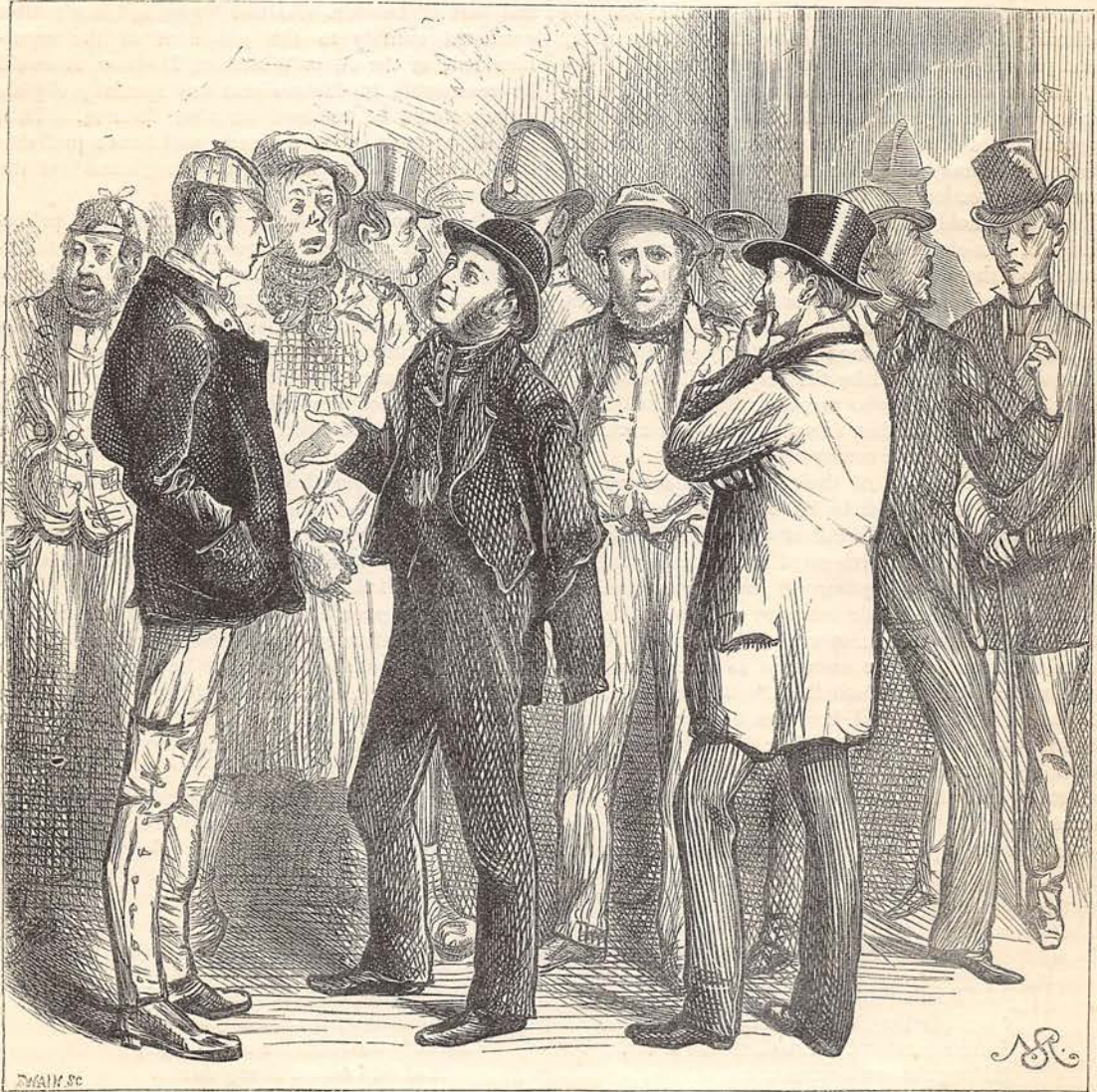
The next part of the business is far more serious. Every man is subjected to a rigid surgical examination, which includes rather a severe test of eyesight: a printed slip is pasted up on the wall of the surgeon's room, and the candidate is required to stand at a given distance and read from it. Many fail here—indeed, this medical ordeal altogether is often very disastrous to candidates. On a recent occasion no less than twenty-six out of thirty-seven were rejected by the Chief Surgeon.

Of those found eligible, a minute personal description is taken, for any future purposes of identification; and—assuming that matters of character bear close investigation—they are formally inspected by one of the Assistant Commissioners, and forthwith enrolled members of the "preparatory class," with an income of fifteen shillings a week.

Training for active service commences next morning, at the Wellington Barracks. The inquisitive stranger who follows on to the drill-ground here may perhaps do so in the expectation of witnessing some rather diverting rehearsals of policemen'ship. To "run in" a malefactor in a business-like and dignified manner, is an accomplishment which it is only reasonable to suppose would be a matter of special instruction; and for obstreperous offenders who decline to run, the "frog-trot"—the plan of carrying a man on all-fours as it were—is a still more complicated feat of constabulary art. One might almost expect to find some frisky and muscular member of the force specially devoted to the duty of enacting the part of the prisoner who, as the newspapers say, "was very violent on his

way to the station," while the recruits struggled with him under the experienced tuition of an inspector. Rehearsals of actual duty in this way, if somewhat arduous, might at times prove at least very entertaining. Nothing, for instance, could be more thoroughly enjoyable than the enactment of a little manœuvre practised some time ago upon an active and intelligent

cises differing only very slightly from ordinary military drill. The object of it is, perhaps, in some degree to impart to them a little smartness of deportment, but more particularly that they may be able to manœuvre with ease and rapidity when, as often happens, they are required to move through the streets in masses or to control a crowd by concerted action. They are



CANDIDATES FOR "THE FORCE" (p. 308).

officer, while engaged in belabouring a mob with his truncheon. The leather case of his weapon hung at his belt behind him, and observing this, some facetious Hercules seized hold of it, slipped it over his shoulder, and, amidst roars of laughter, actually ran away with the indignant officer on his back. Unfortunately for the interest of our article, the preparatory training of the police does not include any kind of practice for an emergency of this description.

The men parade at a quarter before nine in the morning, and forthwith commence a course of exer-

taught to march in single files, in fours, in subdivisions, sections, and so on; and as they are, as a rule, undeniably superior to army recruits, both in intelligence and respectability of character, the precision they usually attain in a few days compares very favourably with the result of a similar length of training with the military. They are drilled steadily for about ten days, during which time every man has the use of an instruction book, which he is expected to study at his leisure. In this he will find general rules for his guidance when actually on duty. Thus: "If an

accident occurs, and any person is injured or insensible, he must send some one, or go himself, for the nearest medical man, get assistance and a stretcher from the station, and convey the person to an hospital or station, as may be directed by the medical man," &c. And again: "A constable who has apprehended a person must attend the police court the next morning, clean and properly dressed, with his prisoner, and be quite ready when the case is called on. On entering the witness-box he is to stand 'at attention,' and pay all possible respect to the magistrate."

To the contents of this instruction book the inspector in charge of the recruits takes occasional opportunities of adding such advice, or such explanations, as he may deem necessary; and at one time it was the practice for the Superintendent of the A Division to hold a kind of class for testing their knowledge of this elementary manual by questions, and by requiring them to state what would be their course under certain fictitious but probable circumstances. This, however, has been discontinued. Practically, it is found that the only teaching of any great value is that which is enforced by the responsibility of actual duty, and that men who are too minutely instructed are apt to rely upon their instructions to the exclusion of their judgment and common sense.

During the period of their drill and instruction, recruits are considered to be on approbation only. Those who prove inefficient at the end of it may be dismissed, or may be relegated to the drill yard for further training. All going well, however, at the end of a fortnight the whole company will appear before the Chief Commissioner, or one of the Assistant Commissioners, and will be sworn in as constables, and required to sign the "Oath Book." These clerks, and cooks, and bakers, and butchers have now become officers of the Crown, and will be forthwith decorated with belt and buttons, and "posted" to any of the nineteen land divisions that may happen to require reinforcement.

As regards pay, these nineteen divisions stand on an

equal footing. Every man begins with twenty-four shillings a week. The duty, however, varies very materially, and the distribution of the recruits depends mainly on their individual fitness for different districts. Thus, a young and slightly-built man will probably be appointed to one of the outer police divisions, where work is comparatively light; while a man of mature years and firmer frame will be dispatched to a central part of London. As this "posting" is a matter entrusted entirely to the judgment of the superintendent of the A, or Whitehall, Division, it would be reasonable to assume that any specially eligible recruit would be retained for that division. This, indeed, appears to be the case, and hence probably the A's are regarded as the "crack regiment" of the force.

Before permanently taking up his quarters, a policeman used at one time to go as it were in leading-strings for a week. He was required to do five hours' duty a day in company with some experienced officer on one of the busiest divisions. This, however, has been discontinued. On being made a constable he now proceeds at once to the scene of his regular duty, though he is not immediately appointed to a beat. For a week he is retained at the police-station, where of course he has many opportunities of becoming familiar with the practical details of the work that lies before him. Occasionally, perhaps, during this period he goes out for an hour or two on beat duty, or it may be that he is required for some reason or other to attend at one of the police courts.

Thus, by degrees, does a man cease to be a cook or a cobbler, and develop into a law officer of the Crown. Once on his beat, he has only to be strictly attentive to duty, to resist temptations to drink and everything else that is wrong, to be civil and respectful to the public and obedient to his superiors, to command his temper, speak the truth, be prudent, valiant, vigilant, intelligent—and he may hope in course of time to rise to the higher ranks of the service: so, at least, says the little book. G. F. MILLIN.

APRIL SHOWERS.

FAST falls the fleeting April shower,
 Splashing the busy street;
 And overhead the dark clouds lower,
 Hiding the sun's retreat.
 Walking along through mud and rain,
 Two heedless figures stray;
 They care not a jot if it rain or not,
 For their thoughts are far away.
 Nestling close to each other's side,
 Arm to arm firm-pressed,
 By the merest chance two hands out-glide,
 And then together rest;
 Two pairs of eyes, up-glancing, meet,
 Then droop and turn away;
 And the old, old story is told in the street,
 This rainy April day.

Wonder we that their faces are bright,
 Unheeding the passing shower?
 Already for them the sky is light,
 And rich with a sunny dower.
 All clouds of doubt have vanished now;
 The dancing sunbeams play;
 And the future teems with golden gleams
 Of a merry, joyous May.

Ah! time and place, they matter not
 When fond hearts meet together—
 Love chooses not one certain spot,
 Nor careth he for weather!
 But time and place have often wrought
 As allies full strong in power;
 And thus are hearts together brought
 By the help of an April shower. G. W.