

## “BOBBY” ON HIS BEAT.

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“Half-past one, and an uncommonly misty morning!”

It's a far cry back to 1252, but that is the date of the appearance of the policeman—if not on the earth, at any rate in this country. In that year King Henry III., of mixed memory, issued an Assize of Arms, requiring that a high constable should be constituted for every hundred or vill, and a petty constable for every parish, whose duty was to summon the inhabitants to quell any disturbance of the peace, and to deliver offenders into the custody of the sheriff. Watchmen were also established in cities and boroughs, and all persons robbed of their goods could recover damages from the local

guardians. The times have changed since then, and we now disperse the inhabitants, by means of the Riot Act, in case of a disturbance of the peace, and as for recovering anything from the local guardians—well, he would be uncommonly innocent who attempted it.

In the same century a curious experiment at Home Rule was attempted in the City of London, on the principle of “every man his own policeman,” but it was hardly a success. The “Chronicles of the Mayors and Sheriffs” tell us that “The citizens kept watch and ward, riding by night through the City with horse and arms, though among them a countless multitude of persons obtruded themselves, and some evil-minded persons, under pretext of searching for aliens, broke open many houses, and carried off such goods as were there to be found. To restrain the evil designs of these men, the watches on horseback were therefore put an end to, and watch was kept by the respective wards, each person keeping himself well armed within his own ward.” Judging by these precautions, the burglars of the thirteenth century were evidently a determined set of fellows.

In the days of Edward III. bands of marauders went through the City both by day and night with swords and bucklers, beating and robbing people, and a similar state of things prevailed, more or less, in our large towns down to the days of Henry VIII. It is recorded of this gentle monarch that he hanged “of great thieves and of petty thieves three score and twelve thousand,” after which statement it seems a little superfluous to add that he “greatly terrified the rest.” The remedy proved, however, to be but temporary, for in the reign of Charles I. a night watch of 1097 armed men was required to guard the houses and shops of the citizens. The second Charles, whose knowledge of the London streets by night was extensive and peculiar but scarcely creditable, hit upon the happy idea of affixing a lamp to every tenth door, and experience soon proved that a little light was more effective in suppressing crime than a whole army of watchmen.

The beginning of the present century saw the notorious Charlies still in possession of



the streets. Ancient men they were, worn out with hard work as porters during the day, and then taking up their posts in the street sentry boxes for the night. Burdened with years, and frequently more or less crippled; dressed in voluminous greatcoats to impede their already laggard steps; with ears muffled in rags and scarves lest they should be disturbed in their meditations by prowling footsteps; drowsy and not infrequently disguised in drink, it was little they could do except doze in their sentry boxes, and from time to time sally forth and mumble out, "Half-past one, and an uncommonly misty morning!" No better picture could be presented of these old City watchmen, and the principles on which they acted, than has been drawn for us by Shakespeare in "Much Ado about Nothing." Their pay was but sixpence a night, and they about earned it. They survived the introduction of gas, and still waddled round with their lanterns until 1829, when they were suppressed.

But we are concerned now with the common or area policeman, the "bobby" or "peeler," as he is indifferently called, after Sir Robert Peel, whose New Police Act of 1829 called him into existence. His outward appearance is familiar enough when he is not wanted; but the mysteries that lie hidden beneath his closely-buttoned tunic, the methods which he adopts after the shades of night have fallen, and the adventures with which he meets, but of which he seldom speaks, these are matters of which the man in the street knows practically nothing. How I was little by little introduced behind the scenes, and with what key I gradually unlocked some secret chambers of the police department, are matters which would probably have no interest for the gentle reader. We are concerned with results rather than with processes, and some of these results are here detailed, although consideration for the public safety compels me to withhold much that would be both interesting and startling.

"What must I do to find out all about the police?" I ingenuously asked of an official at Scotland Yard.

"Better get run in, then you'll know enough," was the candid but somewhat disappointing reply, followed up by the remark that if I did not depart pretty quickly he would do himself the pleasure of showing me what the inside of a cell was like. I stood not on the order of my going, but I went without delay. It is evident that the Information Department

at Scotland Yard is not yet in proper working order.

Some days later I met with more success. In a little cottage in a northern suburb lives a recently retired inspector, who was good enough to tell me much and to put me in the way of finding out more.

"How can I become a police constable?" I asked.

"Well, if you are not more than twenty-seven years old, and if you are five feet nine in height, and if your health is thoroughly good, and if you can read and write decently, and if your character will bear investigation, then you can write to the Candidates'



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Department, Scotland Yard, for a form of application. When you have filled this up and sent it in, the Department will verify your references, and will do it pretty closely. I can assure you. I joined at twenty, and they made inquiries about my conduct when a boy at school! If your references are all right you will then be examined in elementary knowledge, and will have to pass the doctor. By the way, the medical examination is exceptionally severe, and it is useless to apply unless you are perfectly sound. If they finally decide to accept you, you will be sent to the Section House in Kennington Lane, where you will have



from three to six weeks' drill and instruction. The people of the neighbourhood used to think that the building was a workhouse, and in one sense they were right enough, for the candidates don't have an idle time of it. Here you will be paid fifteen shillings a week, out of which you will be charged a shilling for lodging and from seven to eight shillings for board, leaving six shillings in hand. After leaving the Section House you will have to attend the Police Court for a week or two, in order to learn how to give evidence, and will then be sent on beat with a companion for a few days. When it is thought that you know the ropes pretty thoroughly, you will be sent on duty in the ordinary way."

"And what are the prospects after going through all this?"

"Your prospects will depend mainly upon yourself. You may rise to be a Superintendent at £475 a year, or you may be speedily dismissed from the force. But I suppose you were referring to wages. You would start at twenty-four shillings a week, with a yearly rise of a shilling a week until you got thirty-two shillings. Usually a man must serve eight years as an ordinary constable before he can expect promotion. After fifteen years' service you would be pensioned if unfit for duty, but after twenty-five years' service you can claim it. The full pension is two-thirds of the salary, and for my part I was glad to claim it."

"But you are not old, and it seems a pity to give up a third of one's income," I remarked.

"Yes, but a pensioned man is safe. Nothing can take my pension away now that it has been granted, and there are many things a man can do to earn more. When I was in the force I had a perfectly clean record, never a bad mark in my whole career; but if anything had gone wrong in the division over which I was inspector, whether through the stupidity of some constable or for any other reason, the blame would have fallen on my shoulders, and all my past record would not have averted it. So it was with a real sense of relief that I claimed my pension."

About a week after the above conversation I strolled forth half an hour after midnight in pursuit of knowledge. It was in an outlying district of South London, and several burglaries had recently taken place, so that I expected to find the neighbourhood full of policemen. But not one could I see. Slowly I paced up and down, my footsteps

echoing strangely in the deserted streets. It is curious how different London looks by moonlight. The street down which I was pacing, trying to realise the feelings of a constable on duty, was familiar enough by daylight, but now its deserted condition gave it increased length, and the strange contrast of light and shadow made the houses look more lofty and fantastic. Not a soul was to be seen, and only my own footsteps disturbed the silence. I sauntered up and down quite six times, and had neither seen nor heard a trace of the police.

"No wonder that robberies take place, when the streets are left in this disgraceful state of neglect," I was inwardly commenting as I stepped into the shadow of a house, when suddenly I was seized by the arm, the light of a bull's-eye lantern flashed in my face, and I found myself in the clutches of three constables and a sergeant!

"Now then, young fellow, where are you going?" gruffly demanded the sergeant.

"Oh, er—er—er, I'm—er—going home," I gasped, trying to look as innocent as I could.

"That tale won't do, young man," answered one of the constables; "I've had my eye on you for the last twenty minutes, and you've loitered up and down this street six times, and what's more, you've been trying to open the window at No. 37."

"Look here, sergeant," I urged vigorously, "there has been no policeman here, because I've been watching to see, and the unprotected state of the street is a disgrace to the force."

"Oh, you've been watching for the police, have you? Just about what we suspected you were after. Now, you'll just come along quietly, and make no noise about it, or it will only make matters worse for you."

It was clear that resistance was useless, and so the Special Commissioner of the WINDSOR was ignominiously conveyed to the local police-station. Still I was on the road to learn more of the methods of the force, although the position of affairs was beginning to assume an inconvenient aspect. Luckily no one was about at this hour to see my innocence thus taken into custody.

At the police-station I was taken into the charge-room and placed inside an iron railing at the one end, with a scale of feet marked against the wall for the purpose of measuring the height of the prisoner. The inspector on duty took his seat at a desk opposite, and all the constables available promptly crowded into the room and fixed me with



their gaze. I subsequently learnt that this was for purposes of identification.

Constable 397 Q then proceeded to charge me with loitering with intent to commit a felony! He told how he had watched me for twenty minutes loitering up and down the street and apparently looking out for the police. It seems that I had passed close by him six times, so close in fact that I almost brushed against him. He also stated that I had attempted to open the pantry window of No. 37, which abutted on the street. I then remembered that when I first sauntered down the street I had slipped on a piece of orange peel, and in recovering myself had struck my arm against the low window in question. But how did he know that the window had been touched?

Constable 378 Q corroborated these statements, saying that he had watched me from the opposite side of the street, while the sergeant and third constable stated that they were signalled by



the last witness shortly before I was apprehended.

The whole business was a mystery to me. The descriptions of my movements were so minutely accurate that it was impossible to doubt their word, and yet I could have sworn that the street was absolutely deserted.

The inspector then asked what I had to say for myself, first cautioning me that anything I said might be used in evidence against me. What I said it is impossible to relate, for it has all passed from me, and I have but a vague recollection of impassioned assertions of innocence, combined with assurances that I was only a harmless journalist who, after burning the midnight oil, had gone out for a breath of fresh air. A

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broad grin on the faces of those constables who were not within range of the inspector's eye showed how much of my tale was believed.

In the end the inspector said that he would not enter the charge for a few hours in order that inquiries might be made, but that in the meantime, as the charge-room was wanted for another case that had arrived, I must be removed to the cells. Now I felt happier, not at the prospect of the cells, but because there was a fair chance that I should soon be set free.

There are less comfortable ways of passing



"I made myself fairly comfortable."

the night than in a police cell. I was conveyed along a well-lighted passage with massive doors ranged down one side, and through one of these I passed into temporary durance vile. Imagine a lofty room about twelve feet by six feet, with walls lined with white tiles and a floor of cement, well warmed with hot-water pipes and lighted with a large heavily-barred window by day and at night by an inner window outside which a jet of

gas was burning, and you have a fair idea of the place. The furniture consisted solely of a massive oak bench placed along one side and scrubbed spotlessly clean, as indeed was the whole cell. The door contained a sliding shutter, and an electric button hard by served to summon the jailer in case of necessity. Here, with the aid of a couple of rugs and a straw-stuffed canvas pillow, I made myself fairly comfortable, only being disturbed by the vocal efforts of a lady two cells off who persisted in rendering "Sister Mary Jane's Top Note" in a great variety of keys.

About nine o'clock I was released, the result of the police inquiries having proved satisfactory, and I departed in search of a more satisfactory breakfast than that of which I was invited to partake in my cell. But out of evil comes good, and the result of this adventure was that I struck up quite friendly relations with the constables and officers who had been concerned in my arrest. Little by little, as the result of many brief chats, I was told some of the details of the inner working of the police system, and much that was thus learnt I have for convenience here woven into connected conversations, only suppressing those facts which it would not be for the public safety to repeat.

One night, when slowly pacing up and down with the constable who first noticed my suspicious doings, the conversation turned upon night duty and its hardships.

"Yes, night duty is not over pleasant," remarked 397 Q. "In winter weather it's uncommonly cold work, for you are not allowed to go above a certain pace, and when there's a driving rain you generally get pretty wet. About 98 per cent. of the men break down during their first five years' service, usually through exposure to the weather. Last year sixty-three men were invalided, and twenty-four of them had lung disease or rheumatism; and out of fifty who died, thirty had various lung troubles. Then, of course, the work is very monotonous; you may sometimes go for weeks together without seeing or hearing anything unusual. Still some men in the force prefer night duty, probably because there is more money about. I don't mean bribery or blackmailing—happily such offences are extremely rare—but money may often be got for giving an extra eye to premises, for calling people's attention to an open window, and for knocking up in the morning. But there is not so much of the last nowadays; alarm clocks are so cheap,



and a policeman is not always to be depended upon. He may be called away to watch a house or to assist in an arrest just at the time his customer wants knocking up.”

“You must get pretty hungry and thirsty before morning?”

“Well, no, not often. You see, we generally bring with us a can of tea or coffee with an arrangement for keeping it hot, which we hide in somebody’s front garden till we want it; and it’s easy to have a sandwich or two in one’s pocket. We are only allowed to buy drink at a public-house if a superior officer is present, but non-intoxicants can be always obtained. It’s a technical breach of the rule, but no notice is taken of it.”

“I suppose you are generally glad of the chance to make an arrest?” I observed; “it is a mark in a man’s favour, is it not?”

“No, sir, it is not,” replied the constable emphatically. “There is no greater mistake, though a very common one, than to think that. The first principle of police work is this, ‘Prevention is better than cure.’ The object of our existence is not to catch criminals, but to prevent crime. That is why I ran you in the other night. You had not committed a burglary, but we thought you were on that game, so we just took steps to prevent it. Of course if a crime is committed on a man’s beat, he is expected to catch the offender; but he gets much more credit with his superiors if he looks after his beat so well that no crimes are committed. If the man on night duty is thoroughly up to his work, burglaries ought to be quite rare. As a matter of fact there were last year only 514 cases of burglary by night, as against 1501 cases of housebreaking by day. This is due partly to the fact that there are six or seven men on duty at night to one by day, and also to the much greater ease with which a robbery can be effected in the daytime.”

“But what methods do you adopt to prevent burglaries at night?”

“Well, in the first place we have to keep our eyes and ears open. The constable who stands gossiping with people will very likely find that a crime has been committed the while. Then, as soon as the streets are quiet, we go round and carefully examine all doors and windows to make sure that they are fast, and next we put up our marks. Every low wall and the doors and windows of unoccupied houses, as well as every other place likely to be attempted by thieves, are all carefully marked in such a way that if a cat climbs over the wall, or anyone touches a door or window, we know it when we next pass.”

The constable proposed to give me a practical proof of this. Just round the corner, but in the next beat, was an empty house, and at my friend’s suggestion I went softly up to it and gave the door a gentle push and also shook one of the windows. We then awaited events, and in about three minutes we saw a signal made at the street corner. On going up we found the man on duty and another constable, who had also seen the signal and hastened to the spot, and were told in a whisper to keep a very sharp look-out, for someone had attempted both the door and window of that empty house within the last ten minutes. On returning to our beat, my friendly policeman explained the mystery and showed me all the ingenious contrivances included under the purposely misleading name of “marks.” Here I am compelled to be reticent: a description of the methods adopted would be very interesting, but such an explanation would at once deprive the public of one of its most effective safeguards by night.

“Now, perhaps, you will understand what I mean,” added my informant, “when I say that the night policeman’s worst enemy is *cats!* They prowl about over walls and remove our marks and so lead us off on false scents. I remember once noticing that something had gone over a wall, and, of course, I stood still for a time and listened intently. Soon I heard a footstep behind the house and then a scrambling sound, followed by other suspicious noises. By this time I felt sure someone was about, and so I silently signalled from the corner, and got the house quietly surrounded by men, only to find that it was nothing but a cat after all.”

“By the way, constable, how is it that so few policemen are to be seen about the streets either by day or night?”

“Well,” he laughed, “I should have thought that your experience the other night would have taught you better than that. It is not our business to be seen, *but to see*. When a policeman hears anyone coming at night it is his business to see what the man is after, and for this reason it is very desirable that he should not be seen. Nothing is easier than to step into a porch, or behind a tree, or in the shadow of a house, and remain perfectly hidden. You may be quite sure of this: whenever a man walks the streets of London by night a good many pairs of eyes are watching him. You may remember that the late Lord Truro some years ago publicly stated that he did not see a single policeman as he rode home one night from the House



of Lords to the suburbs. Well, the Commissioner made inquiry, and it was found that every policeman on the route had seen him pass and had noted the time."

"What is the best way of protecting one's house? Keeping a light burning or what?" I inquired.

"Lights are of no use whatever. You must bear in mind that burglars usually watch a house for some days before they attempt it, and they soon get to know any little tricks of that sort. The best protection for a house is a crying baby! No burglar will make the attempt if he hears a baby.

A dog is not a bad thing, but it is apt to die or get mysteriously lost a day or two before the robbery takes place. It should be remembered that the window is the usual point of attack. During last year, out of 514 burglaries in London, the entrance was effected by a window in 335 cases. All the largest burglaries were managed in this way. Why, the ordinary method of fastening a window is simply ridiculous! Anybody can push the catch back with a knife."

"What part of the work do policemen hate most?" I asked.

"Catching dogs, without a doubt," he answered.

"Look "I stood still for a time and listened intently."



how ridiculous it is to see a policeman dodging round to try and catch some wretched little dog, while

the bystanders chaff him and tell him to whistle for assistance. Then again you never know what kind of a temper the brute may have, and a dog-bite is anything but pleasant. Last year no less than sixty-two of our men were bitten."

The time was rapidly going and day was now breaking, so I only put one more inquiry. "I suppose, constable, that life in the force has its little compensations though—amiable cooks, mutton-pie, and the like, eh?"

"Well, of course, that's an old joke," he answered; "but I never saw any mutton-pie, though the servants are generally fast enough at making friends. It's the uniform that does it. The average servant-girl will "go" for anything that has a uniform on, whether it's a policeman, or a soldier, or a postman. I don't say but what a man here and there may get something handed up from the area, but you may take my word that it's a precious rare thing."

Thus much I learnt from the constable. Soon afterwards I had several chats with the sergeant, as he strolled about at night visiting the men on



their beats, and noting if each was doing his duty. Each sergeant is responsible for a certain number of men, while the sergeants in their turn are looked after by the inspectors.

“Well, sergeant, I suppose you’ve had a good many years in the force?” I began.

“Yes, I’ve served over twenty years, and have seen some changes in my time. It’s wonderful how London grows, and of course the force has to keep pace with it. Including all ranks, we number 15,271 men, and that sounds large until you remember that the Metropolitan Police District covers 688 square miles. During last year 22 miles of new streets were formed, and 13,141 new houses erected, so that you see things are moving along. The rateable value of the area we protect amounts to close upon £39,000,000, but it is of course impossible to estimate the enormous value of the property involved.”

“I suppose you have had plenty of adventures in your career?”

“Well, not so many. You see, the average policeman’s life is a very humdrum one. The cases that thrill people as they read them in the newspapers are the exception and not the rule. Even detectives have a very monotonous time in a general way. Nothing could be more untrue to fact than the detective stories which seem to be so popular in the magazines just now. I’ve done a good deal of plain-clothes work myself, so that I know what it is. When I first joined the force I once made a terrible fool of myself. I was on night duty, and noticed a light moving in a house about four o’clock in the morning. Instead of quietly signalling some more men and getting the house surrounded, I foolishly knocked at the front door to alarm the inmates. ‘Who’s there?’ came a voice from within. ‘A policeman; open the door,’ said I. ‘Oh, it’s all right,’ was the answer; ‘I’m just getting up.’ So I quietly went on my way, and a few hours later the news arrived at the station that the house had been broken into during the night. You see, the burglar had himself answered my knock and had afterwards escaped through a back window. I nearly got dismissed over that business.

“I have not been knocked about much myself, though, of course, some men get very severely handled. Last year, 2291 policemen were assaulted in the execution of their duty. I was once knocked down by a drunken man in the Holloway Road, and on another occasion I got pretty roughly treated by a man with a wooden leg in the Edgware Road. It took six of us to convey that man

to the station. Of course one is obliged to be careful in struggling with a prisoner. An unlucky blow may cause some quite unintended injury, and then the newspapers all talk about the brutality of the police! For instance, it is not safe to trip up a struggling prisoner. I did it once in my early days, and the man’s head struck the pavement with a thud that was heard by the sergeant a quarter of a mile away. Of course this was when all was quiet at night. Then we have to be very cautious how we use our truncheons. The regulations tell us never to strike at the head, but always at the limbs, so as to disable the prisoner. For my part I have only used my truncheon once during my whole career. That was on Hampstead Heath, and the prisoner had previously knocked two of my teeth out. My greatest scare happened some years ago when I was on night duty. I saw a light in a house, signalled for help, surrounded the premises, and then went in with another constable. After a long search we found our man hiding in a cupboard, and he at once presented a pistol at me. Of course I hit out, and lost no time about it, so as to disable him, and then the pistol turned out to be a pipe-case!”

“Have you found that burglars try to get the constable away from his beat before commencing operations?”

“Very seldom. When it does occur, there is usually a woman in the affair. Another dodge is for two suspicious-looking characters to loiter about one end of a man’s beat, and to behave in such a fashion that he is obliged to keep his eye on them. In the meantime their accomplices are cracking a crib at the other end of the beat. But you must remember that twice as many houses are broken into during the day as at night. Sunday evening is our very worst time. The usual method is that two respectable-looking men watch the family off to church. Then they go to the door and knock. If anybody comes they simply ask some question and go away, but if they find that the house is empty, one of them just forces the door with a jemmy, while the other keeps watch. It makes practically no noise to wrench open the ordinary latch. Then they go in, shut the door, collect the most portable articles of value, and quietly walk out again as if they belonged to the house. The only remedy for this sort of thing is to leave someone at home. Another common occasion for house-breaking is when the family are out of town. If only people would leave their blinds up, there would not be half so many of these



robberies. Drawn blinds are simply an advertisement for the housebreaker. The police ought also to be told if a house is to be left unoccupied even for a day. Then they take special precautions. By the way, what a lot of people buy police-whistles, and

or we should have to adopt some fresh dodge."

A few weeks later, I once more found myself in the police-station, but this time not as a prisoner. It was the slack hour of the day, the inspector had nothing in particular to do, and he was very willing to chat. On the wall of his office hung a couple of swords and a few handcuffs, a pair of which I, of course, soon tried on, and found that, through long disuse, they would not lock. As a matter of fact, these contrivances have become almost obsolete, and are only used on very rare occasions. In a small room opening from the inspector's office were several telegraphic instruments on the A B C system. The needle of one instrument began clicking merrily as a message passed through on its way to another station. As it did not concern him, the inspector did not trouble to read it, which was perhaps fortunate for me, for the message ran thus: "Re-



"He at once presented a pistol at me."

fancy that they are a protection. It is the greatest mistake in the world. Go into the street and blow one of these whistles, and then see what will come. Certainly not a policeman; but probably a broken-

growler, whose driver will rend the heavens with his language when he finds that he is not wanted. The fact is, there is a certain method of using the whistle which shows that a policeman is at the end of it. But you must not divulge the secret of its use,

porter trying to interview police: warn your men not to talk."

"I suppose you get plenty of queer applications here," said I to the inspector, when we returned to the office.

"I should rather think we do," he answered. "Just take this morning for example. Soon after I came on duty a well-dressed man arrived and told me that he had been separated from his wife and daughter for ten years, and that he had just heard that his daughter was ill in a hospital. A letter to the wife, inquiring where the girl had been taken, having brought no response, he wanted us to take up the case and compel his wife to disclose the daughter's address. Of course we could do nothing for him.

"Next came an elderly lady in a great state of excitement, carrying a miserable little dog in her arms. She told me at great length that 'a brute of a man' had trodden on Fido's foot, and she wanted a summons. She did not know who the monster was, but that was nothing to do with it; it was the duty of the police to find out criminals. When I informed her that we could do nothing to assist her, she came at me with her umbrella, and we were obliged to use a little firm persuasion to get her outside.



"Soon afterwards a greengrocer arrived and complained that one of his customers had refused to pay an account on the ground that it had been already settled, but he declined to produce the receipt. Would we send a constable round to compel him to produce it? Here again we could do nothing but refer the applicant to the county court.

"The next visitor was a tall sour-faced woman who wanted a summons against her servant because she had a follower, which was contrary to her agreement when she was engaged. When I told her that we could not interfere, she retorted that she believed

by cabmen and omnibus conductors. They included 2499 purses, 160 watches, 2306 bags with their contents, and 15,626 umbrellas and sticks. Some of the articles were strange enough. There were a banker's bag containing £700, an astronomical telescope, several bicycles, a bantam cock, a horse's brain preserved in spirits, a canary in a cage, a suit of chain armour, and a host of queer things. Slightly more than half of these articles were afterwards claimed, and £2674 11s. 3d. was paid in rewards for their recovery."

"What is your view, inspector, of the uniform question? Do not the men suffer from the weight of their clothing in summer?" I asked.

"No, I have rarely heard any complaints. A good deal of sentiment is talked in the newspapers, but there is very little in it all. A policeman's work consists largely in standing about, and in night duty, for which warm clothing is indispensable. During the hottest month of the summer we feel the weight of the uniform a little when on day duty, but if light tunics were served out they would be but little worn, and we should soon have an increased number of men on the sick list. Even in hot weather it is not safe to stand about in draughty streets unless you are pretty warmly clad.

"But, to change the subject, you will perhaps be interested to know how we identify habitual criminals. In all cases where persons are convicted the most minute description of their height, colour of hair and eyes, shape of features, marks, etc., is made and is entered in a number of books at Scotland Yard, classified under the various headings of height and so on. Photos are also taken, showing full face and profile, and are kept in classified albums. When a person is charged with any crime the constable who apprehended him is sent to Scotland Yard and examines the description and photographs of the particular class to which the prisoner seems to belong. In addition to this, all remanded prisoners are sent to Holloway, where they are paraded before experienced detective officers. So perfect is the system that a prisoner rarely escapes identification. Let me give you a recent example. A licence-holder—that is a ticket-of-leave man—reported himself in the usual way to the police at Leeds. The next day he was arrested for shop-lifting in the Euston Road. The constable who arrested him went to Scotland Yard and there found the man's photo in one of the albums. The officials



"Lost!"

the man was a policeman in plain clothes, and that was of course the reason!

"Two lost children were brought in during the morning; one of them was soon claimed, and yonder is the other," pointing to a child sitting on a policeman's knee in the charge-room and contentedly munching a bun. "We keep them a few hours and then send them to the workhouse if unclaimed. Those umbrellas in the corner have been brought in by cabmen. It is quite surprising how careless of their property the public are. Here are some figures that will surprise you. During last year 32,997 articles were brought to the Lost Property Office at Scotland Yard, chiefly



laughed at the idea, saying that the man in question had reported himself the previous day at Leeds. But the constable was positive, and the measurements were found to correspond. I then went into the man's cell and suddenly said, 'Look here, we are not going to call you William Smith any more; we will call you Thomas Jones for a change!' The man turned as white as a sheet and exclaimed, 'You've got me now!' This is only an example of what goes on every day."

Then the inspector showed me the various books and forms in use behind the scenes. On his desk lay the file of "Police Information," a sort of daily newspaper, of which four editions are issued from Scotland Yard every day at 9.30 a.m., 1.30 p.m., 6.30 p.m., and 10.30 p.m. It is hardly necessary to say that the contents of this paper are of the most secret character. I saw particulars of persons whose offences are quite unknown to the public, but concerning whom the police are silently making inquiries. Many a net is thus being secretly woven which will presently be drawn in, and the world will be startled at the result.

Then there is the bi-weekly *Police Gazette*, containing lists of persons who are "wanted" for various reasons, and the "Pawnbrokers' List," which is sent out daily to all police-stations and pawnshops in the metropolis, containing accounts of stolen property. I was next shown a large album containing photographs of all the unclaimed dead found in the metropolis—a ghastly and indescribable collection of horrors. As I turned its pages I looked upon all that remains of

many a gruesome mystery, and yet it was strange to see how peaceful many of the faces were.

A small packet was next opened, and I had before me the photographs and particulars of all the ticket-of-leave men in the division. I asked the inspector if it was true that released convicts were hindered in obtaining employment by the supervision of the police.

"Not at all," he answered; "the utmost precaution is taken not to injure these poor fellows. When a licence-holder is due to report himself, he just calls at the station and asks for the inspector. He is at once shown into the office by the constable on duty, who has no idea who he is, and I see him privately. He simply produces his licence, tells me if he is at the same address, and that is all. When we wish to make sure of his address we never send a constable or a well-known detective to inquire. An unknown man who can be relied upon is sent, and simply asks if 'Bob' is at home. If he is, he just takes him aside, says 'How are you?' and goes. If he is not at home, nothing more is needed, as the fact that he lives there has been sufficiently established. To do anything which would injure the prospects of a licence-holder would be regarded as a most grave offence on the part of a police officer."

Much more was shown and explained, which I cannot repeat for reasons already stated, but sufficient has, perhaps, been given to prove that the police of the metropolis are a more efficient and capable body of men than is sometimes supposed.

