

# DETECTIVE DAY AT HOLLOWAY.

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THE "Castle," as the handsome building at the end of the Camden Road is familiarly called, is nowadays the principal prison for accused but unconvicted persons in London, in fact the great house of detention which has replaced the old and long since demolished gaol of Clerkenwell. It is the annex and antichamber of the Old Bailey Sessions House, lodging as a rule some four hundred prisoners remanded thither for inquiry and safe custody. The first is by no means the least important condition, for the identification of individuals and the verification of their antecedents forms a very large part of our criminal procedure. A culprit's fate when found guilty depends greatly on what is known of him; judges and benches are supposed to consider previous convictions when apportioning sentence, inflicting longer terms on those proved to be addicted to crime. It is to be feared that in this respect they often follow their own sweet will; a disbelief in the efficacy of punishment, or a tender-hearted reluctance to use their full powers has fostered excessive, possibly dangerous, leniency of late—but that is another story. Whatever may come of it the police and the prison authorities are always eager to definitely recognise, to establish the undoubted personality of every one who comes within the grip of the law. It frequently happens that a man or woman who has got into trouble, who has been arrested for some small offence, is very much "wanted" for another, infinitely more heinous; or again, that the law-breaker proves to be someone "at large on licence"—a ticket-of-leave man, making improper use of the freedom conceded to him on the express condition that he will keep out of harm. So great importance attaches to identification. Many methods are employed to compass this, and I shall presently refer to them all; but that which is by far the most interesting and perhaps the most efficacious up to the present time is the detectives' inspection, made three times weekly, at Holloway.

There is a great cluster of plain-clothes policemen around the great gates on the mornings in question—thirty of them: twenty-two Metropolitan and six of the City police, with one superior officer, an inspector from New Scotland Yard. To assist at this gathering would be of great practical service to the "detective" novelist, or the actor who has to play the stage detective, or any theatrical manager anxious to be right in his local colour. These are the veritable Simon Pures, not the Buckets or Hawkshaws or Sergeant Cutlers; mostly burly, well-built, straight-limbed fellows, with the square shoulders, erect bearing of men who have been drilled, and that peculiar firm footfall and rather slow-moving regulation gait of the constable on his beat. For one and all have been "uniformed," have learnt the rudiments of their profession in the common round of everyday police business in the streets. Their faces have also a sort of family likeness; all, with the usual variety of feature noticeable among any thirty different men, have observant eyes, set lips and a general look of thoughtful reticence and reserve. In outward appearance however, especially in costume, they offer strong contrasts. Each has pretty well followed his own taste in dress: one is in dittoes of a not too modest plaid or check pattern, another displays a long-skirted ulster, a third is in a rather frayed frock-coat and wears a "bowler" hat. The fashion in hats and boots varies greatly; the "stove-pipe" is not entirely absent; some carry umbrellas, some thick sticks of a suggestively useful and friendly size. They are, in short, as mixed and medley a lot to look at as you would see in any crowd at a street corner, and this result is no doubt encouraged by the authorities, who wish their detectives to differ in no marked or distinctive way from the rest of the world. As watching, "shadowing," examination and inquiry form so large a part of their duties, there is wisdom in this rule. But I question whether our London detectives are not very generally recognisable, at least by those they pursue, and this very ceremony I am about to describe must greatly help this. It cuts

both ways ; if the police can identify their game, the game must become more or less familiar with their hunters when thus brought continually face to face.

The senior officer, Inspector Barkis, is however cast in a different mould. There is nothing conventional about him ; no one indeed would take him for a detective, certainly not one of the ordinary commonplace sort. Mr. Barkis is admirably turned out, spick and span from head to foot, from his first-rate tall hat to his brightly-varnished boots ; he wears a well-made, stylish frock-coat, his smart tie sports a fine scarf-

of information, and he can tell you some queer stories of the "crooked gentry" we have come here to see.

The parade of prisoners is now ready in the great exercising yard of the prison—a level stretch of bright greensward under the dark surrounding boundary walls ; grass thrives well in gaol, and so do sunflowers, which, standing straight and tall to a height of six or seven feet, are a notable feature in the Holloway prison garden. It is a march past rather than a parade, for the whole body of prisoners slowly circle round and round the outer or widest circle of the stone-



THE PARADE OF PRISONERS.

pin—the memento doubtless of some good bit of detective work, for this is an officer of cosmopolitan experience with many striking successes in his varied record. His duties have often taken him beyond the Atlantic, and he is perhaps as well known and as much respected in New York as in London, while his frequent visits to the great Republic have told upon him not unpleasantly by adding that suggestion of independence, that air of "quite as good a man as you are," which is so noticeable, and often in a much more marked degree, in all American officials. But Mr. Barkis, like his namesake, is very willing, very affable and obliging, he is full

paved paths that are marked out from the grass—carefully regarded by the little group of reviewing or inspecting officers collected in one corner of the yard.

Mr. Barkis knows many of them, whatever their present appearance, and it must be understood that the criminal is a protean being who constantly changes his skin, often through astuteness, more often through the force of adverse circumstances, such as a long run of persistent ill-luck when nothing has prospered in his nefarious trade. All here may be inwardly similar in pursuits and evil tendencies, but in outward appearance they differ greatly. A few, very few, are in the

prison uniform, the bright rather garish blue suit which is allotted to the unconvicted, and which is sufficiently distinctive in case of escape, but avoids the degrading features of the familiar drab spotted over with the



"HIS APPEARANCE IS THAT OF A SEEDY SWELL  
IN VERY LOW WATER."

Government broad-arrow. For many reasons a "trial" prisoner is permitted, nay, encouraged, to wear his own clothes; only when these are hopelessly ragged or disgustingly dirty is the prison blue inducted. Uniform always robs men of their individuality, bring-

ing them down to a dead level of monotonous resemblance, and this tends to defeat the object of this parade. Now we can pick out easily many various types: the coster—probably a false one, but quite like those of the music halls, who has come to grief and has been arrested in the garb which cloaks his real business—that of burglary; the artisan, still in his green baize apron, also a disguise assumed to cover the same unavowable trade; a dozen or more unmistakable roughs loping round in that dropping dot-and-go-one gait peculiar to the street loafer hanging round for any chance (dishonest) job that offers. Some of them are in corduroys and velveteens, some in rags, some in degenerate suits of dittoes; one or two are seafaring men, one an unmistakable foreigner, dark skinned with earrings, and gleaming eyeballs turned back like a fierce beast in a cage; one or two are quite fashionably dressed in frock-coats and tall hats, looking so eminently respectable and well-to-do that one wonders to see them here, and asks why they are "in."

"That young chap with the tall hat on the back of his head?" the inspector repeats my query, looking hard at this rather uncommon type, who lounges nonchalantly along with his hands in his pockets his trousers turned up over his drab gaiters and the perfectly unconcerned look of one who knows the case against him is strong and has made up his mind for the worst. "That? Oh yes; he is charged with a gigantic forgery. A bank clerk—son of a military officer, nephew of an Irish baronet,—not an old lag."

"And these two?" They happen to walk within two or three of each other in the long Indian file, but I have paired them because they are so much alike in appearance. Both are showily dressed in rather sporting "down-the-road" fashion, long-skirted drab coats almost to their heels, bowler hats, drab gaiters, smart spotted ties; both have an indescribable swaggering air which brings them very near the level of gentlemen sportsmen, but just falls short and leaves them unmistakable "bounders" and cads.

"Call themselves brothers. Honourable Frank and Honourable Reggy Plantagenet. Bogus, of course," says Mr. Barkis contemptuously. "Picked 'em up in the West-End, where they've been carrying on a great game defrauding tradesmen and house agents. Got into a first-class residence, stocked it fully with high-class furniture, set up a grand establishment, and never paid a soul. Of

course they're old hands. Haven't made 'em out yet ——"

"Beg your pardon, sir," interposes a detective. "I know that second chap. He passed through my hands four or five years ago. Got penal servitude in the name of Jacob Benskin. Long firm case."

"What sentence?"

"Seven years."

"Then he's on ticket now, and wanted for failing to report himself, no doubt. Any-one else know him?"

With this line to lead them several detec-



"THE WOMEN, DRAWN UP IN LINE, CAN BE INSPECTED AT A GLANCE."

tives bring corroborative evidence, and after that the other "Honourable" Plantagenet is easily identified. They are not brothers, only brother convicts, who "did time" together at the "boat," or in penal servitude, were "turned up" together, discharged or rather released into the London area, and who will now undoubtedly find themselves in the dock side by side.

Not far off walks another rather puzzling person; he is tall, middle-aged, with neglected gray hair and ragged moustachios, and his

appearance is that of a seedy swell in very low water, but he holds himself erect, with no sense of shame, as a man unfortunate but blameless. His clothes, all black, are rusty and greasy, frayed at the edges, the braid hanging in strips, the bottoms of his trousers are worn and cut ragged, his once smart button boots are broken and bulgy, yet they refuse to meet over his stockingless feet.

"Pretends to be a Russian," the inspector tells me. "A man of high family, count or prince or something, exiled for political reasons, and his family have cast him off to starve. That's his story. Took to swindling and blackmailing, that's why he's here now. He's not known in our records at the Yard, although the photographic albums have been searched through and through this week past. We've never had him, or not for a long time, or he is greatly changed in appearance. I have an idea I can 'place' him, but

I'm not positive till I hear from the other side. I fancy I've seen him in the States."

I may as well complete this case here. This Russian was really an American, as Inspector Barkis presently proved, born somewhere down in the Southern States, a gentleman actually, of first-rate education, a fluent linguist, polished manners and most insinuating address, who had travelled all over Europe, moving sometimes in the very best society and turning every opportunity to good account. In this way he became possessed of various family and other secrets on which he based blackmailing demands and often raised considerable sums. But by degrees he had worked out his gold mines, and his latest attempt had failed and landed him in gaol. It was upon a credulous old lady, to whom he revealed himself as a great

personage, unfortunate and in exile, but aspiring to regain his own, and whom he robbed shamelessly. After his first recognition his antecedents were easily made out, and it was found that he was a very old hand, had done two periods of penal servitude and was no stranger to foreign prisons. He had a dozen or more aliases under which he had operated in the capitals and great cities abroad, he had been called the Count Von Arnhoff, Chevalier Zamertini, Marques de Santa Maria, Seymour, Bouverie, Black-

wood, Fitzurse, any name that was high-sounding suited his purpose at the time. It was reported of him, when his identity was fully proved, that he was the most accomplished liar and told his stories with such a specious resemblance to truth that even the most wary and suspicious people were deceived.

From the male we pass on to the female side, where a much smaller party awaits us, and the women, drawn up in line, can be inspected almost at a glance. There is as much variety in attire, but more tawdry finery; dress is made up of more incongruous and flashy elements, crude colours that "fight" with each other, nothing matches, a coarse shawl is thrown over a satin skirt, a showy mantle of cotton velvet and catskin covers a ragged stuff dress, hats and bonnets range between broad-brimmed, laden with vegetation, and the torn remnant of a "toque" that hardly covers a few hairs. All, almost without exception, have a depraved and brutalised expression; drink and vice have left their brand upon these sad sisters. They are commonplace offenders, most of them, easily identified and generally known to the police, whose offences are drunkenness, brawling, petty larceny or unavoidable partnership with one or other of the bigger criminals we have seen in the male exercising yard.

One, neatly dressed and in sharp contrast to the rest, is seated. "A lady of title," Barkis whispers. "That forged will case. It will go hard with her." And surely she knows it, for never was despair and hopelessness more plainly written in face and attitude as she sits there abstracted, with lack-lustre eyes, taking absolutely no notice of us.

"Hulloa!" says the inspector suddenly. "You've come back have you? Same old game?" He is addressing a small bird-faced creature, who bridles up at the familiarity, and replies in a mincing voice, as though she had been carefully trained to say "potatoes, poultry, prunes and prisms."

"Yes, and I do not understand it at all. I shall appeal at once to the Home Secretary and demand my immediate release."

"That's —," says Mr. Barkis. "Dare say you've often heard of her; her name is constantly in the papers. Always being taken and shut up for the same offence—obtaining food and lodging by fraud. She goes to the best hotels sometimes, says her baggage and maid will follow, and so on. The second or third day they run her in."

Just now the "lady" has been treated

more summarily, for she is still in light opera cloak and white satin slippers, which bear the stains of a night spent in the police cell.

From the detective point of view there is nothing very remarkable about the females for identification. But my attention is drawn to a woman who has rather a quaint history. She is always committed for the same offence, that of travelling on the line without a ticket, and she has done it again and again with one sole idea, it is said, to get to one particular prison, where she will find an officer or wardress against whom she has a secret grudge, and who has so far escaped her by transfer to some unknown whereabouts. No one knows exactly the origin of the feud, or what will happen when they meet, but the thirst for vengeance still drives her on, and still she tries a new road, and is still arrested, to move on anywhere when again released.

This detective inspection at Holloway, however, is not, as I have already said, the only method of identifying old hands. We have heard a good deal of late of the new system of measurements adopted from the French, and of the system of recording every individual who passes through the mill by his "finger-prints"—an unalterable and inalienable sign-manual; but these processes, excellent in themselves, and already the rule with us, are only in their infancy, and cannot be largely useful for some time to come.

The idea which underlies and is the true foundation of these methods is so novel that it may still be only vaguely understood, and I had better restate it briefly. It depends mainly upon two now incontrovertible facts in the human organism: first, that certain parts of the body, such as the length and breadth of the head, the length of the index finger, of the foot, of the leg below the knee, and so forth, are absolutely constant and unchanging during life; the second, that an impression of the fleshy part of the finger tips leaves peculiar marks that vary generally with every individual. Upon these an ingenious process has been based by which every offender is now catalogued and indexed, so that if he at any time comes again within the grip of the law his identity can be fixed by taking his measurements and finger-prints anew and comparing them with the data already recorded.

In Paris the measurements alone are taken, but on such an excellent plan, and the information is so systematically and effectively arranged, that the result, the positive identification of the individual by

the production of a set of old measurements exactly corresponding with the new, can be obtained in less than five minutes from the drawers and cabinets in which they are stored.

I have spent many an hour in this French identification office, which is in the top story of the Paris Prefecture of Police and under the personal supervision of the inventor of the system of "anthropometry," as it is called, M. Bertillon. In one large room are collected a dozen or more *détenus*—prisoners under temporary arrest charged with various offences, the gathering in of the previous night, some only suspected, some taken red-handed, but of whose antecedents as

passes with which the measurements are taken to millimetres or thousand parts of a yard. When all is done and entered on a card this new card is passed to a superior official, who makes the search and promptly produces the corresponding old card. I was greatly struck by the look of astonishment and surprise of all those subjected to such strange proceedings. Still more amusing is the collapse, the absolute surrender, of any "dark horse" who has given a false name and who is now confronted with full particulars of his identity, supported by his own photograph as taken when last in the hands of justice.

The work never slackens. As one lot is disposed of fresh candidates for identification continually arrive from the *dépôt* or prison of the Prefecture below, and now and again a *garde de Paris*—one of the soldier policemen who assist the authorities—brings under escort some suspicious person, sent straight from the court-house where he has been arraigned, and about whom the judge or magistrate is anxious to know more. I remember when one in particular, a gaudily-dressed, aristocratic-looking man, the perpetrator really of an atrocious murder, was ushered into the crowded room, his attitude was one of fierce protest, his eyes blazed, he would answer no questions, but threatened continually, as a Moldavian or Wallachian prince, I forget which, to appeal at once to his ambassador. There was some little trouble in getting him to submit to the calipers, and but for the imposing force of officials present he would have resisted the measurement. Never was a man so dumbfounded as he was by the production of the card which told his previous history, that of a returned convict, *cheval de retour, en rupture de ban*, banished from Paris, but still residing there in a first-class hotel, which he had made the base of operations ending in murder and robbery.



MEASURING THE EAR.

yet very little is positively known. The operators or "measurers" are detective officers or warders under instruction, who move about in long white blouses like ordinary working-men. The whole place has rather the aspect of a scientific gathering, a lecture-room or laboratory, even the prisoners, the subjects of experiment, play their part as though deeply interested in results that affect them most closely. One by one they take their places upon the dais—a wooden platform on which is the imprint of a foot and behind it a standard of height—while the operator hovers over them with enormous brass calipers or com-

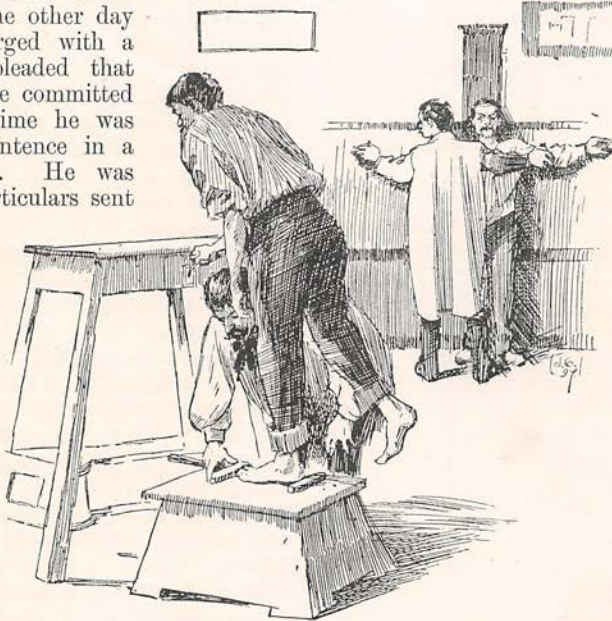
In due course these new processes will no doubt be found equally useful with us. But a first essential is to collect facts, the detailed information which will index all the criminal class, and this can only be obtained gradually as individuals now in custody are discharged from prison. By this means the police, by whom very properly the whole system will be worked, have already some two thousand sets of measurements and finger-prints to which reference is constantly made. It will probably take some four or five years to make a really valuable collection. Meanwhile the adoption of the Bertillon method

has produced one good result: the measurements with us are more or less identical—only fewer—with those in France, and by this international arrangement, when fully developed, a great blow will be struck at cosmopolitan crime. Nothing is more true in these latter days than the statement that great crimes are of no country. They are prepared in one capital—most frequently London—and perpetrated in another. When an arrest is made abroad the antecedents of the culprit are perhaps known in this country, or *vice versa*. It is obvious that the adoption of one European standard of measurement will greatly facilitate identification. Only the other day a foreigner charged with a serious offence pleaded that he could not have committed it for at that time he was serving out a sentence in a prison in Paris. He was measured, the particulars sent over, and by return of post came his full history and proof positive that his defence was untenable.

For the present however our police continue to use their old methods in addition to the new. One of the most important has been described. In addition to these are the "photograph searches," still practised daily at New Scotland Yard, where admirable portraits are preserved in innumerable albums of nearly all offenders convicted in the metropolis. A clever officer who has charge of a case can look through many hundreds of these photographs in a forenoon, and will generally "spot" his man. Another useful help is the custom of taking and registering distinctive marks, the personal traits and blemishes, especially the elaborate tattoo marks with which the criminal class so foolishly brand themselves, thereby writing their names, so to speak, upon their own bodies—a rash custom, which almost inevitably "gives them away." All these indications

are recorded and classified in the great black book of crime, the Register of Habitual Criminals now kept at Scotland Yard, a most voluminous work, always posted up to date, but which has grown to such dimensions that indexing for ready reference is nearly impossible. Not the least difficulty with this registering is the confusion that arises from so many individuals exhibiting nearly identically the same marks. There is generally a poverty of invention about the artist who tattoos, and his decorations, except in a few remarkable cases, do not go beyond initials, anchors, hearts, crossed flags, and so forth.

Again, it is extraordinary what a number of criminals show the same distinguishing features; for instance, in one year alone twenty-eight people had a ring tattooed on the second finger, and there are hundreds who have lost one eye, or are scarred in a certain way by wounds or burns. This of course multiplies enormously the labour of search and often militates against the certainty of identification. Nor



THE SYSTEM OF "ANTHROPOMETRY."

must it be forgotten that to notice and accurately record a number of distinctive marks demands much time and patient trouble, while to measure and impress the finger tips on a card will cause less and yet provide far more definite information—positive facts more practically recorded and more readily hunted up.

There is in truth no truce in the combat constantly in progress with crime, and not the least valuable of the services rendered by our police protectors is that by which a watchful eye is kept upon all offenders, so that everyone may be known for what he is, and none with a previous criminal history may hope to escape recognition and identification.