

POLICE EFFICIENCY.¹

It does seem presumptuous for one who is not a Police officer to address this Convention on such a subject as Police efficiency. Not only am I not a policeman, but in spite of youthful appearance, never expect to fill such an important office or walk a beat in Toronto. However, you may find some advantage in obtaining an outside point of view as I must present, though I greatly fear you will consider it very commonplace.

Police work, as we in modern times understand it, has not a long historic record. Within the past one hundred years it has developed to its present high state of efficiency. The soldier has a glorious past, extending back, as we say, to time immemorial. But if the optimism of to-day is to be realized in results, the soldier has no future. The sword is literally to be turned into a ploughshare, and the spear into a pruning hook. However, the old prophet Jeremiah said, "We looked for peace, but no good came." While, therefore, we must ardently hope and pray that war is at an end, past experience does not justify us in being too confident. Still whatever may be said about our gallant friend, the soldier, the policeman, if he has not a long past, undoubtedly has a splendid present, and may look forward to a magnificent future of service and efficiency in the cause of the state.

Short as is Police history, it has already a fine record of which every citizen may justly be proud. There are without doubt many Police forces worthy of honourable mention. We shall refer to only three which have distinguished themselves in particular:

The great Metropolitan Police force in Scotland Yard, London, England.

The old Royal Irish Constabulary.

The old North West Mounted Police in Canada.

These three forces, combining as they have done, multifarious duties outside of what may be termed ordinary Police functions, have shown the world what may be accomplished along the lines of Police efficiency. Each of them has a most worthy historical record which cannot here be given.

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Police duties were very early defined, as, in a general way, two-fold:

First, regulation of public order and enforcing good government.
Second, prevention and pursuit of crime.

The first official use of the word "Police" was in the appointment of the "Commissioners of Police" in Scotland in 1714, a little over 200 years ago. Systematic policing was of slow growth in England. In France, the king, Charles V., created a Police as, he said, "to increase the happiness and security of his people."

In 1777, the state of things in London and all England was most deplorable. Crime was rampant. In the year 1800 it was computed that in every 22 people in England there was one criminal. The efforts to repress crime were entirely inadequate. Strange to say, the people generally were most strongly opposed to the introduction of Police. It was regarded as an arbitrary and tyrannical interference with personal liberty. However, in 1829, Sir Robert Peel had a law enacted laying the foundation for better Police government. This led to the policeman being called a "Peeler," after his surname, Peel, and a "Bobby," after his Christian name, Robert, Sir Robert Peel. Although in 1833, there was a very lamentable collision between the mob and the Police, yet within a few years "crime" having been brought more into check and security greater, the public objection to the Police very much diminished until, as we know now, it has entirely disappeared, and every good citizen looks upon the policeman as his friend.

The Police Act.

Until 1856 it was still optional to have Police, but in that year the Police Act was passed making Police protection compulsory in the various municipalities in England. The Metropolitan force had been formed some years before and was in active operation by that time. As a matter of fact, the Metropolitan Police Act was passed in 1829, though at first exclusive to the City of London. It is noteworthy that the organization from the outset was generally very similar to the present, showing how wisely our forefathers laid their plans. They had—

Police offices in various districts corresponding to our stations. A horse patrol, corresponding to our mounted section. A Chief Constable. Superintendents. Inspectors. Sergeants. Constables.

While the aim and object of the Police is still the same as when organized, yet the functions have been varied and extended and may thus be defined:

First—To secure obedience to the law.

Second—To deal with breaches of the law.

Third—To detect, pursue, and arrest offenders.

Fourth—Preservation of order.

These are really included in the definition previously given.

The Police are necessarily in close relation to the state. They stand, in fact, between the Crown and the people, maintaining law and order. It is important always to remember that the state employs the Police solely in the interest of public welfare.

The detective is the direct descendant of the old "Bow Street Runners" or "Robin Redbreasts," so styled because they wore scarlet waistcoats. They are probably the most active and one of the most efficient branches of the modern Police in all British countries. They were first introduced into the Metropolitan force after the Bow Street Runners had been disbanded. At first there were only a few, but became more numerous when their efficiency and importance were demonstrated.

Every British country now has a well organized and equipped Police and Detective force. The United States has a very large Police department in each of its various cities, towns and municipalities. All the continental countries in Europe and elsewhere have similar protective forces more or less fully organized as the circumstances require.

Throughout all the years of development many most useful lessons have been learned as to the kind and character of men who will make the most efficient Police officers. They are a distinct class, who, in addition to highly specialized training, must have a certain natural aptitude for this profession.

In the selection of a Police officer the most important consideration is efficiency. A fine physique is essential but of itself insufficient. A good mental equipment is very important, but cannot alone justify acceptance. A fair education is quite necessary, but still may leave a lack. Even a combination of these in a high degree may fall very short of the required estimate. That combination must be sought which goes to make in the sum total an efficient officer. This indicates that a very careful examination of each unit of the force must be made to ensure general efficiency, and that in a time of emergency there shall be no breakdown. There are many qualities which go to make up this combination. It does not mean that a superman is required. All men, however, have not the same qualities. We must look for a man who possesses those qualities

which, in the whole, constitute one who will be an efficient officer. It would, indeed, be difficult, perhaps impossible, to state in detail all the essential qualities. We may give some of the principal ones, the absence of any of which would be a great drawback. Shall we say:

A high sense of duty; courage; courtesy; tact; observant; energy and alertness; some education; fair ability; thoroughness; public service consciousness; Police instinct; political freedom.

Things of Importance.

It might well be said this is a very large bill of fare. Surely you do not require so much in a man who is to receive only a policeman's pay. It might be, we must admit, that every man cannot measure up to all the above requirements, but there is an ideal towards which he should aspire. It is, I consider, of the greatest importance that the Chief or committee who is selecting recruits, keep them in mind. In fact, a written list of these and other things would be a very useful guide in trying out applicants.

While I admit that we cannot always expect each of the above qualities in a very high degree, yet the entire absence of almost any of them would justify rejection.

Has he not courage? Then he cannot face the dangers. Has he not courtesy? Then he cannot deal properly with the populace. Has he not tact? Then at a crucial moment he may fail to do the right thing and possibly make a fatal blunder. Does he lack energy? If so, he will not manifest the activity which he must possess to make him a useful officer. So on down through all the list. Complete absence of an important quality certainly means rejection.

There is one element I desire to single out in particular, because, in my view, every man should have it. That is the quality of Police instinct. We cannot too highly estimate it, but we know that every man to be efficient must within himself have that characteristic. I have noted remarkable instances of it in my own court. A policeman walking his beat at 3 a.m. met a man carrying something concealed under his coat. Being suspicious, he tactfully engaged the man in conversation and finally got him to lift up his coat revealing a ham. Some further judicious enquiry led to the discovery of a burglary which had been committed only an hour before in a small store. The burglar was sent to prison and the officer recommended for a merit mark. One night a constable and his Patrol Sergeant saw a parcel protruding from under a gate and set themselves to watch it. Soon a motor car came along and the occupant stepped cautiously

out and picked up the parcel. But when entering the car with it he was intercepted and another crime was uncovered and punished and the officers recognized. Only the other day, in Bala, Ont., a citizen of the United States stepped out of his hotel in the morning to find that his car had been stolen. It was at once reported to Toronto and by noon he was wired to come down and get his car. This indicates that the Police are becoming car insurers. I could multiply instances of this kind showing what good and efficient service is rendered.

In Police work there are two tests to keep in mind for an officer:

First—Will he efficiently perform the routine duties?

Second—Will he respond efficiently in an emergency?

The latter is really the more important of the two. I tried a man some time ago who while driving a car, in an emergency, put his foot on the accelerator instead of the brake. That is exactly the kind of man we do not want. To do the right thing in a tight corner is the best possible efficiency. We must ever keep before us the great objects of the policeman's official life:

First—To preserve public order.

Second—To deal with crime and criminals.

Every policeman has his daily work laid out, his daily beat to walk, his daily routine of service to perform. The great thing to accomplish is for him to keep his beat clean and free from complaints. The best policeman is not the one who is perpetually in the courts and issuing summonses, but the man who keeps his beat clear of trouble. This is where he manifests his tact and courtesy. It is always wrong to nag the people. A kindly word of advice, reproof or encouragement will go a long way. Persistent offenders must, to be sure, be brought to court. A wise officer knows just how to handle his people and keep them in good humor and make them law-abiding citizens.

I believe as a whole our Police officers are men who have a real inspiration for their duties, and carry them on in a painstaking, conscientious manner, fully seized of their great responsibilities.

The motor car has brought in its wake a trail of crime. Burglaries, housebreakings, hold-ups, banditry and other serious crimes, are menacing every community at present. There never was a time when efficiency was more necessary in our Police and detective forces. Each policeman now must be a detective and every detective a policeman. All must combine to make Canada so unsafe a place for the criminal that he will find it best to mend his ways or carry on his depredations in some other more congenial country.

The Public Interest.

Crime, criminals and criminal investigations have been a growing theme with literary writers. From Edgar Allen Poe to Conan Doyle and now Edgar Wallace, they have been a prolific source of fiction. Perhaps the most remarkable development along this line is the crime club recently organized in the United States and now extending its operations into Canada. No doubt it is a publisher's scheme for selling more books, yet it illustrates strikingly the public interest in the criminal branch of Police work. This club proposes to issue each month a book and also a newspaper containing accounts of the most important actual crimes and trials besides the mystery stories now so numerous published. I mention this merely as an illustration of the great interest taken by the public generally in crime and criminals and how criminals are captured and brought to trial.

A close friend of mine, some years ago, seeing the great actor, Sir Henry Irving, coming out of a book store with a parcel of books under his arm, and being curious to know his taste for reading, went in and asked the bookseller what class of books Sir Henry had bought. He was told they were all detective stories. Another amusing thing is one of the latest moving pictures under the title, "Do Detectives Think?" We who are interested in their daily work can assure the public that they not only think, but act. They work while we sleep and because of their faithful watchfulness we, as a general thing, can sleep in peace and security.

A feature of Police and especially detective work of which we often do not take sufficient account is the extent to which they must operate under the scrutiny of the public eye. A business man in his private affairs goes along in his important transactions, and no one knows or seems to care anything about them. But as soon as a detective starts on a case, every available scrap of news is collected and broadcasted. The newspapers (God bless and guide them) are anxious to tell everything that has been done or even thought about a particular case. This often is not in the public interest. Still they like to follow a detective or officer around and, so to speak, shadow him to glean information as to what is transpiring. As this is often embarrassing to the Police and militating against their efficiency, the papers will, on an appeal, loyally, for a time withhold statements until the proper stage to give them publicity.

It seems superfluous to say that anything in the nature of favoritism in a Police force by superior officers or others in authority, cannot but be destructive of efficiency. Every man should

advance step by step on his own merit, and by reason of the satisfactory and efficient performance of his arduous duties. Let it not ever be supposed that there can be such a thing as "pull" in the force. Self-seeking and canvassing for preferment and promotion should always be discouraged. In fact, it ought to be generally known that no man is overlooked and he will be raised up in due course and that any effort on his part to push himself forward by influence or otherwise will have the effect of retarding him in going ahead.

It is of supreme importance to keep Police work out of politics. As soon as the politician begins to deal with the Police then we may bid farewell to proper efficiency, because he is sure to make a mess of it. Unfortunately, right here in York County where, under the capable direction of High Constable Phillips, a fine county Police force was being gradually worked up, the County Council, a few years ago, decided to remit the whole matter of Police protection to the various municipalities, towns, villages and townships. The result has been great confusion, increase in expense and a number of municipalities have no Police at all. The very first principle of Police organization is concentration and co-operation. This is entirely abandoned in York County except that for some unexplained reason there are a few County Police still kept on who can be sent to any part of the County. All the confusion which has ensued and the expense incurred, might easily have been avoided by the gradual expansion of the growing County force under the fine management of the High Constable.

I really owe this Convention an apology for my temerity in attempting to deal with such a subject. Do not, I beg of you, take it in any dictatorial spirit, but as an honest effort at suggesting what occurs to a person from the outside. Doubtless all that I have said is better known to you than to me, and in such case it must be looked upon merely as a reminder. The patience of a Police officer is proverbial and you certainly have emphasized it to-day by the manner in which you have listened to this somewhat rambling address.

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Toronto.