

Policemen's Tricks

Some of the Experiences of a Police Inspector

[From the *Brooklyn Eagle*]

"I'm going out to watch the men to-night," said Inspector Henry L. Jewett, of the Police Department, to an *Eagle* reporter one afternoon last week.

"Why do you watch them?"

"To see that they do their duty."

"But are not roundsmen and sergeants appointed for that?"

"Well, yes. So are captains, and if necessary I watch them, too. You have heard a man say: 'I'll hold the stakes,' and someone else may say: 'That's all very fine, but who will hold you?' that is about the size of this business."

The reporter asked leave to be the inspector's companion on the tour, and the request was granted. "But," added the inspector, "you will not make a good witness."

"I don't want to be a witness," said the reporter.

"Yes, but I want a witness; one whose record for veracity is untarnished, so I shall have to get some one else in that capacity. I am afraid that some of your newspaper men are better fitted to be members of the Ancient Order of Ananias than to occupy a position on the witness stand."

"It seems to me," said the reporter, somewhat nettled, "that by your own admissions your word does not amount to much when you are necessitated to have another man to verify what you saw."

"That is a matter of opinion, sir," said the inspector, severely, as he handed the reporter a very bad cigar. He did not pursue the conversation further, however, and so the reporter considered that he had scored a point. At midnight he met the inspector and Drill Captain McKelvey. Both were muffled up to the chin and looked like two sneak thieves in hard luck. It rained steadily for three hours, and the reporter ventured to remark that the weather was inclement for such business:

"All the better," said Jewett, "we are more likely to catch them napping." The Inspector had said previously that it would be a pretty good tramp. So it was. Through the driving rain, from the First Precinct to the Tenth, through the principal streets where posts met, then up on Atlantic avenue until Franklin avenue was crossed, and into the Twelfth (which extends clear to the

boundary line of East New York), then to the Ninth Sub-Precinct, down Broadway, and emerging from that at a southerly point, taking Greene avenue down to the Ninth, then to Myrtle avenue and into the Fourth, until every important post had been visited in each precinct. Protected by rubber coats, the rain had no effect, but the deserted streets and the dismal appearance of the city were by no means inspiring, and the reporter registered a mental vow that he would not take such a contract on hand again unless he was compelled to do so. Shortly after 6 the tour ended, and the inspector and drill captain went their respective ways home.

“For such a bad night,” said the Inspector, “the men have behaved excellently. There was one man a little dusk in Myrtle avenue, but he was only off post for ten minutes, and I couldn’t tell where he was. There were trivial cases of like character. The worst was when we were waiting under the porch at Music Hall. Right at that point the First, Fourth, and Tenth precincts join, and the posts are so divided that when we were watching there we could time the men on six of them. The only man who didn’t show up was Hawxhurst, of the Fourth, but you noticed how quick he answered the roundsman’s rap. I didn’t know where Hawxhurst was, but I know that he didn’t appear to be very wet.”

“Do you have any funny experiences?”

“Yes.”

“Well, relate some.”

“Let me see—well, when the liquor stores commence to open early on a winter’s morning, especially if it is cold or wet, they are worth watching, especially if they happen to be near where two posts meet. In Greenpoint, last year, I had reason to suspect that a ginmill on the corner of Franklin and Greene streets was sort of a “hunky hole” for some of the men, and I laid for them. I was successful the first morning. The bar-keeper opened about 5 o’clock, and I entered. The back room was dark, with the exception of the light which came from a well-filled self-feeder. The stove had a rail around it and I got a chair, leaned back in it, put my feet on the rail and hadn’t been there more than five minutes when who should come in but Officers Dill and Knapp, of the Seventh Precinct. As they entered each ordered a drink and they went straight to the rear room. I pulled my hat over my eyes and pretended to be half asleep. They had no idea as to who I was and they settled themselves comfortably in chairs. I took a quiet look at them from under the rim of my hat. They tried to draw me into conversation.

“It’s a pretty cold morning,’ said one.

“Yes,’ I said.

“But it’s warm in here.’

“I sat up and said, ‘You’re right—it is warm—don’t you think it’s a little too hot?’”

“What did they do?” asked the reporter.

“They took one look and recognized me and one of them said, ‘Good morning,’ and they both left and never had their drinks either.”

“Was anything done to them?”

“Oh, yes, the General put the spurs to them pretty lively.”

“Any other cases?” continued the reporter.

“Yes. McKelvey and I went down to the Eighth Sub-Precinct about six weeks or two months ago. It was about 3 o’clock in the morning and there was Sergeant Kirby sound asleep behind the desk and the doorman was snoring in a chair. We walked past them and into the captain’s room. The captain was on duty at police headquarters that night. I laid on his lounge and McKelvey took the chair. We had previously lighted the gas and we thought we’d wait and see how long the pair would sleep. About an hour or so after we had been there the roundsman entered to report and he woke the sergeant up. He saw the captain’s room lighted up and he called to the doorman and awakened him.

“Who in —— lighted that gas?” he asked.

“Blest if I know,” said the doorman.

“You must have lighted it,” asserted the Sergeant, “for I know I didn’t.”

“And I’m hanged if I did,” was the solemn response; “I guess it must be ghosts.”

“Well, go and put it out.”

“This was the talk as near as I can remember, and both the men were yawning. The doorman came to the door of the Captain’s room, and you ought to have seen the look on his face when he saw us. We never moved a muscle or spoke a word, and he was paralyzed. He couldn’t even speak. In a few minutes we got up and walked out, wishing the Sergeant a social ‘Good morning.’ They got three days a piece for that.”

“Any other cases?”

“Oh, there’s lots, but I can’t remember them all of a sudden. I had a man in Furman street one night—or rather one morning. He went into a liquor store there, and I waited until nearly his relieving-time, at about 6 o’clock—about four hours—while he was sleeping inside, and it was as cold as could be. When he came out—it was Grant of the Second—I said: ‘What were you

doing in there?’ He said: ‘I just went in to warm my hands.’ ‘Is that all?’ I said. ‘Yes, inspector, and I wasn’t in there five minutes!’ I said to him: ‘I didn’t ask you how long you were in there, but if you tell the Commissioners that you were only in there five minutes, I shall have to prove to you that your memory is very defective.’ I left him, but he was not very easy in his mind as to what I knew about the time he had spent there.”

“Did you ever have a man get away from you?”

“Yes. I remember one man—Frank Reed, of the Seventh Precinct. I saw him go in the front door of a liquor store, and I stood in such a position that he could not come out either of that or the side door without my knowing it. After I had stood there about an hour I saw him coming down the street, swinging his club, and he was surprised to see me. I learned afterward that some of his friends had ‘piped me off,’ and had told him, and he was helped over about a dozen fences clear to the other side of the block, and that was how he got out; but as I did not see that part of the business I was not in a position to sustain the charge against him of being off post; but I caught him after that.”

“Do you often take such tours?”

“O, yes; but of course not at stated periods, or there would not be much results. The fact that such visits are uncertain keeps the men alert.”

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