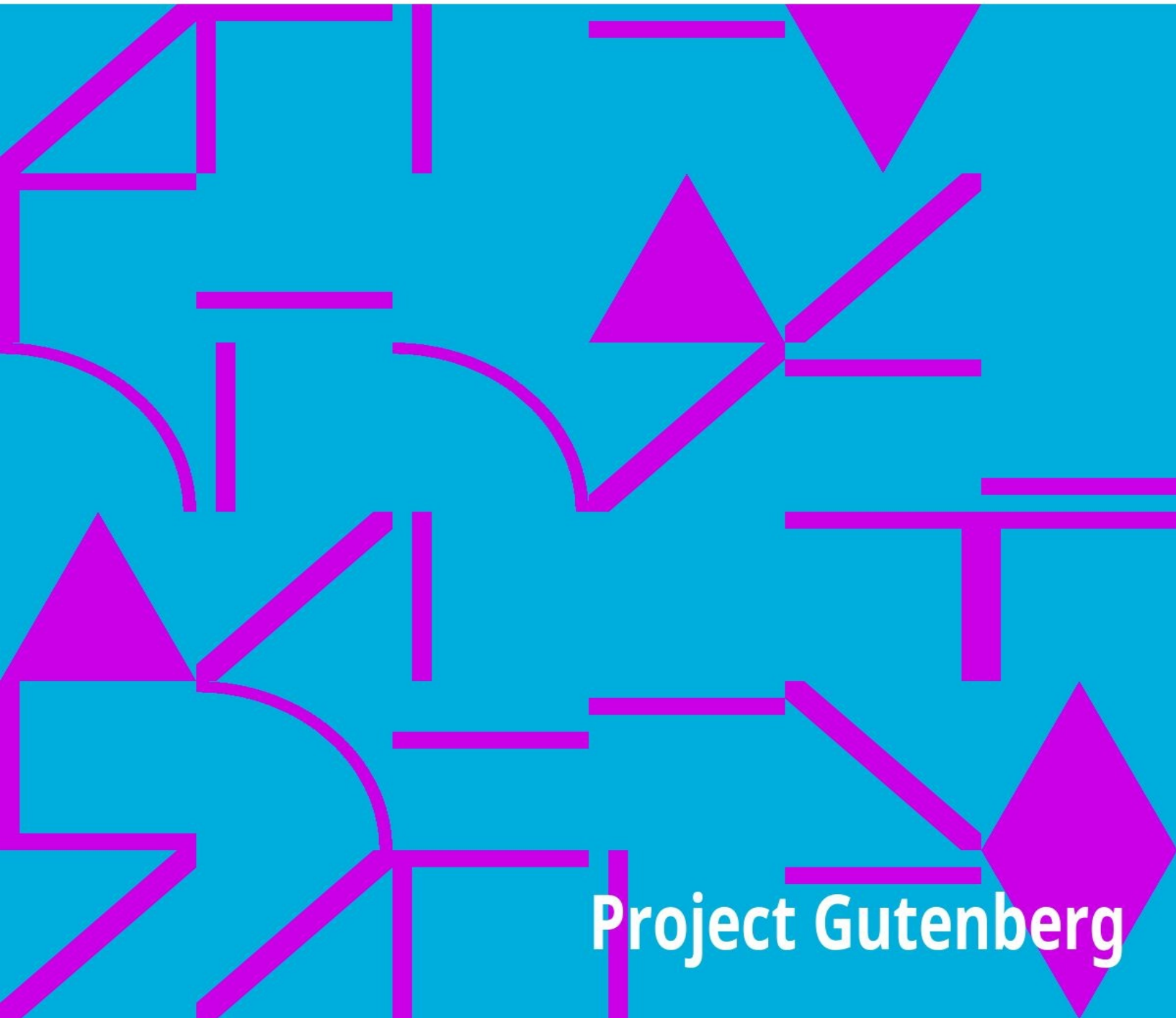
Notes of an Itinerant Policeman

Josiah Flynt



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NOTES OF AN ITINERANT POLICEMAN

By

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AUTHOR OF "TRAMPING WITH TRAMPS"

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TO

WILLARD ROPES TRASK

CONTENTS

NOTE.

A number of the chapters in this book have appeared as separate papers in the *Independent*, *Harper's Weekly*, the *Critic*, *Munsey's Magazine*, and in publications connected with McClure's Syndicate; but much of the material is new, and all of the articles have been revised before being republished.

INTRODUCTORY.

For a number of years it had been a wish of mine to have an experience as a police officer, to come in contact with tramps and criminals, as a representative of the law. Not that I bore these people any personal grudge, or desired to carry out any pet policy in dealing with them; but I had learned to know them pretty intimately as companions in lodging-houses and at camp-fires, and had observed them rather carefully as prisoners in jails, and I was anxious to supplement this knowledge of them with an inquiry in regard to the impression they make on the man whose business it is to keep an official watch over them while they are in the open. I desired also to learn more concerning the professional offender than it had been possible for me to find about him in tramp life. If one has the courage to go and live with professional criminals as one of them, he can become even more intimate with them than in a police force, but it is very difficult to associate with their class long and not be compelled to take an active part in their criminal enterprises, and my interest in them was not so great that I was prepared to do this. I merely wanted to know how strong they are as a class, in which sections of the country they are the most numerous, whether they have peculiar characteristics differentiating them in public thoroughfares from other types of outlaws, how they live, and what is the general attitude toward them of our police and prison authorities. Partial answers to these questions I had been able to get in Hoboland, but I was anxious to fill them out and get any new facts that would throw light on the general situation.

During the spring and summer of last year (1899) it was possible for me to have a police officer's experience. The chief of a large railroad police force gave me a position as a patrolman, and, in company of two other officers, I was put on a "beat" extending over two thousand miles of railroad property. The work we were given to do was somewhat of an innovation, but it afforded me an excellent opportunity to secure the information I desired. For two months and a half, which was the extent of my connection with the undertaking and with the force, we had to travel over the property, protecting picnic trains, big excursions, passengers travelling to and from towns where circuses were exhibiting, and the ordinary scheduled traffic, whenever there was reason to believe that pickpockets and other thieves were likely to put in an appearance.

Early in the spring wandering bands of thieves start out on tours of the railroads.

They follow up circuses and picnics, and make it a point to attend all big gatherings, such as county fairs, races, conclaves, and congresses. Their main "graft," or business, is pocket-picking, but in a well-equipped "mob" there are also burglars, sneak-thieves, and professional gamblers. The pickpockets and gamblers operate, when they can, on passenger trains, and they have become so numerous and troublesome in a number of States that railroad companies are compelled to furnish their own protection for their patrons.

This protection, on the road for which I worked, has generally been provided for by the stationary members of the force, and more or less satisfactorily, but last year the chief wanted to experiment with "a flying squadron" of officers, so to speak, who were to go all over the property and assist the stationary men as emergency required, and we three were chosen for this work. In this way it was possible for me to come in contact with a large variety of offenders, to make comparisons, and to see how extensively criminals travel. It was also easy for me to get an insight into the workings of different police organisations along the line, and to inspect carefully lock-ups, jails, workhouses and penitentiaries.

In the following chapters I have tried to give an account of my finding in the police business, to bring out the facts about the man who makes his living and keeps up a bank account by professional thieving, to tell the truth in regard to "the unknown thief" in official life who makes it possible for the known thief to prey upon the public, and to describe some of the tramps and out-of-works who wander up and down the country on the railroads. There is much more to be said concerning these matters than will be found in this little book, but there are a great many persons who have no means of finding out anything about any one of them, and it is to such that my remarks are addressed. Until the general public takes an interest in making police life cleaner and in eliminating the professional offender and the dishonest public servant from the problems which crime in this country brings up for solution, very little can be accomplished by the police reformer or the penologist.

CHAPTER I.

WHO CONSTITUTE OUR CRIMINAL CLASSES?

The first duty of a policeman, no matter what kind of a police force he belongs to, is to inform himself in regard to the people in his bailiwick who are likely to give him trouble. In a municipal force an officer can only be required to know thoroughly the situation on his particular beat; if he can inform himself about other districts as well, he is so much more valuable to the department, but he is not expected to do much more than get acquainted with the people under his immediate surveillance. In a railroad police force it is different, and it is required of the officer that he study carefully the criminal situation in all the towns and villages on the division on which he is stationed. Some divisions are longer than others, but the average railroad policeman's beat is not less than sixty miles, and in some cases nearly two hundred. Mine, as I have stated, was over two thousand miles long, and it took in five different States and nearly all the large cities in the middle West. I was, consequently, in a position to acquaint myself pretty thoroughly with the criminal classes in one of the most populous and representative parts of the country. Offenders differ, of course, in different localities, and one is not justified in drawing sweeping conclusions concerning all of them from the study of a single type, but my work was of such a nature that, in the course of my investigations, I encountered, indoors and out, the most frequent offenders with whom the policeman and penologist have to deal. It would take a large book merely to classify and describe the different types, but there is a general analysis that can be made without any great sacrifice of fact, and it is this I desire to attempt in this chapter.

There are six distinct categories of offenders in the United States to which may be assigned, as they are apprehended and classified, the great majority of our lawbreakers. They are: the occasional or petty offender, the tramp, the "backwoods" criminal, the professional criminal, the "unknown" thief, and what, for want of a better name, I call the diseased or irresponsible criminal. All of these different types are to be found on the railroads, and the railroad police officer must know them when he sees them.

The largest class is that of the petty offenders, and it is in this category that are

found the majority of the criminally inclined foreigners who have emigrated to our shores. It is a popular notion that Europe has sent us a great many very desperate evil-doers, and we are inclined to excuse the increase of crime in the country on the ground that we have neglected to regulate immigration; but the facts are that we have ourselves evolved as cruel and cunning criminals as any that Europe may have foisted upon us, and that the foreigners' offences are generally of a minor character, and, in a number of instances, the result of a misunderstanding of the requirements of law in this country, rather than of wilful evil-doing. I hold no brief for the strangers in our midst in this connection; it would be very consoling, indeed, to know that we ourselves are so upright and honest that we are incapable of committing crimes, and, this being proved, a comparatively easy task to lessen the amount of crime; but there is no evidence to show that this is the case. The majority of the men, women, and children that I found in jails, workhouses, and penitentiaries, on my recent travels, were born and brought up in this country, and they admitted the fact on being arrested. If the reader desires more particular information concerning this question, the annual police reports of our large cities will be found useful; I have examined a number of them, and they substantiate my own personal finding. In some communities the proportion of foreign offenders to the general foreign population is greater than that of native offenders to the general native population, but I doubt whether this will be found to be the case throughout the country; and even where it is, I think there is an explanation to be given which does not necessarily excuse the crimes committed, but, in my opinion, does tone down a little the reproach of wilfulness. The average foreigner who comes to the United States looks upon the journey as an escape; he is henceforth released, he thinks,—and we ourselves have often helped to make him think so,—from the stiff rule of law and order in vogue in his own land. He comes to us ignorant of our laws, and with but little more appreciation of our institutions than that he fancies he is for evermore "a free man." In a great many cases he interprets "free" to mean an independence which would be impossible in any civilised country, and then begins a series of petty offences against our laws which land him, from time to time, in the lock-up, and, on occasions, in jail. Theft is a crime in this country as well as elsewhere, and we can make no distinction in our courts between the foreigner and native, but I have known foreigners to pilfer things which they thought they were justified in taking in this "liberal land;" they considered them common property. Some never get over the false notions they have of our customs and institutions, and develop into what may be termed occasional petty thieves; they steal whenever the opportunity seems favourable. It is this class of offenders, consisting of both natives and foreigners, that is

found most frequently in our police courts and corrective institutions.

I have put the tramp next to the occasional offender in numerical importance, and I believe this to be his place in a general census of the criminal population, but it is thought by some that his class is the most numerous of all. Doubtless one of the reasons why he is considered so strong is that he is to be found in every town and village in the country. It must be remembered, however, that he is continually in transit, thanks to the railroads, and is now in one town and to-morrow in another. In both, however, he is considered by the public to represent two distinct individuals, and is included in the tramp census of each community. In this way the same man may figure a dozen times, in the course of a winter, in the enumeration of a town's vagabonds, but as a member of the tramp population he can rightfully be counted but once. It is furthermore to be remarked concerning this class that a great many wanderers are included in it who are not actual vagabonds. The word tramp in the United States is made to cover practically every traveller of the road, and yet there are thousands who have no membership in the real tramp fraternity. Some are genuine seekers of work, others are adventuresome youths who pay their way as far as food and lodging are concerned, and still others are simple gipsy folk. The genuine tramp is a being by himself, known in this country as the "hobo." The experienced railroad police officer can pick him out of a general gathering of roadsters nearly every time, and the man himself is equally expert in discovering amateur roadsters. I will describe one of the first men I learned to know in Hoboland; he is typical of the majority of the successful tramps that I met during my experience as a police officer.

His name was "Whitey,"—St. Louis Whitey,—and I fell in with him on the railroad, as is the case in almost all hobo acquaintances. He was sitting on a pile of ties when I first saw him. "On the road, Jack?" he said, in a hoarse, rasping voice, sizing me up with sharp gray eyes in that all-embracing glance which hoboes so soon acquire. They judge a man in this one glimpse as well as most people can in a week's companionship. I smiled and nodded my head. "Bound West?"

"Yes."

"The through freight comes through here pretty soon. I'm goin' West, too. This is a good place to catch freights." I sat down beside him on the ties, and we exchanged comments on the weather, the friendliness of the railroad we were on, the towns we expected to pass through, some of the tramps we had met, and

other "road" matters, taking mental notes of each other as we talked. I noticed his voice, how he was dressed, where he seemed to have been, the kind of tramps he spoke most about, how he judged whether a town was "good" or not, whether he bragged, and other little things necessary to know in forming an opinion of all such men; he observed me from the same view-point. This is the hobo's way of getting acquainted, of finding out if he can "pal" with a man. There are no letters of introduction explaining these things; each person must discover them for himself, and a man is accepted entirely on the impression that he makes. A few men have great names that serve as recommendations at "hang-outs," but they must make their friends entirely on their merits.

Merely as a hobo there was nothing very peculiar about "Whitey." He looked to be about forty years old, and knew American tramp life in all its phases. His face was weather-beaten and scarred, and his hands were tattooed. He dressed fairly well, had read considerably, mainly in jails, wrote a good hand, knew the rudiments of grammar, and almost always had money in his pockets. He made no pretensions to be anything but a hobo, but the average person would hardly have taken him for this. He might have passed in the street as a sailor, and on railroads he was often taken for a brakeman. I did not learn his history before becoming a tramp,—it is not considered good form to ask questions about this part of a man's life,—but from remarks that he dropped from time to time I inferred that he had once been a mechanic. He was well informed about the construction of engines, and could talk with machinists like one of their own kind. He had been a tramp about eight years when I first met him, and had learned how to make it pay. He begged for a thing, if it was possible to be begged, until he got it, and he ate his three meals a day, "set downs" he called them, as regularly as the time for them came around. I was with him for two weeks, and he lived during this time as well as a man does with $1,500 a year. His philosophy declared that what other people eat and wear he could also eat and wear if he presented himself at the right moment and in the right way, and he made it his business to study human nature. While I travelled with him he begged for everything, from a needle to a suit of clothes, and did not hesitate to ask a theatre manager for free tickets to a play for both of us, which he got.

What made him a tramp, an inhabitant of Hoboland, was that he had given up the last shred of hope of ever amounting to anything in decent society. Every plan that he made to "get on" pertained exclusively to his narrow tramp world, and I cannot recall hearing him even envy any one in a respected position. I tried several times to sound him concerning a possible return to respectable living,

and tentatively suggested work which I thought he could do, but I might as well have proposed a flying trip. "It's over with me," was his invariable reply. His fits of drunkenness—they came, he told me, every six weeks or so—had incapacitated him for steady employment, and he did not intend to give any more employers the privilege of discharging him. He had no particular grudge against society, he admitted that he was his own worst enemy; but, as it was impossible for him to live in society respectably, he deemed it not unwise to get all he could out of it as a tramp. "I'm goin' to hell anyhow," he said, "and I might as well go in style as in rags." Being considerably younger than he, he once barely suggested that perhaps I would better try to "brace up," but it was in no sense of the word an earnest appeal. Indeed, he seemed later to regret the remark, for it is out of order to make such suggestions to tramps. If they want to reform, the idea is that they can do it by themselves without any hints from friends.

As a man, separate from his business, "Whitey" was what most persons would call a good fellow. He was modest, always willing to do a favour, and everybody seemed to like him. During our companionship we never had a quarrel, and he helped me through many a strait. I have seen him once again since the first meeting. He was not quite so well dressed as formerly, and his health seemed to be breaking up, but he was the same good fellow. In late years I have not been able to get news of him beyond the rumour that he was dying of consumption in Mexico.

The menace of the tramp class to the country seems to me to consist mainly in the example they set to the casual working man,—the man who is looking around for an excuse to quit work,—and in the fact that they frequently recruit their ranks with young boys. It is also to be said of them that they are often in evidence at strikes, and take part in the most violent demonstrations. As trespassers on railroads they are notorious; they are a constant source of trouble to the railroad police officer. Strictly speaking, the majority of them cannot be called criminals, although a great many of them are discouraged criminals, but in the chapter dealing with "The Lake Shore Push" it will be seen how ferocious some of them become.

The next largest class is composed of what I call backwoods criminals. Scattered over the country, in nearly every State of the Union, are to be found districts where people live practically without the pale of the law. These places are not so frequent in the East as in the West, in the North as in the South, but they exist in New England as well as in Western States. They are generally situated far away from any railroad, and the inhabitants seldom come in touch with the outside

world. The offenders are mainly Americans, but of a degenerated type. They resemble Americans in looks, and have certain American mental characteristics, but otherwise they are a deteriorated collection of people who commit the most heinous offences in the criminal calendar without realising that they are doing anything reprehensible. I have encountered these miniature "Whitechapels" mainly on my excursions in tramp life, but I had to be on the lookout for them during the police experience. In one of the States which my "beat" traversed, I was told by my chief that there was a number of such communities, and that they turned out more criminals to the population in a year than the average large city. One day, while travelling in a "caboose" with a native of the State in question, I asked him how it came that it tolerated such nests of crime, but he was too loyal to admit their existence. "We used to have a lot of them," he explained, "but we've cleaned them up. You see, when we discovered natural gas, it boomed everything, and we've been building railroads and schools all over. No; you won't find those eyesores any more; we're as moral a State to-day as any in the Union." It was a pardonable pride that the man took in his State, but he was mistaken about the matter in question. There are communities not over a hundred and fifty miles from his own town where serious crimes are committed every day, and no court ever hears of them because they are not considered crimes by the people who take part in them. Not that these people are fundamentally deficient in moral attributes, or unequal to instruction as to the law of Mine and Thine, but they are so out of touch with the world that they have forgotten, if indeed they ever knew, that the things they do are criminal.

It is impossible at present to get trustworthy statistics in regard to this class, because no one knows all of its haunts, but if it were possible, and the entire story about it were told, there would be less hue and cry about the evil that the foreigners among us do. I refer to the class without advancing any statistics, because it came within my province as a police officer to keep track of it, and because it had attracted my attention as an observer of tramp life; but it is well worth the serious consideration of the criminologist.

The professional criminal, or the habitual offender, as he is called by some, comes next in numerical strength, but first of all, in my opinion, in importance. I consider him the most important because he frankly admits that he makes a business of crime, and is prepared to suffer any consequences that his offences may bring upon him. It is he who makes crime a constant temptation to the occasional offender, and it is also he with whom we have the most trouble in our criminal courts; he is almost as hard to convict as the man with "political

influence." On my "beat" he was more in evidence, in the open at least, than any of the other offenders mentioned, except the tramp, but, as I stated, the warm months are the time when he comes out of his hiding-places, and it was natural that I should see a good deal of him.

My fifth category is made up of what a friend calls "the unknown thief," whom he considers the most dangerous and despicable of all. He means, by the unknown thief, the man in official life, or in any position which permits of it, who protects, for the sake of compensation, the known thief. "If you will catch the unknown thief," he has frequently said to me, "I will contract to apprehend and convict the known," and he believes that until we make a crusade against the former, the latter is bound to flourish in spite of all our efforts. He sees no use, for instance, in spending weeks and sometimes months in trying to capture some well-known criminal, as long as it is possible for the man to buy his freedom back again, and it is his firm belief that this kind of bargaining is going on every day.

Although there was no doubt that the unknown thief was to be located on any "beat," if looked for, my instructions were not to disturb him unless he seriously disturbed me, and as he made no effort to interfere with my work I merely made a note of his case when we met, and doubtless he also "sized me up" from his point of view. How strong his class is, compared with the others, must remain a matter of conjecture, but I have put his class fourth in my description because it is the quality of his offences, rather than their quantity, which makes his presence in the criminal world so significant. There are those who believe that he is to be found in every town and village in the United States, if enough money is offered him as bait, but I have not sufficient data to prove, or to make me believe, such a statement. The league between him and the known thief—the man whose photograph is in the "rogue's gallery"—is so close, however, that I have devoted special chapters to both offenders.

Of the last category, the man whom I have called the irresponsible criminal, there is not much of interest or value that I have to report. While acting as police officer I practically never encountered him in the open, and the few members of his class that I saw in prisons seemed to me to have become irresponsible largely during their imprisonment. Perhaps I take a wrong view of the matter, but I cannot get over the belief that the majority of offenders, particularly those who are ranked as "professionals," are *compos mentis* as far as the law need require. In every department of the prisons that I visited, men were to be seen who gave the impression of being at least queer, but they formed but a very small part of

the prison population, and may very possibly have been shamming the eccentricities which seemed to indicate that they were on the border line of insanity. For this reason, and, as I say, because I met none in the open, it has seemed fair to put this class last.

The foregoing classification is naturally not meant as a scientific description in the sense that the professional criminologist would take up the matter. I have merely tried to explain how the criminal situation in the United States seems to the man whose business it is to keep an official watch over it. I may have overlooked, in my classification, offenders that some of my brother officers would have included, but it stands for the general impression I got of the criminal world while in their company. To attempt to estimate the numerical strength of these classes as a whole would land one in a bewildering bog of guesses. It is only recently that we have made any serious effort to keep a record of offenders shut up in penal institutions, of crimes which have been detected and of offenders who have been punished, and it is a fact well known in police circles that there is a great deal of crime which is never ferreted out. There is consequently very little use in trying to calculate the number of the entire criminal population. The most that I can say in regard to the question is that never before has this population seemed to me to be so large, but I ought to admit that not until my recent experience have I had such an advantageous point of view from which to make observations.

CHAPTER II.

THE PROFESSIONAL CRIMINAL.

In appearance and manner the professional criminal has not changed much in the last decade. I knew him first over ten years ago, when making my earliest studies of tramp life. I saw him again five years ago, while on a short trip in Hoboland, and we have met recently on the railroads; and he looks just about as he did when we first got acquainted.

Ordinarily he would not be noticed in mixed company by others than those accustomed to his ways. He is not like the tramp, whom practically any one can pick out in a crowd. He dresses well, can often carry himself like a gentleman, and generally has a snug sum of money in his pockets. It is his face, voice, and habits of companionship that mark him for what he is. Not that there is necessarily that in his countenance which Lombroso would have us believe signifies that he is a degenerate, congenitally deformed or insane, but rather that the life he leads gives him a look which the trained observer knows as "the mug of a crook." He can no more change this look after reaching manhood than can a genuinely honest man, who has never been in prison, acquire it. I had learned to know it, and had become practised in discovering it, long before I became a policeman. It took me years to reach the stage when in merely looking hurriedly at a criminal something instinctively pronounced him a thief, but such a time certainly comes to him who sojourns much in criminal environment. There are, of course, certain special features and wrinkles that one looks for, and that help in the general summing up, but after awhile these are not thought of in judging a man, at least not consciously, and the observer bases his opinion on instinctive feeling. Given the stylish clothes to which I have referred, a hard face, suspicious eyes which seem to take in everything, a loitering walk, a peculiar guttural cough, given by way of signal, and called the thief's cough, and a habit of lingering about places where a "sporty" constituency is usually to be found, and there is pretty conclusive evidence that a professional thief is in view. All of this evidence is not always at hand; sometimes there is only the cough to go by, but, the circumstances being suspicious, any one of them is sufficient to make an expert observer look quickly and prick up his ears.

In New York City, for instance, there are streets in which professional thieves can be met by the dozen, if one understands how to identify them, and it is only necessary to pass a few words and they can be drawn into conversation. Some are dressed better than others,—there are a great many ups and downs in the profession,—and some look less typical than the more experienced men,—it takes time for the life to leave its traces,—but there they stand, the young and old, the clever and the stupid, for any one who knows how to scrape acquaintance with them. They are the most difficult people in the world to learn to know well until one has mastered their freemasonry, and then they are but little more fearful of approach than is the tramp.

I devote a special chapter to their class, because I believe that they are the least understood of all offenders, and also, as I stated in the last chapter, because I consider them the real crux of the problem of crime in this country. The petty offender is comparatively easy to discourage, the backwoods criminal will disappear as our country develops, the born criminal, the man who says that he cannot help committing crimes, can be shut up indefinitely, but the professional criminal, thanks to his own cleverness and the league he and the unknown thief have entered into, baffles both the criminologist and the penologist, and he probably does more financial harm to the country than all the other offenders put together. He is the man that we must apprehend and punish before crime in the United States will fail to be attractive, and at the present moment it is its attractiveness which helps to make our criminal statistics so alarming.

I have placed him fourth in numerical strength in my general classification, and I believe this to be a correct estimate of the number of those who really make their living by professional thieving. If those are to be included who would like to succeed as professional thieves and fail, and drop down sooner or later into the occasional criminal's class, or into the tramp's class, the position I have given the so-called successful "professional" would have to be changed; but it has seemed best to confine the class to those who are rated successful, and on this basis I doubt whether an actual census taking, if it were possible, would prove them to be more numerous than I have indicated. Seeing and hearing so much of them on my travels, I made every effort to secure trustworthy statistics in regard to their number, and as the majority of them are known to the police, it seemed reasonable to suppose that, if I passed around enough among different police organisations, I ought to get satisfactory figures, but the fact of the matter is that the police themselves can only make guesses concerning the general situation, and I am unable to do any better.

When putting queries concerning the number of the offenders in question, my informants wanted me to differentiate and ask them about particular kinds of professionals before they would reply. One very well informed detective, for instance, said: "Do you mean the whole push, or just the A Number One guns? If you mean the push, why you're safe in saying that there are 100,000 in the whole country, but the most of 'em are a pretty poor lot. If you mean the really good people, 10,000 will take 'em all in."

The cities which were reported to have turned out the greatest number were New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburg, Buffalo, Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and San Francisco. Chicago was given the palm for being, at the present moment, the main stronghold of habitual criminals. Nearly every photograph I saw of a young offender was said to represent one of Chicago's hopefuls, and the pictures of the old men were generally described as the likenesses of New York City "talent." Chicago's lead in the number of "professionals" was explained by one man on the ground that it is a Mecca and Medina "for young fellows who have got into some scrape in the East. They go to Chicago, get in with the push, and then start out on the road. The older men train them."

A question that I was continually putting to myself when meeting the "professional" was: What made him choose such a career? He is intelligent, agreeable to talk to, pleasant as a travelling companion, and among his kind a fairly good fellow, and why did he not put these abilities and talents to a better use? To understand him well I believe that one must make his acquaintance while he is still living at home, as a boy, in some city "slum." He does not always come from a slum, but, as a rule, this is where he begins his criminal career. In every quarter of this character there is a criminal atmosphere. The criminologists have not given this fact sufficient prominence in their writings. They make some mention of it, but it is seldom given its true significance in their books. The best-born lad in the world can go wrong if forced to live in this corrupt environment. Not that he is necessarily taught to commit crimes, or urged to, although this sometimes happens; they become spontaneous actions on his part. The very air he breathes frequently incites him to criminal deeds, and practice makes him skilful and expert. In another environment, in nine cases out of ten, he could be trained to take an interest in upright living; in this one he follows the lines of least resistance, and becomes a thief.

Let me describe the childhood of a criminal boy who will serve as a type for thousands.

He was born in one of the slums of New York, not far from the Bowery, and within a stone's throw of the clock of Cooper Institute, and the white spire of Grace Church. From the very start he was what is called an unwelcome child. Not that there was any particular dislike toward him personally, but his parents had all they could do, and more too, to care for the half dozen other children who had come to them, and, when he appeared, there was hardly any room in the house left. He grew up with the sense of want always present, and when he got into the street with the other children of the neighbourhood, it became even more oppressive. Pretty soon he learned from the example of his playmates that begging sometimes helps to quiet a boy's hunger, and that pilfering from the grocer's sidewalk display makes the dinner at home more substantial. These are bits of slum philosophy that every child living in slums learns to appreciate sooner or later. The lad in question was no exception. He was soon initiated into the clique, and played his own part in these miniature bread riots. He did not appreciate their criminal significance. All he knew was that his stomach was empty and that he wanted the things he saw in the shops and streets. He was like a baby who sees a pretty colour gleaming on the carpet, and, without counting the cost or pains, creeps after it. He knew nothing of the law of Mine and Thine, except as the thing desired was held fast in the fist of its owner. Not that he was deformed in his moral nature, or naturally lacking in moral power, but this nature and power had never been trained. Like his body, they had been neglected and forgotten, and it is no surprise that they failed to develop. Had somebody taken him out of his "slum" environment, and taught him how to be respectable and honest, his talents might have been put to good uses, but luck, as he calls circumstances, was against him, and he had to stay in low life.

In this life there is, as a rule, but one ideal for a boy, and that is successful thieving. He sees men, to be sure, who find gambling more profitable, as well as safer, and still others humble enough to content themselves with simple begging, but as a lad truly ambitious and anxious to get on rapidly, he must join the "crook's" fraternity. There is also a fascination about crime which appeals to him. Men describe it differently, but they all agree that it has a great deal to do in making criminals. My own idea is that it lies in the excitement of trying to elude justice. I know from experience as an amateur tramp that there is a great deal of satisfaction in slipping away from a policeman just as he is on the point of catching you, and I can easily understand how much greater the pleasure must be to a man, who, in thus dodging the officer, escapes not simply a few days in a county jail, but long years in a penitentiary. It is the most exciting business in the world, and for men equal to its vicissitudes it must have great attractions.

In time it interested the boy I am describing. At first he thieved because it was the only way he knew to still his hunger, but as he grew older the idea of gain developed, and he threw himself body and soul into the thief's career. He had been brought up in crime, taught to regard it as a profitable field of labour, full of exciting chase and often splendid capture, and naturally it was the activity that appealed to him. He knew that he had certain abilities for criminal enterprises, that there was a possibility of making them pay, and he determined to trust to luck. The reader may exclaim here: "But this boy must have been a phenomenon. No lad wilfully chooses such a career so young." He was in all respects an average slum boy in his ambitions and maturity, and if he seems extraordinary to the reader, the only explanation I can give is that low life develops its characters with unusual rapidity. Outcast boys are in business and struggling for a place in the world long before the respectable boy has even had a glimpse of it. This comes of competition. They must either jump into the fray or die. The child in them is killed long before it has had a chance to expand, and the man develops with hothouse haste. It is abnormal, but it is true, and it all goes to show how the boy in question was registered so early in the criminal calendar. He had to make his living, he had to choose a business, and his precocity, if I may call it that, was simply the result of being forced so early into the "swim." He ought to have been a frolicsome child, fond of ball and marbles, but he had but little time for such amusements. Money was what he wanted, and he rushed pell-mell in search of it. I will leave him in the company of hardened tramps and criminals, into which he soon drifted, and among whom he made a name for himself.

The resolution to be a "professional" comes later with some lads than with others. Until well on into their teens, and sometimes even into their twenties, there are those who merely drift, stealing when they can and managing otherwise when they can't. Finally they are arrested, convicted, and sent to state prison. Here there is the same criminal atmosphere that they were accustomed to in the open, only more of it. Go where they will in their world, they cannot escape it. In prison they form acquaintances and make contracts against the day when they will be free again. They are eventually turned loose. What are they to do? The "job," of course, that they have talked about with a "pal" in the "stir" (penitentiary). They do it, and get away with two or three thousand. This decides them. They know of more deals, and so do their cronies, and they agree to undertake them and divide the plunder. So it goes on for years, and finally they have "records;" they are recognised among their fellows and in police circles as clever "guns;" they have arrived at distinction.

Only one who has been in the criminal world can realise how easy it is for a boy to develop on these lines. He who studies prison specimens only, and neglects to make their acquaintance while they are still young and unhardened, naturally comes to look upon them as weird and uncanny creatures, to be accounted for only on the ground that they are freaks of nature; but they are really the result of man's own social system. If there were no slums in this country, no criminal atmosphere, and no unknown thieves to protect the known, there would be comparatively few professional offenders. The trouble at present is that when a boy gets into this atmosphere, once learns to enjoy criminal companionship and practice, he is as unhappy without them as is the cigarette fiend without his cigarette. Violent measures are necessary to effect any changes, and there comes a time when nothing avails.

Before closing this chapter it seems appropriate to refer to some of the peculiar characteristics of professional offenders. The most that can be attempted in the space of one chapter is a short account of a few of their traits as a class, but an interesting book might be written on this subject.

A peculiar caste feeling or pride is one of the most noteworthy characteristics of professional offenders. They believe that, in ostracising them from decent company, the polite world meant that they should live their lives in absolute exile, that they should be denied all human companionship, and in finding it for themselves among their kind, in creating a world of their own with laws, manners, and customs, free of every other and answerable only to itself, they feel that they have outwitted the larger world, beaten it at its own game, as it were. Their attitude to society may be likened to that of the boy who has been thrown out of his home for some misdemeanour and who has "got on" without paternal help and advice; they think that they have "done" society, as the boy often thinks that he has "done" his father, and the thought makes them vain. Individually, they frequently regret the deeds which lost them their respectability, and a number, if they could, would like to live cleaner lives, but, collectively, their new citizenship and position give them a conceit such as few human beings of the respectable sort ever enjoy. Watch them at a hang-out camp-fire gathering! They sit there like Indian chiefs, proud of their freedom and scornful of all other society, poking fun at its follies, picking flaws in its morality, and imaginatively regenerating it with their own suggestions and reforms. At the bottom of their hearts they know that theirs is a low world, boasting nothing that can compare with the one which they criticise and carp at, and that they are justly exiled; but the fact that they have succeeded alone and unaided in making it their own puffs

them up with a pride which will not allow them to judge impartially.

I remember talking with a Western criminal in regard to this matter, and taking him to task for his loose and careless criticism, as I considered it. He had tossed off bold judgments on all manner of inconsistencies and immoralities which he claimed that he had found in respectable society, and took his own world as a standard of comparison. Generosity was a virtue which he thought much more prevalent in his class. He listened to my objections, and seemed to accept some of the points made, but he closed the argument with a passionate appeal to what he would have called my class pride. "But think how we've fooled 'em, Cigarette," he exclaimed. "Why, even when they put us in prison we've still got our gang, just the same, our crowd,—that's what tickles me. I s'pose they are better'n I am,—I'll be better when I'm dead,—but they ain't any smarter'n I am. They wanted me to go off in the woods somewhere 'n' chew up my soul all alone, 'n' I've fooled 'em,—we all have! That's what I'm kickin' for, that they give in 'n' say, 'You ain't such Rubes as we thought you were.' If one uv 'em 'ud jus' come to me 'n' say: 'Jack, it's a fact, we can't ring in the solitary confinement act on you.—d'you know, I believe I'd reform jus' to be square with 'im. What I want 'em to do is to 'fess up that I ain't beholden to 'em for cump'y, for my gang, 'n' that they ain't any smarter'n I am in findin' a gang. I'm jus' as big a man in my crowd as they are in theirs, 'n' nothin' that they can do'll make me any smaller. Ain't that right, eh?" And I had to confess that from his point of view it was.

Respectable, law-abiding people never realise what a comfort this caste feeling is to thousands of men. I have met even educated men to whom it has been a consolation. They have never been able to define exactly the compensation it affords them, indeed they have often been ashamed to admit the fact, but it has remained, nevertheless. I think the man I have just quoted enunciates it as clearly as it is possible to be set forth in words. His joy consisted in discovering that he was just as "smart," just as full of resource, just as equal to a trying situation, even in his disgrace and downfall, as the man who shunned his company, who wanted him banished or sent to prison; he had revenged himself, so to speak, on his avengers, a gratification which is more or less dear to all human beings.

Personal liberty and freedom in contra-distinction to class liberty and freedom also count for a good deal in the outcast's life. Besides being independent of other people, he is also more or less independent of his own people, so far as laws and commands are concerned. He tolerates no king, president, or parliament, and resents with vigour any infringements upon his privileges, either from society or his own organisation. In fact, he leaves the organisation and lives

by himself alone, if he feels that its unwritten, but at times rather strict, laws bear too heavily upon him. There are men who live absolutely apart from the crowd, shunning all society, except that which supports them. They are often called "cranks" by their less thoroughgoing companions, and would probably impress every one as a little crotchety and peculiar, but their action is the logical outcome of the life. The tendency of this life is to make a man dislike the slightest conventionalism, and to live up to his disliking is the consistent conduct of every man in it. He hates veneer about him in every particular and only as he throws off every vestige of it does he enjoy to the full his world.

In a lodging-house in Chicago, some years ago, I met a tramp who was a good example of the liberty-loving professional offenders. We awoke in the morning a little earlier than the rest, and, as it was not yet time to get up, fell to talking and "declaring ourselves," as tramps do under such circumstances. After we had exchanged the usual cut and dried remarks which even hobo society cannot do entirely without, he said to me, suddenly, and utterly without connection with what had gone before: "Don't you love this sort o' life?" at the same time looking at me enthusiastically, almost as if inspired. I confessed that it had certain attractive features, and showed, for the sake of drawing him out, an enthusiasm of my own. "I don't see," he went on, "how I have ever lived differently. I was brought up on a farm, but, my goodness, I wouldn't trade this life if you'd give me all the land in the wild West. Why, I can do just as I please now—exactly. When I want to go anywhere, I get on a train and go, and no one has the right to ask me any questions. That's what I call liberty,—I want to go just where I please," and he brought out the words with an emphasis that could not have been stronger had he been stating his religious convictions.

I have often been asked whether tramps and criminals have class divisions and distinctions like those in society proper. "Are there aristocrats and middle class people, for instance," a number of persons have said to me, "and does position count for much?" Most certainly there are these distinctions, and they constitute one of the most notable features of the life. There is just as much chance to climb high and fall low, in the outcast world, there are just as many prizes and praises to win, as in the larger world surrounding it, and the investigator will find, if he observes carefully enough, the identical little jealousies, criticisms, and quarrels that prevail in "polite society."

A man acquires position in pretty much the same way that it is acquired elsewhere,—he either works hard for it, or it is granted him by common consent on account of his superior native endowment. There is as little jumping into

fame in this world as in any other; one must prove his ability to do certain things well, have a record of preparation consistent with his achievements, before he can take any very high place in the social order. The criminal enjoys, as a rule, the highest position; he is the aristocrat of the entire community. Everybody looks up to him, his presence is desired at "hang-out" gatherings, boys delight to shake his hand, and men repeat his remarks like the wise sayings of a prophet. He feels his importance, works for it, and tries to live up to it, just as determinedly as aristocrats in other spheres of activity, and if he loses it and falls from grace, the disappointment is correspondingly keen.

The tramp may be said to belong to the middle class of the outcast world, and, like other middle class people, he often finds life a little nicer in a class socially above him. He enjoys associating with criminals, being able to quote them on matters of interest to the "hang-out," and giving the impression that he is *au courant* with their business. If he can do all this well it makes him so much the more important among his fellows. His own particular class, however, also has advantages and attractions, and there are men who seek his company nearly as much as he seeks the criminals. There is an upper middle class as well as a lower, and the line of separation is sharply drawn. The "old stagers," the men who have been years "on the road," and know it "down to the ground," as they say, constitute the upper middle class. They can dictate somewhat to the tramps not so experienced as they are, and their opinions are always listened to first. If they say, for instance, that a certain town is "hostile," unfriendly to beggars, the statement is accepted on its face, unless some one has absolute evidence to the contrary, and even then the under class man makes his demurrer very modestly. I have never succeeded in getting as far as this during my tramp experiences, and had to remain content in the lower division, but even there I had a significance denied to men less experienced than I was. A newcomer, for instance, a "tenderfoot," was expected to show me deference, and if I happened in at a "hang-out," where only newcomers were present, I was cock of the walk. Even these "tenderfeet" have a class pride, too, for at the bottom of all this social arrangement there are men and women who have been turned out of every class, the outcast of the outcasts. They are called "tomato-can-stiffs" and "barrel dossers" by the people above them, terms which indicate that they have reached the last pitch of degradation. They realise their disgrace nearly as much as their counterparts who have been turned out of respectable society, and often look with longing upon the positions they once enjoyed, but their lot is not entirely without its consolations, as I learned one day in talking with one of them. "Well, at any rate," he said, "I ain't got to keep thinkin' all the while 't I'm goin' to fall

and lose my posish the way you have to. There's no place for me to fall to, I've come to the end o' my rope. You've got to keep lookin' out fer yerself ev'ry step you take—keep worryin' about gettin' on, 'n' I don't have them worries any more, 'n' it's a big relief, I tell you. You feel the way you do when you get out o' prison." This thought is a little fanciful, and not entirely sincere, but I can nevertheless appreciate the man's point of view, for, with all the independence and liberty of this world, there is, just as he said, considerable worry about holding one's place, and I can imagine a time when it would be pleasant to be relieved of it all.

The financial profits in a professional offender's career are not easy to determine, but they must be taken into consideration in all accounts of his life, no matter how short. I saw more of the pickpocket, during my police experience, than of any other professional thief, and it was possible for me to learn considerable in regard to his winnings.

CHAPTER III.

THE BUSINESS OF PICKING POCKETS.

Next to the tramp, who is more of a nuisance on American railroads, however, than a criminal offender, the pickpocket is the most troublesome man that a railroad police officer has to deal with. He has made a study of the different methods by which passengers on trains can be relieved of their pocketbooks, and unless he is carefully watched he can give a railroad a very bad name. The same is true of a circus, in the wake of which light-fingered gentry are generally to be found. Circuses, like railroads, hire policemen to protect their properties and patrons, and there are certain "shows" which one can attend and feel comparatively safe; but in spite of the detectives which they employ, many of them are exactly what the owner of a circus called them in my presence —"shake-downs." Everybody is to be "shaken down" who is "green" enough to let the pickpockets get at him, and, if pocketbooks are lost, the proprietor will not be held responsible.

A railroad company, on the other hand, is severely criticised, and justly, if pickpockets are much in evidence on its trains, and as they are the most numerous of all habitual offenders, the railroad police officer is kept very busy during the summer season.

The origin of the pickpocket takes one too far back in history to be explained in detail here, but the probability is that his natural history is contemporaneous with that of the pocket. When pockets were sewed into our clothes, and we began to put valuables into them, the pickpocket's career was opened up; to-day he is one of the most expert criminal specialists. In the United States he has frequently begun life as a newsboy, who, if he is dishonest, soon learns how to take change from the "fob" pocket of men's coats. If he becomes skilled at this kind of "grafting," and attracts the attention of some older member of the pickpocket's guild, he is instructed in the other branches of the art, or trade, as one pleases; I call it a business. An apt pupil can become an adept before he is in his teens; indeed, some of the most successful pickpockets in the country to-day are young boys. There are a number of reasons why so many criminals make pocket-picking a specialty. In the first place, it brings in hard cash, which does not have

to be pawned or sold, and which it is very difficult to identify. The "leather," or pocketbook, is "weeded" (the money is taken out) and then thrown away, and unless some one has actually seen the pickpocket take it he cannot be convicted. Another reason is that it requires no implements or tools other than those with which nature has provided us. Two nimble fingers are all that is necessary after the victim has once been "framed up," and the ease with which victims are found constitutes still another attraction of the profession. We all think we take great care of our pocketbooks in crowded thoroughfares, and on street cars, but the most careful persons are "marks" for the pickpocket, if he has reason to believe that the plunder will pay him for the necessary preparations. It is usually the unwary farmer from the country who makes the easiest victim, but there are knowing detectives who have been relieved of their purses.

A fourth reason, and the main one, is that a practised hand at the business takes in a great deal of money. Twenty-five dollars a "touch" is not considered a phenomenal record if there is much money in the crowd in which the pickpocket is working, and five or six touches in a day frequently only pay expenses. An "A Number One grafter" is after hundreds and thousands, and it is the ambition of every man in the business to be this kind of pickpocket.

Some men operate on the "single-handed" basis; they travel alone, arrange their own "frame-ups" (personally corner their victims), and keep all the profits. There are a few well-known successful pickpockets of this order, and they are rated high among their fellows, but the more general custom is for what is called a "mob" of men to travel together, one known as the "tool" doing the actual picking, and the others attending to the "stalling." A stall is the confederate of the pickpocket, who bumps up against people, or arranges them in such a way that the pickpocket can get at their pockets. Practically any one who will take a short course of instruction can learn how to stall, but there are naturally some who are more expert than others. A tool who hires his stalls and makes no division of spoils with them will sometimes have to pay as much as $5 a day for skilled men. When he divides what he gets, each man in the mob may get an equal share or not, according to a prearranged agreement, but the tool is the man who does the most work.

Of first-class tools, men who are known to be successful, there are probably not more than 1,500 in the United States. Practically every professional offender has a "go" at pocket-picking some time in his career, but there are comparatively few who make a success of it as actual pickpockets; the stalls are numberless. Among the 1,500 there are some women and a fair portion of young boys, but

the majority are men anywhere from twenty to sixty years old. The total number of the successful and unsuccessful is thirty, forty, or fifty thousand, as one likes. All that is actually known is that there is an army of them, and one can only make guesses as to their real strength.

It is an interesting sight to see a mob of pickpockets at work. It equals football in exercise and tactics, and fencing in cunning and quickness. At the railroad station one of the favourite methods is for the mob to mix with the crowd, pushing and tugging on and near the steps of the coaches. It was my duty to watch carefully on all such occasions, and I was finally rewarded by seeing some pickpockets at work. We were three officers strong at the time, and we had concentrated at the middle of the train, where the pushing was worst. One of the officers was a man who has made a lifelong study of grafts and grafters. He and I were standing close together in the crowd, and suddenly I saw him dart like a flash toward the steps of one of the cars. I closed in also, as best I could, and there on the steps were two big stalls blocking the way, one of them saying to the people in front of him: "Excuse me, but I have left my valise in this car." His confederate was near by, also pushing. Between the two was the tool and his victim, and my companion had slipped in among them just in time to shove his arm in between the tool's arm and the victim's pocket, and the "leather" was saved.

In the aisle of a car, when the passengers are getting out, another popular procedure is for one stall to get in front of the victim, another one behind him, and the tool places himself so that he can get his hand into the man's pocket. The stall behind pushes, and the one in front turns around angrily, blocking the way meanwhile, and says to the innocent passenger: "Stop your pushing, will you? Have you no manners?" The man makes profuse apologies, but the pushing continues until the two stalls hear the tool give the thief's cough or make a noise with his lips such as goes with a kiss, which is a signal to them that the leather has come up, and is safely landed; it has been passed in lightning fashion to a confederate in the rear; the tool never keeps it if he can help it. On reaching the station platform the front stall begs pardon for the harsh words he has spoken to the passenger, and in the language of the story-teller, all ends happily.

Still another trick, and one that can happen anywhere, is to tip the victim's hat down over his eyes, and then "nick" him while he is trying to get his equilibrium again. A veteran justice of the peace whom I met on my travels, and who was the twin brother in appearance of the poet Whittier, has an amusing story to tell of how this trick was played on him. We had called on him—my two brother

officers and I—to find out whether he would enforce the local suspicious character ordinance if we brought pickpockets before him that we knew were in town. It was circus day, and a raft of them had followed the show to the town, and we were afraid that they might attempt to do work on our trains.

"Pickpockets! Enforce the suspicious character ordinance!"—screamed the squire. "You just bring the slickers in, an' see what I'll do with them. Why, gol darn them, they got $36 out o' me the night the soldier boys came home."

"How did it happen?"

"I can't tell you. All I know is that I was coming down that stairway over there across the street, my hat fell over my eyes, and I stumbled. I didn't think anything about it at the time, but when I got down to Simpson's, where I was going to buy some groceries for my wife, I found that my wallet was gone."

"Did you notice any one on the stairway?"

"Yes, there was a well dressed looking stranger coming down behind me, and there may have been another man, coming down behind him, but I couldn't 'a' sworn that they took my wallet. Some boys found it down the street the next day."

For the benefit of those who have to travel much, and we are all on the cars a little, it seems worth while to describe the "raise" and "change" tricks. When a victim is to be raised, one stratagem is for a stall to go to him and ask whether a valise in the seat behind him is his,—it always is,—and if so will he kindly shift it. If passengers are getting into the car, and there is considerable crowding going on, the man will be relieved of his pocketbook while he is reaching down for his valise.

To "change" a man is to shift him from one car to another on the plea that the one he is in is to be taken off at a junction. While he is changing and going down the aisle, his "roll" or wallet disappears, and the pickpockets take another train at a junction. It is all done in a flash, and is as simple as can be to those who are in the business, but a great many "leathers" would be saved if people would only be careful and not crowd together like sheep. At circuses I have seen them push and shove like mad, and all the while the pickpockets were at work among them.

An interesting story is told of an Illinois town where a mob of pickpockets had been led to believe that they had "squared" things sufficiently with the

authorities to be able to run "sure thing" games at the show grounds with impunity,—pickpockets dabble occasionally in games,—but they swindled people so outrageously that the authorities got scared and prohibited the games. The men had paid so heavily for what they had considered were privileges, that they were going to be losers unless they got in their "graft" somehow, so they turned pickpockets again, and, as one man put it, "simply tore the crowd open." When it dispersed, the ground was literally covered with emptied pocketbooks.

The easiest way for the police officer to deal with the pickpocket is to know him whenever he appears, and to let him understand that he is "spotted" and would better keep away. Some officers are born thief-catchers, and can seemingly scent crime where it cannot even be seen, and, whether they know a man or not, can pick out the real culprit. The average officer, however, must recognise his man before he can touch him, unless he catches him red-handed, and it is he who knows a great many offenders and can call the "turn" on them, give their names and records, that is the great detective of modern times. The sleuth of fiction, who catches criminals by magic, as it were, is a snare and a delusion.

During my police experience I carried with me a pocket "rogue's gallery" of the most notorious pickpockets of the section of the country in which I had to travel. For a time I saw so many of these gentry in the flesh, and was shown so many pictures, that a bewildering composite picture of all formed in my mind. It seemed to me, sometimes, as if everybody I saw in the streets resembled a pickpocket that I had to be on the lookout for. I finally determined to commit to memory a picture a day, or every two or three days as was necessary, and learn to differentiate, and the method proved successful. To-day there are about fifty pickpockets that I shall know wherever I see them. The majority of them I have met personally, but a number are known to me by photograph only.

To illustrate the usefulness of photographs in the police business, and incidentally my method, I must tell about a pickpocket whom I identified, one morning, in a town where a circus was exhibiting. He had tried to take a watch from a fellow passenger on a trolley-car, and had nearly succeeded in unscrewing it from the chain when he was discovered. He was a desperate character, and drew a razor, with which he frightened everybody off the car, including the motorman. He attempted to escape by running the car himself, but on seeing that it was going to take him back to the town, he deserted it, appropriated a horse and buggy, and made another dash for liberty. He was eventually driven into a fence corner by some of the young men of the town, and kept at bay until the police arrived, when he was taken to the lock-up, where, in

company with my two companions, I saw him. He was brought out of his cell for our inspection, and, as luck would have it, it was his photograph in my book that I had elected to commit to memory a few days before. I knew him the minute I saw him, and he was identified beyond a possible doubt. In return he gave me the worst scolding I have ever had in my life, and threatened to put out "my light" when he is free again, but this is a *façon de parler* of men of his class; after he has served his five or ten years he will have forgotten me and his threat.

The amount of money which pickpockets take in annually is probably greater than that of any of the other specialists in crime. It would be idle to say how large it is, but it is a well-known fact that thousands of dollars are stolen by them at big public gatherings to which they have access. It was reported, for instance, that at the recent Confederate Soldiers' Reunion in the South $30,000 were stolen by pickpockets, and almost every day in the year one reads in the newspapers of a big "touch" reaching into the thousands. I think it is a conservative statement to say that in a lifetime the expert pickpocket steals $20,000. Multiply this figure by 1,500, which I have given as the number of the first-class tools in the country, and the result reaches high up into the millions. Like other professional thieves, the pickpocket throws away his money like water, and very seldom thinks of saving for old age, but practically all successful mobs have "fall money" (an expense fund for paying lawyers, etc., when they get arrested) of from $3,000 to $5,000 each, carefully banked, and I know of one pickpocket who is the owner of some very valuable real estate. A good illustration of the rapidity with which they recoup themselves financially after a period of rest, or a term in prison, is the story told about one of them who returned to this country penniless after a pleasure trip in Europe. The man related the incident to a friend of mine. "Didn't have a red," he said. "I tackled a saloon keeper I knew for a couple of thousand. How long do you think I was paying him back? Three weeks!"

If the pickpocket knew how to save his money, and could invest it well, his children might some day be but millionaires.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW SOME TOWNS ARE "PROTECTED."

Speaking generally, there are two methods in vogue in American police circles for dealing with crime, and they may be called the compromising and the uncompromising. The latter is the more honest. In a town where it is followed, the chief of police is known to be a man who will not allow a professional thief within the city limits, if he can help it, and he is continually on watch for transient offenders. He will make no "deal" with criminals in any particular, and he takes pride in securing the conviction and punishment of all whom his men apprehend. He is naturally not liked by offenders, although they respect his consistency, and there is a local element of rowdies who consider him "an old fogey," but he is the kind of officer that makes Germany, for instance, and England, too, in a measure, so free of the class of criminals that in this country are so bold. There are some chiefs of police in the United States of this character, and they become known throughout the criminal world, but there ought to be more of them.

The compromising policeman is a man of another stripe. He knows about the uncompromising "copper," has read about him and thought about him, but he excuses his disinclination to accept him as a model on the ground that, if he did, the thieves would "tear his town open."

"Why, if I should antagonise this class, as you suggest," he will say to the protesting citizens, "they would come here some night and steal right and left, just out of revenge. I haven't enough men to protect the city in that way. The Town Council only give me so much to run the entire force, and I have to manage the best way I can. If you'll give me more men, I'll try to drive all the thieves out of the city."

In certain instances his argument has truth in it; it sometimes happens that he has not enough men to take care of the city from the uncompromising policeman's point of view. The trouble is, however, that because he is thus handicapped he thinks that he can go a step farther, and is justified in reasoning thus: "Well, I had to pay to get this position, and if the people don't want the town protected as it ought to be, it isn't my fault, and I'm going to get out of the job all that's in it,"

and then begins a miserable conniving with crime.

To illustrate what a professional thief can accomplish with such a police officer, let it be supposed that the thief is happily married, as is sometimes the case, has a family, and wants to live in a certain town. The chief of police knows him, however, and can disgrace his family, if he is so inclined. The thief wants his family left alone, he takes a pride in it, so he visits the chief at "Headquarters," and they have a talk. "See here, chief," he says, "I'll promise you not to do any work in your town, if you'll promise to leave me and mine alone. Now, what's it going to cost me?"

Sometimes it costs money, not necessarily handed over the desk, and not always to the chief personally, but in a manner that is satisfactory to all concerned. In other cases the matter is arranged without money, and the thief may possibly promise to "tip off" to the chief some well-known "professional" when he comes to town, so that the chief can get the benefit of an advertisement in the newspapers; they will say that such and such a man has been captured, "after a long and exciting chase ably conducted by our brilliant chief." The chase generally amounts to a quiet walk to the hotel or saloon where the visiting thief is quietly reading a newspaper or drinking a glass of beer, and the capture dwindles down to a request on the part of the chief or his officer that the man shall go to the "front office," which he does, wondering all the while who it was that "beefed" on him (told the chief who he was). A number of the "fly catches," as they are called in police parlance, which create so much comment in the press, can be explained in some such way as this. Meanwhile, however, what has become of the protected thief? He may keep his word, a number of thieves do, and commit no theft in the town where he is allowed to live; it depends on how much money he needs to meet his various expenses, how dear his family is to him, and what temptations he encounters. If he does break his word, however, and there are no hall-marks on his theft, by which it can be definitely traced to him, all he has to say, when asked by his protector as to who did it, is: "It must have been outside talent." In other words, he can "work" with almost absolute safety in the town, and the innocent public is paying taxes all the while for a police force that ought to be able to apprehend him.

To prove that this case is not hypothetical but actual, I would say that I have recently been in at least two cities where I know that professional thieves live with impunity, for I saw as many as ten in each, and they were not afraid to do criminal work in either. The police of both places claimed that in giving the thieves a domicile they were protecting their towns, but any one who knows

either city well is aware that professional crime is prevalent.

One of the worst features of the policy under consideration is its selfishness. A chief who says to a professional thief, "I will leave you alone if you will leave me alone," practically says to him: "Go to another town when you want to steal." An amusing story is told in this connection about two chiefs who aired their different notions in regard to the matter, at one of the annual conferences of the chiefs of police. One of them had said tentatively, so the story goes, that he had heard that in some cities criminals were protected, and that he considered the practice a bad one. Another chief, who was thought to favour such a policy, got up and said that he did not know much about the question in hand, but he did know that his town was particularly free of crime. "That may be, Bill," retorted the first speaker, "but I'll tell you what your thieves do—they come down to my town to steal and go back to yours, where they are left alone, to live." I give the anecdote merely as gossip, but it illustrates splendidly one of the worst results of compromise with crime.

It sometimes happens that an entire municipal administration, or, at any rate, the most powerful officials in it, favour the policy of compromise, and then it is utterly impossible to punish the criminal adequately. I have been in such communities. Not long ago I was in a town of about ten thousand inhabitants where a "mob" of New York pickpockets were caught in the act of attempting to pick a pocket. On being charged with the crime by the officers who had discovered them, they admitted their guilt and profession, and said: "But what are you going to do about it?" If the town authorities had been trustworthy the pickpockets could have been sent to the penitentiary; because there was practically no hope of securing their conviction in the local courts on account of their ability to bribe, or to give a purely nominal bail and then run away, they were let go.

One of the best illustrations of how a town's officials sell themselves is embodied in the vile character known as "the fixer." I know this man best as a circus follower. Connected with nearly all shows, sometimes officially and sometimes not, are men who have games of chance with which they swindle the public. In late years it has become necessary for these men, in order to run their games, to pay for what are called "privileges," and the man who secures these is called "the fixer." He goes to the mayor or the chief of police of a town, as necessity requires,—sometimes to both,—assures them that the games are harmless (which they know is a lie), and hands them $25, $50, or $100, as circumstances may require. In association with the men who have the games are

pickpockets and other professional thieves,—indeed the gamesters themselves can frequently change clothes with the pickpockets and let the thieves attend to the games while they pick pockets. It is not necessarily understood that the "crooks" are to be protected by the authorities to the extent that the gamesters are, but "the fixer," who stands in with the thieves also, is supposed to be able to get them out of any serious trouble, or, at least, to warn them if he knows that trouble is brewing.

It was once my duty to run a race with a "fixer," and try to get the ear of a mayor of a town before he did. Two other officers and myself had assured ourselves that a "mob" of pickpockets was following up a circus which was being transported over the railroad we were protecting, and we knew that in one town, at least, "the fixer" had "squared" things with the authorities. The circus was on its way to another town on our lines, the mayor and police of which we believed we could swing our way if we got to them before "the fixer" did, and we travelled there ahead of him. We were particularly anxious to have the pickpockets arrested if they put in an appearance, and we told the mayor who they were, what protection they were getting, and explained to him how he would be approached by "the fixer." The mayor listened to us, nodded his head from time to time, and then said: "Well, there'll be no fixing done in this town, and if you will point out the pickpockets, when they come in, you may rest assured that they will be arrested. I can't understand what the citizens of a town can be thinking of when they elect to office men such as you describe." The pickpockets as well as "the fixer" must have got wind of what we had done, for the former did not appear, and the latter made no call on the mayor. We learned, however, that he arranged things satisfactorily to all concerned in the town where the circus exhibited on the following day.

How many towns in this country can be "fixed" in this manner is a question I would not attempt to answer, but I do know that in the district where I was on duty as a police officer a great deal of tact exercise was necessary to beat "the fixer" in a town where it was to his interests to buy up the local authorities; and I ask in wonderment, as did the mayor whom I have quoted: What are the citizens of a town thinking of, when they allow such corrupt officials to manage things? Is it because they are ignorant of what goes on, or merely because they are indifferent? A friend in the police business, but a man who has understood how to remain honest in spite of it, answers the question by saying: "The world is a graft; flash enough boodle under nine noses out of ten, and you can do as you like with them. Take New York, for instance. I could clean up that city in a week

if the people would stand by me. They wouldn't do it. Enough would tumble down in front of some fixer to queer everything that I might do. You can't do anything worth while in the police business unless you've got the people behind you, and they are as fickle as a cat. Why, if I were chief of police in New York, and I should clean up the city thoroughly, there is a class of business men who would come to me and say that I was taking away some of the main attractions of the city, and that they were going to make a kick about it. Heaven knows that the police are corrupt, but I tell you that the public is corrupt, too. See how things are up in Canada! I have just come back from there, and I can assure you that there is no such sneak work going on up there as there is with us. Their police courts are as dignified almost as is our Supreme Court, and if a crook gets into one of them they settle him. How many crooks get what they ought to in this country? About one in ten, and he could get off with a light sentence, if he had money enough to square things."

Perhaps this is true, and we are indifferent to corruption as a people. Certainly the police business makes one think so, but I have not been in it long enough to hold to this pessimistic notion. It is my opinion that the majority of the people in this country do not realise what goes on about them, and I can take my own experience as an example. I have seen more of criminal life, perhaps, than the average person, and it would seem that I ought to have been able to learn considerable about the corruption in the country, but I must admit that, until this experience in a police force, I had no idea that it was as widespread as it is. It is not unreasonable to suppose that people who have never had occasion to look into such matters at all must be even more ignorant of the situation than I was. There is a great deal of wrong-doing that is apparent to any one who takes an active part in municipal politics, and the newspapers are continually reporting things which can but make it obvious to all who read that there is a strong criminal class in the United States; but one seldom takes such matters seriously until he is brought in close contact with them, and the general public is not thus influenced.

Take the Mazet Committee, which recently investigated New York. So far as the police are concerned, I cannot see that the committee brought to light much that was new, and it was difficult for me to take an interest in this part of the investigation. If they had subpœnaed a few successful professional thieves located in New York, however, and persuaded them to tell what they know, the situation would have been much clearer to me and to the general public. More interest and indignation would also have been aroused if New York is

"protected" in the way that I have indicated in the case of other towns. The police are not going to help investigate themselves, and the public is not likely to be permanently affected by what they say. A very definite effect would be made upon me, however, if a thief would get up and tell on what basis he is allowed to live in New York, what it costs him, if anything, to "square" things when he is arrested, what his annual winnings are, and what, in general, he thinks of the criminal situation in the city. He is a specialist entitled to speak with authority, and I would accept his statements as trustworthy.

It is, of course, to be replied to all this that it is very difficult to persuade a thief to talk, but the point I would make is that the public seldom gets the truth in regard to such matters as are under consideration. It hears in an indefinite way that corruption is rampant, and then there is an investigation, but the average citizen rarely realises what is going on until some personal business brings him in contact with the suspected officials. Let a man have his pocket picked, or his home robbed, and go to the police about it, and he will begin to see how things are managed. If everybody could have this experience, meet both detective and thief, and all could have a talk together, there would be an awakening in public sentiment that would be very beneficial.

Meanwhile all that I can recommend is to hunt down the unknown thief, and punish him hard. There are different methods by which he can be apprehended, but I know of none better than to catch the known thief and through him find out the other. The police and court proceedings, if carefully followed, are bound to develop the facts, and, these once secured, the public is to blame if the unknown thief is not punished.

CHAPTER V.

A PENOLOGICAL PILGRIMAGE.

One of the advantages that the itinerant policeman has over the stationary officer is that he can inspect a large number of penal institutions, and find out who, among the people he has to keep track of, are shut up. The municipal officer may know that a certain "professional" is out of his bailiwick, but unless he can place him elsewhere he is never sure when or where he may turn up again. The itinerant officer, on the other hand, can follow a man, and if he gets into prison the officer knows it immediately. This is a very definite gain in the police business, and it would be well if police forces generally were given the benefit of it. There is a National Bureau of Identification to which officers who are members may apply for information in regard to any offender of whom there is a record, and the institution is to be recommended to those who are connected with police life, but voluntary information in regard to convicts sent to police chiefs by prison wardens would also be helpful.

My interest in the lock-ups, jails, workhouses, and penitentiaries that I visited on my travels was, in a measure, professional, but I was mainly concerned in getting information in regard to their condition and management, and in finding out to what extent they have a deterrent effect on crime. All told, I inspected about thirty-five places of detention and penal institutions, and they represent the best and worst of their kind in the country. In criticising them I would not have it understood that I hold the officials in charge necessarily responsible for their condition—the taxpayers decide whether a community shall have a truly modern prison or not; my purpose is merely to report what I saw, and to comment objectively on my finding.

I visited more lock-ups than anything else. On reaching a town, I went as soon as possible to the "calaboose" to see who were held there. Sometimes the little prison was empty, and then again every cell would be occupied, but in a week I generally saw from thirty to fifty inmates. Mature men predominated, but women and boys were also to be found. The women were invariably separated from the men by at least a cell wall, but the boys, and I saw some not over ten years old, were thrown in with the most hardened criminals. They were allowed

to pass about among the men in the lock-up corridor, and at night were shut up with them in the cells. This is the worst feature of the lock-up system in the United States. Very little effort is made in the smaller towns to separate the young from the old, the hardened from the unhardened, and even in the lock-ups of large cities a much more careful classification of the inmates is necessary. The officials in charge of these places excuse the policy now in vogue on the ground that there is not room enough to give the boys better attention, and the taxpayers say that there is not money enough in the community to build larger lock-ups. There is always a reason of some sort for every blunder that is made, but as long as we make our lock-ups "kindergartens of crime," as I once heard a criminal call them, there is no excuse whatever to wonder why there are so many offenders. It is a fashion, nowadays, to run to "the positive school" of Italy and France for an explanation concerning the origin of the criminal, to ask Signor Lombroso to diagnose the situation, but in this country we need but make a round of our lock-ups to discover where the fresh crop of offenders comes from. They generally get to the lock-up from the "slum," where they may or may not have shown criminal proclivities, but once in the lock-up and allowed to associate with the old offenders, very few of them, indeed, escape the contaminating influences brought to bear upon them.

The county jail may be described as the public school of crime. There are some county jails in which a thorough classification of the inmates is secured, but there is a very small number of these jails compared with the hundreds in which young and old, first offenders and habitual criminals, are all jumbled together. I can write from a full experience in regard to our county jails, because I have not only had to visit them as a police officer, but I have also had to "serve time" in them as a tramp, and I know whereof I speak. Practically any boy, no matter what his training has been, can be made a criminal if handed over to skilled jail instructors, and every day in the year some lad, who, after all is said, is really only mischievous, is committed by a magistrate or justice of the peace to a county prison. There is no other place for the magistrate to send the boy, if his parents demand his incarceration, and the sheriff is not prepared to take him to the reform school immediately, and so he is tossed into the general rag-bag of offenders to take his chances. He is eventually sent to the reform school or house of correction, where it is theoretically supposed that he is going to be reformed; but it is a fact that the majority of professional offenders in this country have generally spent a part of their youth in just such institutions, where they were no more reformed than is a confirmed jailbird on his release from a penitentiary. It is an extremely difficult task to change any boy who goes to a reform school

after a long sitting in a county jail, and the wonder to me is that our reformatories accomplish what they do. The superintendent of a reformatory school in Colorado took me to task some years ago for making the statement in public, in regard to tramps, that I have just made about professional criminals,—that the majority of them have experienced reform-school discipline,—and he said that it was a thoroughly established fact that tramps keep out of such places. Of course they keep out of them as full-grown men, as do also grown-up thieves, but they are sent to them as youngsters, if apprehended for some offence, whether they like it or not, and any one who is acquainted with tramps and criminal life knows this to be true.

I make so much mention of boys in this paper because they are to be the next generation of offenders, unless we succeed in rescuing them from a criminal life while they are still susceptible to good influences; and we are not doing this, or even seriously thinking about it, when we give them professional thieves and convicted murderers as associates in jails.

Various suggestions have been made by which the county jail system can be improved, and I favour the one which recommends that the county institution be abolished entirely, and that two or three well-equipped houses of detention be made to suffice for an entire State. Such an arrangement would not only be a great deal cheaper than the present practice, but it would permit of a careful division of all the inmates. Some of our workhouses are already run on this basis, several counties contributing toward the support and maintenance of each. It would, of course, be necessary to make a county's contributions toward the support of a jail proportionate to its population, but there ought not to be any great difficulty in arranging a satisfactory contract; and it is time, anyhow, that we throw over some of our commercial notions about making corrective and penal institutions pay their way. The thing to do is to make them effective in checking crime, and if they are successful in this very important particular, we can well afford to put a little money in them without worrying about the financial returns.

I visited but one reformatory during my pilgrimage, but it was representative of the latest of these institutions. I refer to the Elmira, N. Y. type. The old and hardened "professional" calls these places the high schools of crime, the next grade after the county jail, but I do not agree with him in this classification. It is true, as he says, that a number of offenders are committed to these institutions, who ought to have been sent to the penitentiary, and it is particularly disgusting to him to see educated men, with "pull" and friends, who have been convicted of

crimes for which less favoured offenders would receive sentences to the State prison, relieved of the disgrace of going to prison by being sent to the "kids' pen," as the reformatory is also sometimes called; but, admitting all this, I believe that the modern reformatory, when well managed, represents the best penological notions. As in all prisons, however, where the inmates work on the association basis, a great deal can be taught that is not in the curriculum of the institution, and it is consequently no surprise to meet, in the open, criminals who have "served time" in reformatories. In the reformatory that I visited, it was a disappointment to me to find that men whose faces, manner, and bearing proved them to be, if not actual professionals, at least understudies of men who are, were mixed up in the workshops with young fellows whom any one would have picked out; for comparatively innocent offenders. I believe in the principle of association in certain corrective institutions also, but I do not approve of indiscriminate companionship. A natural reply to my criticism is that it is hard to tell who are the old offenders, but a prison official who knows his business, and has learned how to read faces and to interpret actions, ought to be able to separate the "crook" from the beginner in crime. It is a false notion to think that the former is going to be helped by association with the latter. A prison is a prison, no matter what euphemistic name it is called, and the old offender is not going to allow any "mother's boy" fellow prisoner to set him an example. In the criminal world, as in the larger world on which it lives, the law of the survival of the fittest is operative, and the fittest, as a rule, are those who are the most hardened; in prison and out, it is they who really run things.

Another mistake made in the reformatory in question, according to my view, is the age limit by which admission into the institution is regulated. When a young man has reached his twenty-first year, and commits a crime which calls for a prison sentence, I say let him have it, no matter whose son he may be, provided the penitentiary authorities observe the classification referred to above. If it can be proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the young man is mentally deficient, and not accountable for his actions, it is obvious that the State prison is no place for him; but, otherwise, it is my observation that more good than harm is done, if he is made to suffer the punishment that the law demands. I realise that I am on debatable ground in taking this view of such cases, but they are debatable largely because the different opinions held in regard to them are the result of different observations. Mine have been made mainly in the outdoor criminal world, and I have not had a wide experience with the offender in confinement, but I have met the pampered young criminal so often, and it has been so plain that it was light punishment which trained him to stand the more severe, that I have come to

believe that a quick checking-up at the start would have been more beneficial.

Of penitentiaries I saw two, each in a different State. One contained about two thousand five hundred inmates, and the other about one thousand eight hundred. It is not easy even for a police officer to explore these institutions freely. I know of one warden who refuses to let the police have photographs of criminals in his charge; he says that "it is not nice to pass them around,"—but I managed to see a good deal that I could not possibly have seen as an ordinary visitor, hurried through by a guard.

As a general statement, it may be said that a penitentiary reflects the warden's personality. There are rules to be observed and work to be done, which have been arranged and planned for by the board of directors, but the warden is the man with whom the prisoners have to deal, and they look up to him as the principal authority in every-day matters. His main anxiety is to get good conduct out of his charges, and he has to experiment with various methods. Some wardens favour one method and some another. One, for instance, will think that leniency and kindness work best, while another will recommend whipping, the dungeon, electricity, hot water, etc., for recalcitrant inmates. The idea of each warden is that he wants things to go smoothly, and if they do not, he has to straighten them out as best he can. All this is very interesting from the warden's point of view, and it interested me also somewhat when visiting the two penitentiaries; but my main endeavour was to try to find out to what extent these institutions were lessening the number of criminals in the communities which they served. A man may be as gentle as a lamb while in durance, and the warden may pride himself on the good conduct he is getting out of him, but how is he going to be when he has his liberty once more? The cleverest criminal is usually the most docile prisoner, and yet he takes up crime again as his profession after his time has expired, and the penitentiary has been in his case merely a house of detention. Excepting the death penalty, however, imprisonment in a penitentiary is the final form of punishment that we have in this country, and if it fails to check crime, either our criminals are increasing out of proportion to our means for taking care of them, or we do not administer the proper chastisement. From what I have been able to see of our penitentiaries as a visitor, and have heard about them as a fellow traveller with tramps, and incidentally with criminals, I am inclined to accept the second conclusion. Crime has increased in this country faster than the population, but in the older States there are enough penal institutions to take care of the offenders, if they were made to have the discouraging effect on criminals that similar institutions have in Europe.

The late Austin Bidwell, an American offender who had a long experience in an English prison, and who was a competent judge of the kind of punishment that is the most deterrent, once said to me that he believed that a short imprisonment, if made very severe, accomplished more than a long imprisonment with comforts. And he added that he thought that in the United States a mistake was made in giving criminals long sentences to easy prisons. I hold more or less to the same view. Penologically, I think that the punishment in vogue in Delaware, for certain offences, is wiser and more to the point than that in any other State in the Union. Punishment in prison ought not to be wholly retributive,—it has been well called expiatory discipline,—but it ought to check crime, and up to date there is no satisfactory evidence that our prisons are achieving this end. In many of them the discipline is too lenient. At one of the prisons I visited, two Sundays of the month are given up to a lawn festival, which the prisoners' friends may attend. They bring lunch baskets and join the prisoners in the prison garden, where they chat, eat ice-cream, and drink lemonade, sold at a booth presided over by one of the prisoners, and generally amuse themselves. It seemed to me that I was attending a picnic. In a talk with the warden in regard to the affair, he said that he found that such favours made the prisoners more tractable.

In my humble opinion, a prison is not a place where favours of this character need be expected or shown, and if good conduct can only be got out of them by being "nice" to them after this fashion, they would better be shut up in their cells until they can learn to obey.

In conclusion, I desire to put two queries: Why is it that the cleverest criminals in our prisons are frequently to be found taking their ease in the prison hospitals and "insane wards," and how does it come that men who belong to the class of prisoners who ought to wear the "stripes" are allowed the clothes which ordinarily are only given to prisoners who have passed the "stripe" period of their incarceration? In one penitentiary I found a politician and rich physician favoured in the latter particular, and in the hospital and insane ward of another, enjoying themselves in rocking-chairs and a private garden, I found more professional thieves than in any other part of the institution. I ask the questions in all innocence, but there are those who claim that correct answers to them would disclose some very bad practices in prison management.

CHAPTER VI.

A NEW CAREER FOR YOUNG MEN.

Up till the present time the police business in the United States has remained almost exclusively in the hands of a particular class. From Maine to California one finds practically the same type of man patrolling a beat, and there is not much difference among the superior officers of police forces. They all have about the same conceptions of morality, honesty, and good citizenship, and they differ very little in their notions of police policy and methods. The thing to do, the majority of them think, is to keep a city superficially clean, and to keep everything quiet that is likely to arouse the public to an investigation. Nearly all are politicians in one form or another, and they feel that the security of their positions depends on the turn that politics may take. If they have a strict chief, one who tries to be honest according to his best light, they are more on their good behaviour than when governed by an easy-going man, but even under such circumstances there may be found, in large forces, a great deal of concealed disobedience. Their main friends and acquaintances are saloon-keepers, professional politicians, and employees in other departments of the municipal government. In small towns they mix with the citizens more than in large cities, but the best of them acquire in time a caste feeling which impels them to find companionship mainly among their own kind. Not all are dishonest or lazy, but the majority have a code of honour suggested by their life and business. Once in the life, and accustomed to its requirements, it is very difficult for them to change to another. They have learned how to arrest men, to make reports, to keep their eyes open or shut according to necessity, to rest when standing on their feet, and to appreciate the benefits of a regularly drawn salary, and their intelligence and general training correspond with such an existence. A few develop extraordinary ability in ferreting out crime, and become successful detectives, and others keep their records sufficiently clean, or secure enough "pull," to rise to superior posts, and in certain cases these exceptional men would fit into exemplary police organisations. As a general thing, however, they are men who would have received much less responsible positions in other walks of life. This is as true of the commanding officers as of the patrolmen. The captain of a precinct is frequently as poorly educated as the patrolman serving under him, and his gold braid and brass buttons are all that really differentiate him

from the men he orders about. The chief, in some instances, is a man of demonstrated ability, but there are chiefs and chiefs, and the way their selection is managed it is largely a matter of luck whether a town gets a good or bad one. Occasionally the citizens of a town will become indignant, and remove from office a disreputable chief, choosing in his place some highly respected citizen who has consented to take the position on a "reform platform" and for awhile the town has a man at the head of its police force who is accepted as an equal in society and is recognised as an influential man in municipal affairs, but before long the professional politicians get hold of the reins of government again, things get back into the old rut, and the conventional chief returns.

It is this precariousness of the life, and the slavery to politicians, that have probably deterred educated young men from making police work their life business. They have seen no chance of holding prominent police positions long, and they have possibly dreaded the companionship which a policeman's life seems to presuppose. The young man just out of college and casting about for a foothold in the world practically never includes the police career in the number of life activities from which he must make a choice. It is the law, medicine, journalism, or railroading which generally attracts him, and he leaves unconsidered one of the most useful callings in the world. There are few men who are given more responsible positions, and who have better opportunities of doing something worth while, than the police officer, and I think that I ought to add, the prison official. In Germany this fact is recognised, and men train for police and prison work as deliberately and diligently as for any other profession; in this country very little training is done, and the result is that comparatively inferior men get the important posts, and our cities are not taken care of as they ought to be, and could be.

There is nothing sufficiently promising as yet in the state of public opinion to justify one in saying that the time is particularly opportune for young men to begin to consider the police career as a possible calling, but I doubt whether there ever will be until the young men take the matter into their own hands and give public notice of their determination to enter the profession. Numerous obstacles will be put in their way, and hundreds will get discouraged, but for those who "stick," a great career will open up. The beginners must necessarily be the pioneers and fight the brunt of the battle, but, the battle once fought, there will be some positions of splendid opportunity.

For the benefit of those who may care to consider seriously the possibilities of the career, it will not be inappropriate, perhaps, to describe the kind of men they

may expect to have to associate with while going through their apprenticeship, to explain some of the difficulties that will be encountered, and to make a few suggestions in regard to the training necessary for a successful performance of duty. I can write of these matters only as a beginner, but it is the would-be beginner that I desire to reach.

In all police organisations supported by cities there are two distinct kinds of officers, the uniformed men and the detectives. Among these the beginner will have to pick out his friends, and until he knows well the work of both classes of men he will be in a quandary as to which he desires to ally himself with. There are things in the detective's life which make it more attractive to some men than the policeman's, and *vice versa*. The two officers have different attitudes toward the criminal world, and the beginner will probably be decided in his choice according to the impression the different attitudes make upon him. The uniformed officer, or "Flatty," as he is called in the thief's jargon, if he remains upright and honest, arrests a successful professional criminal with the same *sang-froid* and objectivity that are characteristic of him when arresting a "disorderly drunk." It is a perfunctory act with him; the offender must be shut up, no matter who he is, and he is the party paid to do it.

The officer in citizen's clothes, the "Elbow," is a different kind of man. He realises as well as the "Flatty" that it is his business to try to protect the community which employs him, but he handles a prisoner, especially if the latter is a nicely dressed and well known thief, in a different way from the ostentatious manner of arrest characteristic of the ordinary policeman. It almost seems sometimes as if he were showing deference to his prisoner, and the two walk along together like two old acquaintances. The fact of the matter is that a truly successful professional thief is a very interesting man to meet, and he is all the more interesting to the officer if he has been able to catch him unawares and without much trouble. Realising what a big man he has got,—and thieves themselves have no better opinion of their ability than that which the detective has of it,—he likes to ask him about other big men, to get "wise," as the expression is. If it has been a hard chase, he also likes to go over the details of it, and find out who has doubled the most on his tracks. In time, if he keeps steadily at the business and learns to know a number of what are called "good guns" (clever thieves), he develops into a recognised successful thief-catcher; but he has spent so much of his time in fraternising with "guns," in order to learn from them, that he comes to think that his moral responsibility is over after he has located them. Technically, I suppose this is true; it is his business to catch, and

the State must prosecute and convict. The point I would bring out, however, is that he is inclined to be lenient with his prisoner. To him the struggle has been merely one of intelligence and shrewdness; he has had to be quick and alert in capturing the "gun," and the latter has exercised all of his ingenuity in trying to escape. Moral issues have not been at stake; the thief has not stolen from the officer, and why should the latter not be friendly when they meet?

In defence of this attitude toward crime it may be said that criminals are much more tractable in the custody of an officer of the kind under consideration than when arrested by some blustering "Flatty," who shows them up in the street as they walk along, and it is natural for a detective to try to do his work with as little friction as possible. The question, however, that I was continually putting to myself as a beginner in the business was, whether I should not eventually drift into a very easy-going policeman if I learned to look upon the thief merely as a whetstone, so to speak, on which my wits were to be sharpened. It seemed to me that to do my full duty it was necessary to have moral ballast as well as shrewd intelligence, really to believe in law, and that lawbreakers must be punished. I would not have it understood that there are no police officers who keep hold of this point, but I am compelled to say that the detective—and he is the man to whom we shall have to go before professional crime in this country can be seriously dealt with—is too much inclined to overlook it.

The beginner in the profession must take sides, one way or another, in regard to this kind of officer, and as he chooses for him or against him he will find himself in favour or not with the class—and it is a large one—to which the man belongs. It is unpleasant to have to begin one's career by immediately antagonising a number of daily companions, and a series of exasperating experiences follow such a policy, but in the case in question I believe it will be found best to nail up one's colours instanter and never to take them down. The officer who does this gets the reputation of being at least consistent even among his enemies, and he is also relieved of being continually approached by criminals with bribes.

Once started on his course, and his policy defined, the worst difficulty that he will encounter for a number of months will be a reluctance, natural to all beginners, to make an arrest. It seems easy enough to walk up to a man, put a hand lightly on his shoulder, and say: "You're my prisoner," but one never realises how hard it is until he tries it. During my experience I had no occasion to make an arrest single-handed, but it did fall to my lot to have a prisoner beg and beseech me to let him go after he had been turned over to my care, and to the beginner this is the hardest appeal to withstand. The majority of persons

arrested are justly taken into custody, and the bulk of the "hard luck" stories they tell are fabrications, but it takes a man who has been years in the service to listen to some of their tales of woe without wincing.

This squeamishness conquered, the beginner will have to be careful not to become hard and pessimistic. There is a good deal to be said in excuse of a police officer who develops these traits of character,—the life he leads is itself often hard,—but if they dominate his nature he learns to look upon the world in general merely as a great collection of human beings, any one of whom he may have to arrest some day. He sees so much that is "crooked" that he is in danger of thinking that he sees crime and thieves wherever he turns, and unless he is very cautious he will drift into a philosophy which permits him to be "crooked" also, because, as he thinks, everybody else is.

If the beginner has lived in a society where courtesies and kindnesses, rather than insults and scoldings, have prevailed, he will also find it hard for awhile to appreciate the fact that a police officer is a peacemaker, and not an avenger. Wherever he goes, and no matter what he does, he is a target for the nasty slings of rowdies and a favourite victim of the "roastings" of thieves. In tramp life I have had to take my share of insults, and until I experimented with the police business I thought that as mean things had been said to me as a man ought to stand in an ordinary lifetime, but on no tramp trip have I been berated by criminals as severely as during my recent experience as a railroad police officer, and yet it was my duty not to answer back if a quarrel was in sight.

Not all, however, in the policeman's life is exasperating and discouraging. But few men have so many opportunities of doing good, and of keeping track of people in whom they have taken an interest. Nothing has pleased me more in my relations with the outcast world than the chance I had as a railroad patrolman to help in sending home a penitent runaway boy. He had left Chicago on the "blind baggage" of a passenger train to get away from a tyrannical stepfather, and he fell into our hands as a trespasser and vagrant several hundred miles from his starting-point. It was a pitiful case with which no officer likes to deal according to the requirements of the law, but we had to arrest him to rescue him from the local officers of the town where he had been apprehended; if he had been turned over to them the probability is that he would have been put on the stone-pile with the hardened tramps, and when released would have drifted into tramp life. We took him to headquarters on the train, and the general manager of the railroad gave him a pass home, where he has remained, sending me a number of weekly accounts about himself. I report the incident both to show the

opportunities in a policeman's life, and to give a railroad company credit for a kind deed which has probably preserved for the country a bright lad who would otherwise have been an expense and trouble to it as a vagabond and criminal.

A word, before closing this chapter, in regard to how a young man, desirous of following the police career, can best get a start. I chose a railroad police force for my preliminary experience, and I would recommend a similar choice to other beginners if the opportunity is favourable. As long as a man does his work well in a railroad police organisation he is not likely to be disturbed, but under existing conditions the same cannot be said of a municipal force. A railroad officer also has the advantage of being able to travel extensively and to acquaint himself with different communities. If he can rise to the top there is no reason, so far as I can see, why he should not be an eligible candidate for the superintendency of a municipal police force. The chief that I had, if he were able to gather the right men about him, could protect a large city as successfully as he now protects a big railroad system. If it is impossible for a would-be beginner to find lodgment in any police force at the start, my suggestion is that he experiment with the work of a police reporter on a newspaper. It is difficult at present for a police reporter to tell all that he learns, and it is to be hoped that he will some day be able to give the readers of his paper full accounts of his investigations; but the young man who is training for police work can make the reporter's position, in spite of its present discouraging limitations, a stepping-stone to a position in a police organisation. It helps him to get "wise," as the detective says, and it is when he has become "wise" in the full sense of the word that he is most valuable in the police business.

A guard's position in a penitentiary makes a man acquainted with a great many criminals, and is helpful in teaching one in regard to the efficiency of different kinds of punishment. It is, perhaps, to be recommended to the beginner as the next best position to try for, if, after the reporter experience, there is still no opening in a police force. The beginner may not be sure whether he desires to become a police officer or to take part in the management of a prison, and the guard's post helps him to come to a decision.

All three of the recommended preparatory positions will be found useful, if the young man has the patience and time to go through the drudgery which they involve, and he will find that when he finally succeeds in getting into a large police force he has a great advantage over men who have not had his thorough training.

CHAPTER VII.

"GAY-CATS."

Scattered over the railroads, sometimes travelling in freight-cars, and sometimes sitting pensively around camp-fires, working when the mood is on them, and loafing when they have accumulated a "stake," always criticising other people but never themselves, seldom very happy or unhappy, and almost constantly without homes such as the persevering workingman struggles for and secures, there is an army of men and boys who, if a census of the unemployed were taken, would have to be included in the class which the regular tramps call "gay-cats." They claim that they are over five hundred thousand strong, and socialistic agitators sometimes urge that there are more than a million of them, but they probably do not really number over one hundred thousand.

Not much is known about them by the general public, except that they are continually shifting from place to place, particularly during the warm months. In the winter they are known to seek shelter in the large cities, where they swell the ranks of the discontented and complaining, and accept benefits from charitable societies. They certainly are not tramps, in the hobo's sense of the word. His reason for derisively calling them "gay-cats" is that they work when they have to, and tramp only when the weather is fine.

Many of them really prefer working to begging, but they are without employment during several months in the year, and are constantly grumbling about their lot in the world. They think that they are the representative unemployed men of the country, and are gradually developing a class feeling among themselves. They always speak of their kind as "the poor," and of the people who employ them as "the rich," and they believe that their number is continually increasing.

As a railroad policeman it was my duty to keep well in touch with this class of wanderers. Although they do not belong to the real tramp fraternity, and are disliked by the hoboes proper, they follow the hobo's methods of travel, and are constantly trespassing on railroad property. The general manager of the railroad by which I was employed asked me to gather all the facts that I could in regard to their class.

"The attitude of the company toward this class of trespassers," he said, in talking to me about the matter, "must necessarily be the same as toward the tramps, as long as they both use the same methods of travel, but I have often wondered whether there are enough of those who claim to be merely unemployed men to justify railroad companies in experimenting with a cheap train a day, somewhat similar in make-up to the fourth class in Germany and Russia. At present the trouble is that we can't tell whether they would support such a train, and I personally am not convinced that all of them are as honest out-of-works as they say they are, when arrested for stealing rides. If you can gather any data concerning them which will throw light on this matter, I should be glad to have it."

All told, I have met on the railroads about one thousand men and boys who claimed to be out-of-works and not professional vagabonds and tramps. In saying that I have met them, I mean that I have talked with them and learned considerable about their history, present condition, and plans and hopes for the future. They talked with me as freely as with one of their own kind; indeed, they seemed to assume that I belonged among them.

The most striking thing about them is that the majority are practically youths, the average age being about twenty-three years, both West and East. Of my one thousand out-of-works, fully two-thirds were between twenty and twenty-five years old; the rest were young boys under eighteen and mature men anywhere from forty to seventy.

Youths of all classes of society have their *Wanderjahre*, and so much time during this period is taken up with mere roaming that it is easy to understand how many of them must be without work from time to time. It is also true that young men are more hasty than their elders in giving up positions on account of some real or supposed affront; life is all before them, they think, anyhow, and meanwhile they do not intend to knuckle down to any overbearing employer. In certain parts of the country, on account of crowded conditions, it must be stated, furthermore, that it is difficult for a number of young men to get suitable employment.

There is a sociological significance, however, about the present strikingly large number of young men who are "beating" their way over the country on the railroads. There is gradually being developed in the United States a class of wanderers who may be likened to the degenerated *Handwerksburschen* of Germany. They are not necessarily apprentices in the sense that the *Handwerksburschen* usually are, although the great majority of them have trades

and make some effort, in winter at least, to work at them, but they are almost the exact counterpart of the *Burschen* in their migratory habits. Years ago the travelling apprentice was a picturesque figure in German life, and it was thought quite proper that he should pack up his tools every now and then, get out his wheelbarrow, and take a jaunt into the world. He had to take to the highways in those days, and there was no such inducement, as there is now, to make long, unbroken trips. A few miles a day was the average stint, and at the end of a fortnight, or possibly a month, he was ready and glad to go to work again.

This is not the case to-day. The contemporary *Handwerksbursch* works just as little as he can, and travels in fourth-class cars as far as the rails will carry him. In a few years, unless there is some home influence to bring him back, he generally wanders so far afield that he becomes a victim of *Die Ferne*, a thing of romance and poetry to his sturdier ancestors of Luther's time, which for him has become a snare and a delusion. German vagabondage is largely recruited from German apprentices. It is the same love of *Die Ferne*, the desire to get out into the world and have adventures independent of parental care and guidance, which accounts largely for the presence of so many young men in the ranks of the unemployed in this country. As I have said, they are not tramps or "hoboes," but neither are they victims of trusts, monopolists or capital.

Great public undertakings, like the World's Fair at Chicago, the recent war with Spain, a new railroad and the attractions of places like the Klondike, have a tendency to increase the number of these youthful out-of-works. The World's Fair stranded many thousands, and there are already signs that the war with Spain has brought out a fresh crop of them. They have taken to travelling on the railroads because they have become inoculated with *Wanderlust* and because they think that it is only by continually shifting that they are likely to get work. The same thing took place, only on a larger scale, after the Civil War, and our present tramp class is the result. Some of the young men who took part in the Spanish war, and when mustered out joined the wanderers on the railroads, will eventually develop into full-fledged tramps; it is inevitable. At present they are merely out-of-works, and at times honestly seek work.

Let me tell the story of one of my young companions for a few days on a railroad in Ohio. He was a plumber by trade and had left a job only a fortnight before I met him. The weather had got too warm to work, he said (it was in June), and he had enough of a "stake" to keep him going for several weeks "on the road." He was on his way to the Northwest.

"The West is the only part o' this country worth much, I guess," he said, "'n' I'm goin' out there to look around. Here in the East ev'rything is in the hands o' the rich. There's no chance for a young fellow here in Ohio any more." I asked him whether he was not able to make a good living when he remained at work. "Oh, I can live all right," he replied, "but this country's got to give me somethin' more'n a livin', before I'll work hard month in and month out. I ain't goin' to slave for anybody. I got as good a right's the next man to enjoy myself, 'n' when I want to go off on a trip I'm goin'." I suggested that this was hardly the philosophy of men who made and saved a great deal of money. "Well, I ain't goin' to work hard all my life 'n' have nothin' but money at the end of it. I want to live as I go along, 'n' I like hittin' the road ev'ry now and then."

"How long do you generally keep a job?"

"If I get a good one in the fall I generally keep it till spring, but the year round I guess I change places ev'ry two or three months."

"How much of a loaf do you have between jobs?"

"It depends. Last year I was nearly four months on the hog once,—couldn't get anything. As a general thing, though, I don't have to wait over six weeks if I look hard."

"Are you going to look hard out West?"

"Well, I'm goin' to size up the country, 'n' if I like it, why, I guess I'll take a job for awhile. I got enough money to keep me in tobacco 'n' booze for a few weeks, 'n' it don't cost me anything to ride or eat."

"How do you manage?"

"I hustle for my grub the way hoboes do,—it's easy enough."

"I should think a workingman like yourself would hate to do that."

"I used to a little, but I got over it. You got to help yourself in this world, 'n' I'm learnin' how to do it, too."

The nationality of the "gay-cats" is mainly American. A large number have parents who were born in Europe, but they themselves were born in this country, and there are thousands whose families have been settled here for several generations.

What I have said in regard to the unemployed young men applies also, in a measure, to the old men; the latter, in many cases, are as much the victims of *Wanderlust* as are their youthful companions: but there are certain special facts which go to explain their vagabondage. The older men are more frequently confirmed drunkards than are the younger men. Occasionally during the past year I have met an aged out-of-work who was a "total abstainer," but nine-tenths of all the mature men were by their own confession hard drinkers. Whether their loose habits are also answerable for their love of carping and criticising, and their notion that they alone know how the world should be run, it is impossible for me to say; but certain it is that their continual grumbling and scolding against those who have been more persevering than they is another of the causes which have brought them to their present unfortunate state. Men who are unceasingly finding fault with their lot, and yet make no serious attempt to better it, cannot "get on" very far in this country, or in any other.

This type of out-of-work exists everywhere, in Germany, Russia, England, and France as well as in the United States, but I am not sure that our particular civilisation, or rather our form of government, has not a tendency to develop it here a little more rapidly than in any other country which I have explored.

It is a popular notion in the United States that every American has the right to say what he thinks, and my finding is that the love of speaking one's mind is exceedingly strong among the uneducated people of the country. Agitators, who go among them, are partly to blame for this, and I have observed that a number of the expressions used by the "gay-cats" are the stock phrases of socialistic propagandists, but there is something in the air they breathe that seems to incite them to untempered speech. In Germany, where there is certainly far more governmental interference to rant about, and among an equally intelligent class of out-of-works who are not allowed for an instant the freedom of movement permitted the same class in America, there is no such wild talk as is to be heard among our unemployed. I have met scores of old men on the railroads whom long indulgence in unconsidered language has incapacitated for saying anything good about any one of our institutions, as they conceive them, and they begrudge even their companions a generous word. Such men, it seems to me, must necessarily go to the wall, and although a few, perhaps, can advance evidence to show that circumstances over which they had no control brought them low, the majority of those that I know have themselves to blame for their present vagabondage.

It is furthermore to be remarked concerning these aged out-of-works that pride

and unwillingness to take work outside of their trades have also been causes of their bankruptcy. The same is true, to some extent, of all sorts of unemployed men, young and old, but it is particularly true of "gay-cats" who have passed their thirty-fifth year. I have known them to tramp and beg for months rather than accept employment which they considered beneath their training and intelligence.

It has been a revelation to me to associate with these men and see how determined they are that the employing class shall have no opportunity to say: "Ah, ha! we told you so!" Many of them have given up their positions in a pet, and taken to the "road," with the idea that if they cannot get what they want they will make the world lodge and feed them for nothing. To bring out clearly their point of view, I will describe a man whom I travelled with in Illinois. He had been without employment for over eight months when I met him, and had just passed his forty-second year. He expected to get work again before long, and was passing the time away, until the position was ready for him, travelling up and down the Illinois Central Railroad. He was a carpenter by profession, and claimed that for over five years he had never worked at any other occupation, when he worked at all.

"I put in three hard years learnin' to be a carpenter," he said, "an' I ain't goin' to learn another trade now. For awhile I used to take all kinds o' jobs when I got hard up, but I've got over that. It's carpenterin' or nothin' with me from now on. You got to put your foot down in this country or you won't get on at all.

"If I was married 'n' had kids, o' course I'd have to crawl 'n' take what I could get, but, seein' I ain't, I'm goin' to be just as stuck up as any other man that's got somethin' to sell. That's what all men like us in this country ought to do. The rich have got it into their heads that they can have us when they want us, 'n' kick us out when they don't want us, 'n' that's what they've been doin' with the most of us. They ain't goin' to play with me any more, though. Ten years ago I was better off than I am now, 'n' I'd be in good shape to-day if it hadn't been for one o' them trusts."

"Are you not at all to blame for your present condition?" I asked, knowing that the man was fond of whiskey. He thought a moment, and then admitted that he might have squandered less money on "booze," but he believed that he was entitled to the "fun" that "booze" brings.

"'Course we workingmen drink," he explained, "'n' a lot of us gets on our uppers,

but ain't we got as much right to get drunk 'n' have a good time as the rich? I'm runnin' my own life. When I want work I'll work, 'n' when I don't I won't. What we men need is more independence. What the devil 'ud become o' the world if we refused to work? Couldn't go on at all. That's what I keep tellin' my carpenter pals. 'Don't take nothin' outside o' your trade,' I tell 'em, 'n' then the blokes with no trades'll have a better chance.' But you know how it is,—you might as well tell the most of 'em not to eat. I have had a little sense knocked into me. You don't catch me workin' outside o' my trade. I'd rather bum."

And, unless he got the job he expected, he is probably still "on the road."

Enough, perhaps, has already been said to indicate the general trend of the philosophy of the "gay-cats," but this account of them will fail to do them justice if I do not quote them in regard to such matters as government, religion, and democracy. It has never been my privilege to hear them contribute anything particularly valuable to a better understanding of the questions they discuss, but it seems fitting to report upon some of their conclaves, if only to show how they pass away much of their time. They have an unconquerable desire to express themselves on all occasions and on all subjects, and it is no exaggeration to say that two-thirds of their day passes in talk.

In regard to the government under which we live, the favourite expression used to characterise it was the word "fake."

"Republic!" I heard a man exclaim one day; "this ain't no republic. It's run by the few just as much as Russia is. There ain't no real republic in existence. You and I are just as much slaves as the negroes were."

Not all stated their opinions so strongly as this, and there were some who believed that on paper, at least, we have a democratic form of government, but the prevailing notion seemed to be that it was only on paper. The Republican party is considered as derelict as the Democratic by these critics. Neither organisation, they contend, is trying to live up to what a republic ought to stand for, and they see no hope, either for themselves or anybody else, in any of the existing political parties. When quizzed about our Constitution and the functions of the various departments of the government, they all show deplorable ignorance, but it avails nothing to take them to task on this ground. "They guessed they knew the facts just about as well as anybody else," and that was supposed to end the matter.

Religion, which the majority of the men with whom I talked took to be

synonymous with the word church, was another favourite topic of discussion. Indeed, as I look back now over my conversations with the "gay-cats," it seems to me that there was more said on this subject than any other, and I have observed its popularity as a topic of conversation among unemployed men in other countries as well. There is something about it which is very attractive to men who are vagrants, as they think, because of circumstances over which they had no control, and they sit and talk by the hour about what they think the church ought to do, and wherein it fails to accomplish that which it is supposed to have for a purpose. The men that I met think that the reason that the church in this country is not more successful in getting hold of people is because it neglects its duties to the poor.

"Here you and I are," a young mechanic remarked to me, as we sat in the cold at a railroad watering-tank, "and what does any church in this town care about us? Ten chances to one that, excepting the Catholic priest, every clergyman we might go to for assistance would turn us down. Is that Christianity? Is that the way religion is going to make you and me any better? Not on your life. I tell you, the church has got to take more interest in me before I am going to go out of my way to take much interest in it."

"But the church is not a public poor-house," I remonstrated. "You and I are no more excused than other people from earning our living. If the church had to take care of all the people who think they're poor, it would go bankrupt in a day."

"It's bankrupt already, so far as having any influence over the men that you and I meet," he replied. "I don't see a man more than once in six months who goes near a church, and he's generally a Catholic. There's something wrong, you can bet, when things have got to that pass. If the church can't interest fellows like us, it's going to have its troubles interesting anybody."

There were others who expressed themselves equally strongly, but I was unable to get any satisfactory suggestion from any of them as to how the church may be made either more religious or effective. They all had their notions concerning its defects and shortcomings, but they seemed unable to tell how these were to be supplanted by merits and virtues. Many of them impressed me as men who would be capable, under different conditions, of religious feeling, and there was something pathetic, I thought, in the way they loved to linger in conversation on the subject of religion, but in their present circumstances the most inspired church in the world could not do much with them. They are victims of the passion for indiscriminate criticism, and I doubt whether they would know

whether a church was doing its duty or not.

Naturally a never-failing subject for talk was the labour question, and, under this general head, in particular the importation of foreign labour by the big corporations. I cannot recall an allusion to their present circumstances that did not bring this point prominently to the fore, and on occasions the mere mention of the word "foreigner" was sufficient to bring out the most violent invectives. In a number of instances they claimed that they knew absolutely that they had been forced out of positions to make room for aliens who would work for less money.

"An American don't count for what he used to in this country," an old man said to me in Chicago. "The corporations don't care who a man is, so long as he'll work cheap. 'Course a Dago can live cheaper'n I can, 'n' so he beats me. I don't blame the Dago, 'cause he's doin' better'n he did in Italy, anyhow, but I do blame them corporations, 'n' they're goin' to get it in the neck some day, too. I won't live to see it, perhaps, but you will. I tell you, Jack, there's goin' to be a revolution in this country just as sure as this city is Chicago. It's comin' nearer every day. Just wait till there's about a million more men on the road, 'n' then you'll see somethin'. It'll beat that French revolution bang up, take my tip for that."

This same man, if his companions told the truth, had had a number of opportunities to succeed, and had let them slip through his hands. Like hundreds of others, however, he could not bear to admit that he was to blame for his own defeat in life, and he made the foreigner his scapegoat. It is, perhaps, true that some foreigners in this country have ousted some Americans from their positions, but one needs but to make a journey on any one of the railroads frequented by "gay-cats" to realise how small a minority of them are tramping because foreigners have got their jobs. Corporations and trusts may or may not be beneficial, according to the way one considers them, but, in my opinion, they are innocent of dealing unfairly by the thousand "gay-cats" that I have recently interviewed.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAKE SHORE PUSH.

Previous to my experience in a railroad police force, I was employed by the same railroad company in making an investigation of the tramp situation on the lines under their management. The object of the investigation was to find out whether the policy pursued by the company was going to be permanently successful in keeping tramps and "train-riders" off the property, and to discover how neighbouring roads dealt with trespassers. Incidentally, I was also to interview tramps that I met, and ask their opinion of the methods used by the railroad for which I worked. The first month of the investigation was given up to roads crossing and recrossing the lines in which I was particularly interested, and I lived and travelled during this period like a professional tramp. While on my travels I made the acquaintance of a very interesting organisation of criminal tramps, which is continually troubling railroads in the middle West. As I also had to keep watch of it while on duty as a patrolman, an account of my experience with some of its members seems to fall within the scope of this book.

One night, after I had been out about a week on the preliminary investigation for the railroad, I arrived at Ashtabula, Ohio, on the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad, in company with a little Englishman, who, when we registered at the police station where we went to ask for shelter, facetiously signed himself, George the Fourth. There are four "stops," as the tramp says, in Ashtabula, three police stations and the sand-house of the Lake Shore Railroad, and after we had used up our welcome in the police stations we went to the sand-house. Later, when we were sure that the police had forgotten us, we returned to the "calabooses," and made another round of them, but we also spent several nights at the sand-house. On our first night at the sand-house we arrived there before the other lodgers had finished their hunt for supper, and on the principle of "first come first served" we picked out the best places in the sand. It was early in April, and in Ashtabula at this season of the year the sand nearest the fire is the most comfortable. During the evening other men and boys came in, but they recognised that our early arrival entitled us to the good places, and they picked out the next best. About ten o'clock we all fell asleep, leaving barely enough room for the sand-house attendant to move about and attend to his duties. A little

after midnight I was awakened by loud voices scolding and cursing, and heard a man, whom I could not see, however, say:

"Kick the fellow's head off. It's your place right 'nough, teach 'im a lesson."

Somebody struck a match then, and I saw two burly men standing over the little Englishman. They were the roughest-looking customers I have ever seen anywhere. More matches were struck in different parts of the sand-house, and I heard men whispering to one another that the two disturbers were "Lake Shore Push people," and that there was going to be a fight.

"Get up, will ye?" one of them said, in a brutal voice to my companion. "It's a wonder ye wouldn't find a place o' yer own."

"Hit 'im with the poker," the other advised. "Stave his slats in."

Then the first speaker made as if he were going to kick the Englishman in the head with his big hobnailed boot. The Englishman could stand it no longer, and jumping to his feet and snatching up an empty sand-bucket, he took a defensive position, and said:

"Come on, now, if you blokes want a scrap. One o' ye'll go down."

The crowd seemed only to need this exhibition of grit on the part of the Britisher to make them rally to his side, and one of them set a ball of newspapers afire for a light, and the rest grabbed sand-buckets and pieces of board and made ready to assist the Britisher in "doing up" the two bullies. The latter wisely decided that fifteen to two was too much of a disadvantage, and left, threatening to come back with the "push" and "clean out the entire house," which they failed to do, however, that night or on any other night that the Englishman and I spent at the sand-house.

After they had gone, the crowd gathered around the Englishman, and he was congratulated on having "put up such a good front" against the two men. Then began a general discussion of the organisation, or "push," as it was called, which I could only partially follow. I had been out of Hoboland for a number of years previous to this experience, and the "push" was a new institution to me. It was obvious, however, that it played a very prominent part in the lives of the men at the sand-house, for each one present had a story to tell of how he had been imposed upon by it, either on a freight-train or at some stopping-place, in more or less the same way as the Englishman had been. Had it not been that questions

on my part would have proven me to be a "tenderfoot," which it was bad policy for one in my position to admit as possible, I should have made inquiries then and there, for it was plain that the "push" was an association that ought to interest me also; but all that I learned that night was that there was a gang of wild characters who were trying to run the Lake Shore Railroad, so far as Hoboland was concerned, according to their own wishes and interests, and that there were constant clashes between them and such men as were gathered together in the sand-house. There was no mention made of their strength or identity; the conversation was confined to accounts of their persecutions and crimes, and to suggestions as to how they could be made to disband. One man, I remember, said that the only thing to do was to shoot them, one at a time, on sight, and he declared that he would join a "push" which would make this task its object as an organisation. "They're the meanest push this country has ever seen," he added, "an' workin' men as well as 'boes ought to help do 'em up. They hold up ev'rybody, an' it's got so that it's all a man's life's worth to ride on this road."

The following morning, while reading the newspaper, a week or so old, in which a baker had wrapped up some rolls which I had purchased of him, I came across a paragraph in the local column, which read something like this: "A middle-aged man was found dead yesterday morning, lying in the bushes near the railroad track between Girard and Erie. His neck was broken, and it is thought that he is another victim of the notorious 'Lake Shore gang.' The supposition is that he was beating his way on a freight-train when the gang overtook him, and that, after robbing him, they threw him off the train."

After reading this paragraph, I strolled down the Lake Shore tracks to the west, until I came to the coal-chutes, where tramp camps are to be found the year round. As many as fifty men can be seen here on occasions, sitting around fires kept up by the railroad company's coal, and "dope" from the wheel-boxes of freight-cars. I found two camps on the morning in question, one very near the coal chutes, and the other about a quarter of a mile farther on. There were about a dozen men at the first, and not quite thirty at the second. I halted at the first, thinking that both were camps where all roadsters would be welcome. I had hardly taken a seat on one of the ties, and said, "How are you?" when a dirty-looking fellow of about fifty years asked me, in sarcasm, as I afterward learned, if I had a match. "S'pose y' ain't got a piece o' wood with a little brimstone on the end of it, have ye?" were his words. I replied that I had, and was about to hand him one, when a general grin ran over the faces of the men, and I heard a man near me, say, "Tenderfoot, sure." It was plain that there was something either in

my make-up or manner which was not regular, but I was not left long in suspense as to what it was. The dirty man with the gray hair explained the situation. "This is our fire, our camp, an' our deestrict," he said in a gruff voice, "an' you better go off an' build one o' yer own. Ye've got a match, ye say?" the intonation of his voice sneeringly suggesting the interrogation. There was nothing to do but go, and I went, but I gave the camp a minute "sizing up" as I left. The men were having what is called in tramp parlance a "store-made scoff." They had bought eggs, bread, butter, meat, and potatoes in Ashtabula, and were in the midst of their breakfast when I came upon them. In looks they were what a tramp companion of mine once described as "blowed in the glass stiffs." It is not easy to explain to one who has never been in Hoboland and learned instinctively to appraise roadsters what this expression signifies, but in the present instance it means that depravity was simply dripping off them. Their faces were "tough" and dirty, their clothes were tattered and torn, their voices were rasping and coarse, and their general manner was as mean as human nature is capable of. To compare them to a collection of rowdies with which the reader is acquainted, I would say that they resembled very closely the tramps pictured in the illustrated edition of Mark Twain's "The Prince and the Pauper." Their average age was about thirty-five years, but several were fifty and over, and others were under twenty. The clever detective would probably have picked them out for what they were, "hobo guns,"—tramp thieves and "hold-up" men,—but the ordinary citizen would have classified them merely as "dirty tramps," which would also have been the truth, but not the whole truth.

I learned more definitely about them at the second camp, where a welcome was extended to everybody. "Got the hot-foot at the other camp, I guess?" a young fellow said to me as I sat down beside him, and I admitted the fact. "Those brutes wouldn't do a favour to their own mothers," he went on. "We've jus' been chewin' the rag 'bout goin' over an' havin' a scrap with 'em. There's enough of us this mornin' to lay 'em out."

"Who are they?"

"Some o' the Lake Shore gang. They jump in an' out o' here ev'ry few days. There's a lot more o' them down at Painesville. They're scattered all along the line. Las' night some of 'em held up those two stone-masons settin' over there on that pile o' ties. Took away their tools, an' made 'em trade clothes. Caught 'em in a box-car comin' East. Shoved guns under their noses, an' the masons had to cough up."

A few nights after this experience, and again in company with my friend, George the Fourth, I applied for lodging at the police station at Ashtabula Harbour. We made two of the first four to be admitted on the night in question, and picked out, selfishly, it is true, but entirely within our rights, two cells near the fire. We had made up our beds on the cell benches out of our coats and newspapers, and were boiling some coffee on the stove preparatory to going to sleep, when four newcomers, whom I had seen at the "push's" camp, were ushered in. They went immediately to the cells we had chosen, and, seeing that our things were in them, said: "These your togs in here?" We "allowed" that they were. "Take 'em out, then, 'cause these are our cells."

"How your cells?" asked George.

"See here, young fella, do as yer told. See?"

"No, I don't see. You're not so warm." And George drew out his razor. The men must have seen something in his eyes which cowed them, for they chose other cells. I expected that they would maul us unmercifully before morning, but we were left in peace.

One more episode: One afternoon George and I decided that it was time for us to be on the move again, and we boarded a train of empty cars bound West. We had ridden along pleasantly enough for about ten miles, taking in the scenery through the slats of the car, when we saw three men climb down the side of the car. George whispered "Lake Shore Push" to me the minute we saw them, and we both knew that we were to be "held up," if the fellows ever got at us. It was a predicament which called for a cool head and quick action, and George the Fourth had both. He addressed the invaders in a language peculiar to men of the road and distinctive mainly on account of its expletives, and wound up his harangue with the threat that the first man who tried to open the door would have his hand cut off. And he flashed his ubiquitous razor as evidence of his ability to carry out the threat. The engineer fortunately whistled just then for a watering-tank, and the men clambered back to the top of the car, and we saw them no more.

So much for my personal experience with the "Lake Shore Push" as a possible victim; they failed to do me any harm, but it was not their fault. They interested me so much that I spent two weeks on the Lake Shore Railroad in order to learn the truth concerning them. I reasoned that if such an organisation as they seemed to be was possible on one railroad property, it might easily develop on another,

and I deemed it worth while to inform myself in regard to their origin, strength, and purpose. Nearly every other newspaper that I came across, while travelling in this district, made some reference to them, but always in an indefinite way which showed that even the police reporter had not been able to find out much about them. They were always spoken of as the "infamous" or "notorious Lake Shore gang," and all kinds of crimes were supposed to have been committed by them, but there was nothing in any of the newspaper paragraphs which gave me any clue as to their identity. In the course of my investigations I ran across a man by the name of Peg Kelley, who had known me years before in the far West, and with whom I had tramped at different times. We went over in detail, I romancing a little, our experiences in the interval of time since our last meeting, and he finally confessed to me that he was a member of the "Lake Shore Push," and added that he was prepared to suggest my name for membership. From him I got what he claims are the facts in regard to the "push." To the best of my knowledge, never before in our history has an association of outlaws developed on the same lines as has the "Lake Shore Push," and it stands alone in the purpose for which it now exists.

In the early seventies, some say in 1874, and others a little earlier, there lived in a row of old frame houses standing on, or near, the site of the present Lake View Park in Cleveland, Ohio, a collection of professional criminals, among whom were six fellows called New Orleans Tom, Buffalo Slim, Big Yellow, Allegheny B., Looking Glass Jack, and Garry. The names of these particular men are given, because Peg Kelley believes that they constituted the nucleus of the present "Lake Shore Push." They are probably all dead by this time; at any rate, the word "push" was not current tramp slang in their day, and they referred to themselves merely as the "gang." Cleveland was their headquarters, and it is reported that the town was a sort of Mecca for outlaws throughout the neighbouring vicinity. The main "graft," or business, of the gang, was robbing merchandise cars, banks, post-offices, and doing what is called "slough work," robbing locked houses. The leader of the company, if such men can be said to have a leader, was New Orleans Tom, who is described as a typical Southern desperado. He had been a sailor before joining the gang, and claimed that during the Civil War he was captured by Union soldiers and sailors, while on the *Harriet Lane*, lying off Galveston. The gang grew in numbers as the years went on, and there is a second stage in its development when Danny the Soldier, as he was called, seems to have taken Slim's place in leadership. By 1880, although still not called "The Lake Shore Push," the gang had made a name for itself, or, rather, a "record," to use the word which the men themselves would have preferred, and had become

known to tramps and criminals throughout northern Ohio and southern Michigan. The police got after them from time to time, and there were periods when they were considerably scattered, but whenever they came together again, even in twos and threes, it was recognised that pals were meeting pals. When members of the gang died or were sent to limbo, it was comparatively easy to fill their places either with "talent" imported from other districts, or with local fellows who were glad to become identified with a mob. There has always been a rough element in such towns as Cleveland, Toledo, Erie, and Buffalo, from which gangs could be recruited; it is composed largely of "lakers," men who work on the lakes during the open season, and live by their wits in winter time. This class has contributed its full share to the criminal population of the country, and has always been heavily represented in mobs and gangs along the lake shore.

Opinions differ, Peg Kelley claims, as to when the name "Lake Shore Push" was first used by the gang, as well as to who invented it, but it is his opinion, and I have none better to offer, that it was late in the eighties when it was first suggested, and that it was outsiders, such as transient roadsters, who made the expression popular. He says, in regard to this point:

"The gang was known to hang out along the lake shore, an' mainly on the Lake Shore Road, an' 'boes from other States kep' seein' 'em an' hearin' about 'em when they came this way. Well, ye know how 'boes are. If they see a bloke holdin' down a district they give 'im the name o' the place, an' that's the way the gang got its monikey (nickname). The 'boes kep' talkin' about the push holdin' down the Lake Shore Road, an' after awhile they took to callin' it the 'Lake Shore Push.'

"Ev'ry 'bo in the country knows the name now. Way out in 'Frisco, 'f they know 't ye've come from 'round here they'll ask ye 'bout the push, if it's what it's cracked up to be, an' all that kind o' thing. It's got the biggest rep of any 'bo push in the country."

The story of how the "push" got its "rep" is best told by Peg, and in his own words. I have been at considerable pains to verify his statements, and have yet to discover him in wilful misrepresentation. He admits that the "push" has done some dastardly deeds, and appreciates perfectly why it is so hated by out-of-works who have to "beat" their way on trains which run through its territory, but he believes that it could not have been otherwise, considering the purpose for which the "push" was organised.

"Ye can't try to monopolise anythin', Cigarette," he said to me, "without gettin' into a row with somebody, an' that's been the 'xperience o' the push. When there was jus' that Cleveland gang, nobody said nothin', 'cause they didn't try to run things, but the minute the big push came ev'rybody was talkin', an' they're chewin' the rag yet."

"Who first thought of organising the big push?"

"I don't know 't any one bloke thought of it. It was at the time that trusts an' syndicates an' that kind o' thing was beginnin' to be pop'lar, an' the blokes had been readin' 'bout 'em in the newspapers. I was out West then,—it was in '89,—an' didn't know 'bout the push one way or the other, but from what the blokes tell me the idea came to all of 'em 'bout the same time. Ye see, that Cleveland gang had kep' growin' an' growin' an' spreadin' out, an' after awhile there was a big mob of 'em floatin' up an' down the road here. Blokes from other places had got into it, an' they'd got to be the biggest push on the line. There was no partickler leader, the way the James and Dalton gangs had leaders, an' there never has been. 'Course the newspapers try to make out that this fella an' that fella runs the thing, but they don't know what they're talkin' 'bout. The bigger the gang got, the more room it wanted, an' pretty soon they began to get a grouch on against the gay-cats that kep' comin' to their camps. Ye know how it is yourself. When ye've got 'customed to a push, ye don't want to have to mix with a lot o' strangers, an' that's the way the gang felt, an' they got to drivin' the gay-cats away from their camps. That started 'em to wonderin' why they shouldn't have the Lake Shore Road all to themselves. As I was tellin' ye, trusts an' syndicates was gettin' into the air 'bout that time, an' the push didn't see why it couldn't have one too; an' they begun to have reg'lar fights with the gay-cats. I came into the push jus' about the time the scrappin' began. I ain't speshully fond o' scrappin', but I did like the idea o' dividin' up territory. There's no use talkin', Cig, if all the 'boes in the country 'ud do what we been tryin' to do, there'd be a lot more money in the game. Take the Erie Road, the Pennsy, the Dope,[1] an' the rest of 'em. Ye know as well as I do, 't if the 'boes on those lines 'ud organise an' keep ev'ry bum off of 'em 't wasn't in the push, an' 'ud keep the push from gettin' too large, they'd be a lot better off. 'Course there's got to be scrappin' to do the thing, but that don't need to interfere. See how the trusts an' syndicates scrap till they get what they want, an' see how many throats they cut. We've thrown bums off trains, I won't deny it, an' we hold up ev'ry one of 'em 't we can get hold of, but ain't that what the trusts are doin', too?"

I asked him whether the "push" distinguished or not in the people it halted.

"If a reg'lar 'bo, a fella 't we know by name," he went on, "will open up an' tell us who he is, an' his graft, we'll let 'im go, but we tell 'im that the world's gettin' smaller 'n' smaller, 'n' 't he'd better get a cinch on a part of it, too. That don't mean 't he can join the push, an' he knows it. He understan's what we're drivin' at. He can ride on the road 'f he likes, but he'll get sick o' bein' by himself all the time, an' 'll take a mooch after awhile. 'Course all don't do it, ye've seen yerself that there's hunderds runnin' up an' down the line 't we ain't got rid of, an' p'r'aps never will. I ain't so dead sure that the thing's goin' to work, but the coppers'll never break us up, anyhow. They've been tryin' now for years, an' they've got some of the blokes settled, but we can fill their places the minute they've gone."

"How many are in the push?"

"'Bout a hunderd an' fifty. Sometimes there's more an' sometimes there's less, but it aver'ges 'bout that."

"Do all the fellows come from around here?"

"No, not half of 'em. There's fellas from all over; a lot of 'em are Westerners."

"What is the main graft?"

"Well, we're diggin' into these cars right along. We got plants all along the road, from Buffalo to Chi. I can fit ye out in a new suit o' clothes to-morrow, 'f ye want to go up the line with me."

"Don't the railroad people trouble you?"

"O' course, they ain't lookin' on while we're robbin' 'em, but they can't do very much. We got the trainmen pretty well scared, an' when they get too rambunctious we do one of 'em up."

"Do you ever shift to other roads?"

"Lately we've branched out a little over on the Dope an' the Erie, but the main hang-outs are on the Shore. We know this road down to the ground, an' we ain't so sure o' the others. Most o' the post-office work, though, is done off this road."

"What kind of work is that?"

"Peter-work,[2] o' course, what d'ye think?"

"Pan out pretty well?"

"Don't get much cash, but the stamps are jus' about as good. Awhile ago I was payin' fer ev'rythin' in stamps. Felt like one o' the old fourth-class postmasters."

"Doesn't the government get after you?"

"Oh, it's settled some of us, but as I was tellin' ye, there's always fellas to take the empty places."

"Got much fall money?"

"No, not a bit. We don't save anythin', it all goes fer booze an' grub. I've seen a big box o' shoes go fer two kegs o' beer, an' ye can't get much fall money out o' that kind o' bargaining. We have a good time, though, an' we're the high-monkey-monks o' this road."

Later he introduced me to some of his companions. They were the same kind of men with whom the Englishman and I had had the disagreeable encounters,—rough and vicious-looking. "They're not bad fellas, are they?" Peg asked, when we were alone again. "You'd tie up to them, Cig, 'f ye was on the Shore, I know ye would."

It was useless to argue with him, and we separated, he to join a detachment of the "push" in western New York, and I to continue on my way westward. Since the meeting with Peg I have been back several times in the "push's" territory, and have continued to make acquaintances in it. In the tramp's criminal world it stands for the most successful form of syndicated lawlessness known up to date, and, unless soon broken up and severely dealt with, it will serve as a pattern for other organisations. Whether it is copied or not, however, when the history of crime in the United States is written, and a very interesting history it will be, the "Lake Shore Push" must be given by the historian a prominent place in his classification of criminal mobs.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW TRAMPS BEG.

It is a popular notion that tramps have a mysterious sign-language in which they communicate secrets to one another in regard to professional matters. It is thought, for instance, that they make peculiar chalk and pencil marks on fences and horse-blocks, indicating to the brotherhood such things as whether a certain house is "good" or not, where a ferocious dog is kept, at what time the police are least likely, or most likely, to put in an appearance, how late in the morning a barn can be occupied before the farmer will be up and about, and where a convenient chicken-coop is located.

Elaborate accounts have been written in newspapers about the amount of information they give to one another in this way, and many persons believe that tramps rely on a sign-language in their begging.

It is well to state at the outset that this is a false conception of their methods. They all have jargons and lingoes of their own choosing and making, and they converse in them when among themselves, but the reported puzzling signs and marks which are supposed to obviate all verbal speech are a fabrication so far as the majority of roadsters are concerned. Among the "Blanket Stiffs" in the far West, and among the "Bindle Men," "Mush Fakirs," and "Turnpikers," of the middle West, the East, and Canada, there exists a crude system of marking "good" houses, but these vagrants do not belong to the rank and file of the tramp army, and are comparatively few in numbers.

It is furthermore to be said that the marking referred to is occasional rather than usual. Probably one of the main reasons why the public has imagined that tramps use hieroglyphics, in their profession is that when charity is shown to one of them the giver is frequently plagued with a visitation from a raft of beggars.

This phenomenon, however, is easily explained without recourse to the sign-language theory. Outside of nearly all towns of ten thousand inhabitants and more the tramps have little camps or "hang-outs," where they make their headquarters while "working" the community. Naturally they compare notes at meal-time, and if one beggar has discovered what he considers an easy

"mark,"—a good house,—he tells his pals about it, so that they may also get the benefit of its hospitality. The finder of the house cannot visit it himself again until his face has been forgotten, at any rate he seldom does visit it more than once during a week's stay in the town; but his companions can, so he tells them where it is, and what kind of a story they must use.

Although the hoboes do not make use of the marks and signs with which the popular fancy has credited them, they have a number of interesting theories about begging and a large variety of clever ruses to deceive people, and it is well for the public to keep as up-to-date in regard to these matters as they keep in regard to the public's sympathies. Not all tramps are either clever or successful; the "road" is travelled by a great many more amateurs than professionals, but it is the earnest endeavour of all at least to make a living, and there are thousands who make something besides.

Roughly estimated, there are from sixty to seventy-five thousand tramps in the United States, and probably a fifth of all may be classified as "first-class" tramps. There is a second and a third class, and even a fourth, but it is the "A Number One men," as they call themselves, who are the most interesting.

The main distinction between these tramps and the less successful members of the craft is that they have completely conquered the amateur's squeamishness about begging. It seems comparatively easy to go to a back door and ask for something to eat, and the mere wording of the request is easy,—all too easy,—but the hard part of the transaction is to screw up courage enough to open the front gate. The beginner in tramp life goes to a dozen front gates before he can brace himself for the interview at the back door, and there are men to whom a vagrant life is attractive who never overcome the "tenderfoot's" bashfulness.

It was once my lot to have a rather successful professional burglar for a companion on a short tramp trip in the middle West. We had come together in the haphazard way that all tramp acquaintanceships are formed. We met at a railroad watering-tank. The man's sojourn in trampdom, however, was only temporary; it was a good hiding-place until the detectives should give up the hunt for him. He had "planted" his money elsewhere, and meanwhile he had to take his chances with the '"boes."

He was not a man who would ordinarily arouse much pity, but a tramp could not have helped having sympathy for him at meal-time. At every interview he had at back doors he was seized with the "tenderfoot's" bashfulness, and during the ten

days that our companionship lasted he got but one "square meal." His profession of robber gave him no assistance.

"I can steal," he said, "go into houses at night, and take my chances in a shootin' scrape, but I'll be —— if I can beg. 'Taint like swipin'. When ye swipe, ye don't ask no questions, an' ye don't answer none. In this business ye got to cough up yer whole soul jus' to get a lump (hand-out). I'd rather swipe."

This is the testimony of practically all beginners in the beggar's business; at the start thieving seems to them a much easier task. As the weeks and months pass by, however, they become hardened and discover that their "nerve" needs only to be developed to assert itself, and the time comes when nothing is so valuable that they do not feel justified in asking for it. They then definitely identify themselves with the profession and build up reputations as "first-class" tramps.

Each man's experience suggests to him how this reputation can best be acquired. One man, for example, finds that he does best with a "graft" peculiarly his own, and another discovers that it is only at a certain time of the year, or in a particular part of the country, that he comes out winner. The tramp has to experiment in all kinds of ways ere he understands himself or his public, and he makes mistakes even after an apprenticeship extending over years of time.

In every country where he lives, however, there is a common fund of experience and fact by which he regulates his conduct in the majority of cases. It is the collective testimony of generations and generations of tramps who have lived before him, and he acts upon it in about the same way that human beings in general act upon ordinary human experience.

Emergencies arise when his own ingenuity alone avails and the "average finding" is of no use to him, and on such occasions he makes a note on the case and reports about it at the next "hang-out" conclave. If he has invented something of real value, a good begging story, for instance, and it is generally accepted as good, it is labelled "Shorty's Gag," or "Slim's," as the man's name may be, and becomes his contribution to the general collection of "gags."

It is the man who has memorised the greatest number of "gags" or "ghost stories," as they are also called, and can handle them deftly as circumstances suggest, that is the most successful beggar. There are other requirements to be observed, but unless a man has a good stock of stories with which to "fool" people, he cannot expect to gain a foothold among "the blowed in the glass stiffs." He must also keep continually working over his stock. "Ghost stories" are

like bonnets; those that were fashionable and *comme il faut* last year are this year out of date, and they must be changed to suit new tastes and conditions, or be replaced by new ones. Frequently a fresh version of an old story has to be improvised on the spot, so to speak.

The following personal experience illustrates under what circumstances "gags" are invented. It also shows how even the professionals forget themselves and their pose on occasions.

One morning, about eight years ago, I arrived in a small town in the Mohawk valley in company with a tramp called Indianapolis Red. We had ridden all night in a box-car in the hope of reaching New York by morning, but the freight had been delayed on account of a wreck, and we were so hungry when we reached the town in question that we simply had to get off and look for something to eat. It was not a place, as we well knew, where tramps were welcome, but the train would not stop again at a town of any size until long after breakfast, so we decided to take our chances.

We had an hour at our disposal until the next "freight" was due. The great question was what story we should tell, and we both rummaged through our collections to find a good one. Finally, after each of us had suggested a number of different stories and had refused them in turn, on the ground that they were too old for such a "hostile" place, Red suggested that we try "the deef 'n' dum' gag." There are several "gags" of this description, and I asked him which one he meant.

"Let's work it this way," he said, and he began to improvise. "I'm your deef 'n' dum' brother, see? An' we're on our way to New York, where I'm going to get a job. I'm a clerk, and you're seein' me down to the city so's't nothin'll happen to me. Our money's given out, an' we've simply got to ask fer assistance. We're ter'bly hungry, an' you want to know if the lady o' the house'll be good enough to help yer brother along. See?"

I "saw" all right, and accepted the proposition, but the odds seemed against us, because the town was one of the most unfriendly along the line. We picked out a house near the track. As a rule such houses have been "begged out," but we reasoned that if our story would go at all it would go there, and besides the house was convenient for catching the next freight-train.

As we approached the back door I was careful to talk to Red on my fingers, thinking that somebody might be watching us. A motherly old lady answered our

knock. I told her Red's story in my best manner, filling it out with convincing details. She heard me out, and then scrutinised Red in the way that we all look at creatures who are peculiar or abnormal. Then she smiled and invited us into the dining-room where the rest of the family were at breakfast. It turned out to be a Free Methodist clergyman's household. We were given places at the table, and ate as rapidly as we could, or rather Red did; I was continually being interrupted by the family asking me questions about my "unfortunate brother."

"Was he born that way?" they asked, in hushed voices. "How did he learn to write? Can he ever get well?" and other like queries which I had to answer in turn. By the time I had finished my meal, however, I saw by a clock on the wall that we had still fifteen minutes to catch our train, and gave Red a nudge under the table as a hint that we ought to be going. We were about to get up and thank our hostess for her kindness when the man of the house, the clergyman, suggested that we stay to family prayers.

"Glad to have you," he said; "if you can remain. You may get good out of it." I told him frankly that we wanted to catch a train and had only a few minutes to spare, but he assured me that he would not be long and asked me to explain the situation to Red. I did so with my fingers, telling the parson afterward that Red's wiggling of his fingers meant that he would be delighted to stay, but a wink of his left eye, meant for me alone, said plainly enough to "let the prayers go."

We stood committed, however, and there was nothing to do but join the family in the sitting-room, where I was given a Bible to read two verses, one for Red and one for myself. This part of the program finished, the parson began to pray. All went well until he came to that part of his prayer where he referred to the "unfortunate brother in our midst," and asked that Red's speech and hearing be restored.

Just then Red heard the whistle of our freight. He forgot everything, all that I had said and all that he had tried to act out, and with a wild whoop he sprang for the door, shouting back to me, as he went out:

"Hustle, Cigarette, there's our rattler."

There was nothing to do but follow after him as fast as my legs would carry me, and I did so in my liveliest manner. I have never been in the town since this experience, and it is to be hoped that the parson's family have forgiven and forgotten both Red and me.

Besides studying the persons of whom he begs, and to whom he adapts his "ghost stories" as their different natures require, the tramp also has to keep in mind the time of the day, the state of the weather, and the character of the community in which he is begging. I refer, of course, to the expert tramp. The amateur blunders on regardless of these important details, and asks for things which have no relation with the time of the day, the season, or the locality.

It is bad form, for instance, to ask early in the morning for money to buy a glass of whiskey, and it is equally inopportune to request a contribution toward the purchase of a railway ticket late at night. The "tenderfoot" is apt to make both of these mistakes; the expert, never. The steady patrons of beggars, and all old hands at the business have such, seldom realise how completely adjusted to local conditions "ghost stories" are. They probably think that they have heard the story told to them time and again and in the same way, but if they observe carefully they will generally find that, either in the modulation of the voice, or the tone of expression, it is different on rainy days, for instance, from what it is when the sun shines. It takes a trained ear to discriminate, and expert beggars realise that much of their finesse is lost even on persons who give to them; but they are artists in their way, and believe in "art for art's sake." Then, too, it is always possible that they will encounter somebody who will appreciate their talent, and this is also a gratification.

Speaking generally, there is more begging done in winter than in summer, and in the East and North than in the South and West; but some of the cleverest begging takes place in the warm months. It is comparatively easy to get something to eat and a bed in a lodging-house when the thermometer stands ten degrees below zero. A man feels mean in refusing an appeal to his generosity at this time of the year. "I may be cold and hungry some day myself," he thinks, and he gives the beggar a dime or two.

In summer, on the other hand, the tramp has no freezing weather to help him out, and has to invent excuses. Even a story of "no work" is of little use in the summer. This is the season, as a rule, when work is most plentiful, and when wages are highest, and the tramp knows it, and is aware that the public also understands this much of political economy. Nevertheless, he must live in summer as well as in winter, and he has to plan differently for both seasons.

The main difference between his summer and winter campaigns is that he generally travels in summer, taking in the small towns where people are less "on to him," and where there are all kinds of free "dosses" (places to sleep), in the

shape of barns and empty houses. In November he returns to the cities again to get the benefit of the cold weather "dodge," or goes South to Florida, Louisiana, and Texas.

Probably fifteen thousand Eastern and Northern tramps winter in the South every year. Their luck there seems to be entirely individual; some do well and others barely live. They are all glad, however, to return to the North in April and go over their old routes again.

An amusing experience that I had not long ago illustrates the different kind of tactics necessary in the tramp's summer campaign. So far as I know, he has never made use of the story that did me such good service, and that was told in all truthfulness, but it has since occurred to me that he might find it useful, and I relate it here so that the reader may not be taken unawares if some tramp should attempt to get the benefit of it.

I was travelling with some tramps in western Pennsylvania at the time, and we were "beating" our way on a freight-train toward a town where we expected to spend the night. Noontime found us all hungry, and we got off the train at a small village to look for lunch. It was such a small place that it was decided that each man should pick out his particular "beat," and confine his search to the few houses it contained. If some failed to get anything, those who were more successful were to bring them back "hand-outs."

My "beat" was so sparsely settled that I hardly expected to get so much as a piece of bread, because the entire village was known to hate tramps; but an inspiration came to me as I was crossing the fields, and I got a "set-down" and a "hand-out" at the first house I visited.

The interview at the back door ran thus:

"Madam,"—she was rather a severe-looking woman,—"I have exactly five cents in my pocket and I am awfully hungry. I know that you don't keep a boarding-house, but I have come to you thinking that you will give me more for my nickel than the storekeeper will over in the village. I shall be obliged to you if you will help me out."

A look of surprise came into the woman's face. I was a new species to her, and I knew it, and she knew it.

"Don't know whether we've got anything you want," she said, as if I were a guest

rather than a wayfarer.

"Anything will do, madam, anything," I replied, throwing into my words all the sincerity of which a hungry man is capable. She invited me into the dining-room, and gave me a most satisfying meal. There were no conversational interruptions. I ate my meal in silence and the woman watched me. The new species interested her.

Just as I was finishing, she put some sandwiches, cake, and pie into a newspaper. I had made a good impression.

"There," she said, as I was about to go. "You may need it."

I held out my nickel and thanked her. She blushed, and put her hands behind her back.

"I don't keep a hotel," she said, rather indignantly.

"But, madam, I want to pay you. I'm no beggar."

"You wouldn't have got it if you had been. Good-bye."

The tramps' methods of begging, as has been said, are largely regulated by circumstances and experience, but even the amateurs have theories about the profession, and they are never more interesting than when sitting around some "hang-out" camp-fire, discussing their notions of the kind of "ghost stories" that go best with different sorts of people. Indeed, the bulk of their time is passed in conferences of this character. Each man, like the passionate gambler, has a "system," and he enjoys "chewing the rag" about its intricacies. The majority of the systems are founded on the tramp's knowledge of women. Taking the country by and large, he sees more of women on his begging tours than of men, and it is only natural that his theoretical calculations should be busied mainly with women. Some tramps believe that they can tell to a nicety what a blonde woman will give in excess of a brunette, or vice versa, and the same of a large woman in contra-distinction to a small one. Much of their theorising in these matters is as futile as is the gambler's estimate of his chances of luck, but certain it is that after a long apprenticeship they become phenomenally accurate in "sizing up" people; and it is he who can correctly "size up" the greatest number of people at first glance and adapt himself to their peculiarities, that comes out winner in the struggle.

Next in importance to the ability to appraise correctly the generous tendencies of

his patrons, and to modulate his voice and to concoct stories according to their tastes, come the tramp's clothes and the way he wears them. It probably seems to most persons that the tramp never changes his clothes, and that he always looks as tattered and torn as when they happen to see him, but the expert has almost as many "changes" as the actor. Some days he dresses very poorly; this is generally the case in winter; and on other days he looks as neat and clean as the ordinary business man. It all depends on the weather and the "beat" he has chosen for the day's work. Every morning, before he starts out on his tour, he takes a look at the weather and decides upon his "beat." The "beat" selected, he puts on the "togs" which he thinks suit the weather, and away he goes for better or worse. In New York city there are probably a hundred scientific beggars of this character, and they live as well as does the man with a yearly income of $2,000.

Sunday is the most dismal day in the week to the average tramp,—the beggar who is content with his three meals a day and a place to lie down in at night. But few men who go on tramp for the first time expect that Sunday is going to be any different from any other day in the week. They usually reach "the road" on a week-day after a debauch, and they find that their soiled clothes and general unkempt condition differentiate them in public thoroughfares very little from hundreds of workingmen. No policeman worries them with suspicious glances, and in large cities they pass unchallenged even in the dead of night. Indeed, they receive so little notice from any one that they wonder how they had ever imagined that outcasts were such marked human beings.

Then comes their first Sunday. They get up out of their hayloft, or wherever it may be that they lay down the night before, prepared to look for their breakfast just as they did on the previous day, and after brushing off their clothes and washing themselves at some pump or public faucet, they start out. In a small town they feel that something is wrong before they have gone a block, and by nine o'clock in large towns they decide to go without their breakfast if they have not yet got it. A change has come over the earth; they seem out of place even to themselves, and they return through back streets to their lodging-houses or retreats on the outskirts of the town, sincerely regretting that they are travellers of "the road."

A number of men in the world have to thank this Sunday nausea that they are to-day workers and not tramps. The latter feel the effects of it to the end of their days; it is as unescapable as death, but like certain seafaring men who never get entirely free of seasickness and yet continue as sailors, so old vagabonds learn to expect and endure the miserable sensations which they experience on the first

day of the week. These sensations are due to the remnant of manhood which is to be found in nearly all tramps. The majority of them are for all practical purposes outcasts, but at breakfast-time, on Sunday morning, they have emotions which on week-days no one would give them credit for.

It was my fate, some years ago, to be one of a collection of wanderers who had to while away a Sunday in a "dugout" on a bleak prairie in western Kansas. We had nothing to eat or drink and practically nothing to talk about except our dismal lot. Toward nightfall we got to discussing in all earnestness the miserableness of our existence, and I have always remembered the remarks of a fellow sufferer whom we called "West Virginia Brown." He was supposed to be the degenerate scion of a noble English family, and was one of the best educated men I have ever met in Hoboland. He took little part in the general grumbling, but at last there was a lull in the conversation, and he spoke up.

"I wonder," he said, "whether the good people who rest on Sunday, go to church, and have their best dinner in the week, realise how life is turned upside down for us on that day. There have always been men like us in the world, and it is for us as much as for any one, so far as I know, that religion exists, and yet the day in the week set apart for religion is the hardest of all for us to worry through. Was it, or wasn't it, the intention that outcasts were to have religion? The way things are now, we are made to look upon Sunday and all that it means with hatred, and yet I don't believe that there's any one in the world who tries to be any squarer to his pals than we do, and that's what I call being good."

The last "the road" knew of Brown, he was serving a five years' sentence in a Canadian prison. His lot cannot be pleasant, but methinks that on Sundays, at least, he is glad that he is not "outside."

CHAPTER X.

THE TRAMP'S POLITICS.

As a political party the tramps cannot be said to amount to much. Counting "gay-cats" and hoboes, the two main wings of the army, they are numerous enough, if concentrated in a single State, or in a city like New York, to cast, perhaps, the determining vote in a close election, but they are so scattered that they never become a formidable political organisation. They are more in evidence in the East than in the West, and in the North than in the South, but they are to be met in every State and Territory in the Union. On account of their migratory habits very few of them are legally entitled to vote, and the probability is that only a small fraction of them actively take part in elections. In large cities like New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and San Francisco, and during fiercely fought political struggles even in some of the smaller towns, they are collected into colonies by unscrupulous electioneering specialists, and paid to vote as they are told, but otherwise they make very little effort to have their voices count in political affairs. Two of their number, Indiana Blackie and Railroad Jack, have achieved some notoriety as stump speakers, and Blackie was a man who might have secured political preferment,—a consulship, perhaps,—if he had understood how to keep sober, but he broke down during a campaign in West Virginia, and was drowned not long after in the Ohio River. In Wheeling, West Virginia, I heard him make one of the wittiest political speeches I have ever heard anywhere, and his hearers listened to him as attentively as a few evenings before they had listened to a famous politician. The speech was no sooner ended, however, than Blackie went off on a terrible "jag," and I saw him at noon the next day, looking for a wash-boiler. He was splattered all over with mud, and did not know whether he was in West Virginia or Indiana. He finally concluded from the colour of the mud that he was out in Wyoming.

Although the tramps have no comprehensive political organisation, and take but little interest in voting, except when their ballots bring in hard cash, they are great talkers on political questions of the day, and are continually championing the cause of some well-known political leader. As a class, they may be called *Geister die stets verneinen*,—they are almost invariably in opposition to the party in power. Since the last presidential election Mr. William Jennings Bryan

has been their hero, and they expect of him, if his ambition to be President is ever gratified, a release from all the troubles which they think are now oppressing the country, and particularly themselves. They have, without doubt, misconstrued a great deal that Mr. Bryan has said in his speeches and writings; they have pinned their faith to him without carefully considering his promises; but in something that he has said or done, or in his personality, they have discovered, they think, the elements of leadership, which, for the nonce, at any rate, they admire. There is not a man in the country at the present moment, for whom they would shout as much, and in whose honour they would get so drunk, as for Mr. Bryan. They know very little concerning his theories about silver, beyond the expression, "The Cross of Gold," and they are very scantily informed in regard to his notions about expansion and imperialism, but he represents for them, as probably no other political leader ever did, upheaval and revolution, and it is on such things that they expect to thrive.

The place to hear them talk and to get acquainted with their political views is at the "hang-out." Practically any nook or corner where they can lie down at night is a "hang-out" to them, but as most of their life is spent on the railroads their main gathering points are little camps built alongside the track. Here they sleep, eat, wait for trains, and "chew the rag." Much of their conversation is confined to purely professional matters, but every now and then, at some large camp, a roadster will make a slurring remark about this or that political leader, or a paragraph in a newspaper in regard to a "burning" question of the hour will be read aloud, and the confab begins. The topic that started it is soon smothered under a continually accumulating pile of fresh ones, but that does not matter, the "hang-out" never settles anything; it takes up one thing after the other in rapid succession, as fancy dictates, and one must listen carefully merely to catch the drift of what is said. The sentences are short and broken, and a word often suffices to kill what promised to be a lengthy discussion. The old men speak first, the young men next, and the boys are supposed to keep quiet and listen. Sometimes, when "booze" accompanies the talk, the age distinctions are temporarily overlooked, and all speak together; but this kind of a conclave finally ends in a free fight, to which politics and everything else are subordinated.

The burden of practically all the palavers is "the way the country is going to the dogs." It comes as natural to the average tramp to declare that the United States is in dire peril as it does to the German socialist to say that Germany is a miserable *Polizei-Staat*. He does not honestly believe all that he says, and it

needs but a scurrilous remark about our country from some foreign roadster to startle him into a pugnacious patriotism; but in the bosom of his "hang-out" he takes delight in explaining what a bad plight the country is in. This is really his political creed. Free trade, protection, civil service reform, the currency question, pensions, and expansion are mere side issues in his opinion. The real issue is what he considers the frightful condition of our "internal affairs." From Maine to California the tramps may be heard chattering by the hour on this topic, and they have singled out Mr. Bryan as their spokesman because they think that he voices their pessimism better than any other man in public view.

It came as a surprise to me, when first getting acquainted with tramps, to find that they were such grumblers and critics,—such *Nörgler*, as Kaiser Wilhelm says. I had pictured them as a class which managed to live more or less successfully whether any one else got on or not, and had imagined that they were, comparatively speaking, at peace with the world. That they troubled themselves with public questions and political problems was a thought that had not occurred to me. The fact is, however, that they are as fierce political partisans as the country contains, and in talking with them one must be careful not to let an argument go beyond what in polite society would be considered rather narrow bounds. They are quick to resort to fists in all discussions, and in my intercourse with them it has paid best to let them do most of the talking when politics has been the topic of conversation.

It would take a book, and a large one at that, to report all the evidence that they advance at "hang-out" conferences in support of their statements concerning the evils from which they believe the country is now suffering, but no account of their political notions, no matter how short, should fail to take note of their rantings against capital, and what they consider the political corruption of the country. Nearly every conversation they have on politics begins with some wild assertion in regard to one of these topics, and Mr. Bryan's name is invariably dragged into the discussion. They believe that he hates the man who has saved money and understands how to make it earn more, quite as much as they do, and they will be very much disappointed in him, in case he is ever elected President, if he does not suggest legislation by which the rich man can be made "to shell out his coin." On no subject do the tramps use such violent language as on this one of the capitalist. They think that it is he who has imported all the foreign labour in the country,—another eyesore in their opinion; who has made England the real "boss" of things on this side of the Atlantic,—a notion which they claim to have dug out of Mr. Bryan's speeches; who has reduced the wages of the

"poor workingman" and increased the cost of living; and, worst of all, who is now trying to take away from them what they consider their inalienable railway privileges.

They hold him answerable also for the trusts and syndicates, agitation against which they require from any political party in which they take an interest. They have thought seriously over these matters about as much as a ten-year-old child has, but that does not matter. They do not propose to think hard about anything. Mr. Bryan is for the present doing all the thinking which they consider necessary, and they are content merely to repeat in their own jargon statements which he has made, or which they think he has made. He has become for them an infallible oracle, who understands them and their position, and whom they understand. In the bottom of their hearts they know that they are deserving of precious little championship, that they lead despicable lives, and commit some very reprehensible deeds; but it is a consolation to them which they cannot let go, to think that Mr. Bryan includes them in his classification of victims of the "gold bugs," so they try to make propaganda for him.

The time was when many of them shouted for Henry George and "General" Coxey as vociferously as they now shout for Bryan. They expected from George and Coxey the same overthrow of their imaginary oppressors and general upheaval of things that they now look forward to from Mr. Bryan. They were once also enamoured of Mr. Blaine, but for a different reason. They admired the way he championed the cause of Americans who got into trouble in foreign parts. When he was Secretary of State it was a temporary fad among them to scold about the way Americans were treated abroad, and on one occasion, the details of which I have forgotten, Mr. Blaine pleased them immensely by insisting on the release of an American who had been falsely arrested in some foreign port.

They are particularly entertaining when talking about the corruption in the country. They discuss this question with all the seriousness of professional moralists and reformers, and it seems never to occur to them that there is any inconsistency in their attitude toward the matter. An amusing instance of their lack of perception in this particular came to my notice in Columbus, O., where I was temporarily on duty as a railroad police officer. One morning, word came that Mr. Bryan was expected to arrive about noon. He was to give a talk to his local admirers. There were about two hours between the time I received notice of his coming and the hour of his arrival, and I put them in strolling about the streets, seeing whether there were any light-fingered gentry in the town whom I

knew. In the course of my wanderings I dropped into a saloon in one of the side streets where a man, whom I recognised as a "hobo gun,"—a tramp pickpocket,—was holding forth in loud language on the "poleetical c'rupshun" in the country, and in Ohio in particular. He made the usual platitudinous remarks about this matter, to which his drunken hearers listened with approval, and wound up his harangue with a eulogy on Mr. Bryan, who was "the one honest man in the land." When Mr. Bryan arrived at the railroad station, my companions and I had to be on watch to see that his pockets as well as those of the people crowding about him were not picked, and whom should I find prowling about suspiciously in the throng, but the loud-mouthed reformer of the saloon! He was looking hard for a pocket to "nick," but some one must have "tipped off" the "fly cops" to him, for he disappeared before long as mysteriously as he had appeared, and without any plunder, for no "leather" was "lifted" on that occasion.

Not all of the tramps' political talk is merely negative and critical; some of it is also positive and constructive. They think that they know what they want in the way of government, as well as what they do not want. Speaking generally, they favour a crude kind of state socialism, to be prefaced, however, by a general cataclysm, in which existing conditions are to be entirely revolutionised, and out of which the poor, and more particularly the outcast, are to come victorious. They make no attempt to elaborate in conversation the details either of the convulsion, or of the new order of things which is to follow; generalities alone interest them, and they scorn inquiries as to how their theories are to be put into practice. That Mr. Bryan is in sympathy with their notions of the extensive powers that the government ought to have is proved for them by the fact that he believes that silver can be given its rightful place in our monetary system merely by an enactment of Congress, or by command of the President. They recognise no laws in politics other than those which man makes. That there are natural laws and economic facts, over which man has no control, is a matter which they have never taken into consideration. I refer to the rank and file of the tramp army. There are individual men who do not subscribe to what I have given as the political philosophy of the majority of the tramps,—men, indeed, who laugh at the thought of a tramp having any political notions at all,—but they are exceptions. The average roadster considers himself as justified in stating his political beliefs, and working for them, if he is so inclined, as does the workingman,—even more, because he thinks that he has time to formulate his ideas, whereas the workingman is kept busy merely earning his bread.

As agitators and propagandists the tramp is mainly in evidence at big strikes. In

the last fifteen years there has not been a notable railroad strike in the country in which he has not taken part either as a helper in destroying property, or as a self-elected "walking delegate." The more damage the strikers achieve, the more he is pleased, because he believes, as said above, that it is only upon ruins that the government he desires can be founded. When a train of cars is derailed or burned, he considers the achievement a contribution to the general downfall of the rich and favoured classes. He also has the antiquated notion of political economy, that when a thing has been rendered useless by breakage or incendiarism the workingman is benefited, because the thing must be replaced, and labour must be employed to do it,—hence it pays the poor to effect as much destruction as possible. It would be unjust to Mr. Bryan to say that the tramp has got this notion from him, but the trouble is that Mr. Bryan preaches from texts so easily misunderstood by the class of people to which tramps and criminals belong, that he does a great deal of harm to the country, and materially hurts his own cause. Not only the tramp, but thousands of workingmen expect of him, in case he is successful in his ambition, things which he can no more give than can the humblest of his admirers; yet both the tramp and the workingman believe that they have promises from him which justify them in expecting what they do. He is a victim of his own "gift of gab," as the tramp dubs his oratory. He has talked so much and so loosely that the tramp has read into his words assurance of changes which he can never bring about. Of course it is not to be expected that he or any other man in his position should put much store by what such a constituency as the tramps thinks of him, but the tramp's exaggerated notions of his policy are symptomatic of the man's influence on people. What the tramp particularly likes about him is his doctrine of discontent; they would drop him like a hot coal if he should admit that the country was in a proper condition. A great many other people, who are not tramps, tie to him for the same reason. He is the idol *par excellence* of persons who have nothing to lose whether he succeeds or fails. He has promised them great benefits if they will help him to office, and as in the case of the tramp, it costs them nothing to shout and vote for him.

His tramp admirers, however, he can hold only so long as he represents what they deem to be the most radical doctrines going. If another man like "General" Coxey should appear, with more attractive propositions, they would flock to him as readily as they now rally around Mr. Bryan. They are a volatile people. Just before war had been declared with Spain, while everybody was discussing our chances in the approaching struggle, a great many of the tramps were sure that the United States was going to get the "licking" of its life. One tramp was so

positive of this that he declared that "Spain had forgotten more than we ever knew about naval warfare, or ever would know." To-day the same man, as well as the majority of those who sided with him, believe that the United States can "knock out" any nation in existence, and they are dissatisfied because we don't do it. So it will probably go with Bryan, so far as they are concerned. At the next presidential election, if he is defeated again, the majority of them will look around for some other man for whom they can talk. Even successful leadership bores them after awhile. They love change, and are continually seeking it in their every-day life as well as in their politics. It is this trait of theirs which would defeat any attempt at permanent organisation among them.

Two friends were recently discussing the relative power and influence of the man who writes and the man who organises and leads. The late George William Curtis was cited as a man who must have wielded great power with his pen, and Richard Croker was set over against him as an organiser and leader. The argument ran on for some time, and one of the friends finally made this statement: "I wouldn't care if they were nothing better than tramps, provided a thousand of them would follow my directions in everything that was undertaken. Why, I could be king of a ward with such a following. Take the East Side, for instance. The man over there who can vote solid a thousand men on all occasions, beats any writer in the country in influence." Perhaps he does, but no man in the country, be he writer or organiser, could hold a thousand tramps together in politics. For one election they might be kept intact, but a defection would take place before the second one was due. As men to manipulate and direct, they could be made to do most in battle, and I have always regretted that a regiment of them did not go to Cuba during the late war. With a regiment of regulars behind them to have kept them from retreating, and some whiskey to inspire them, a regiment composed of fellows such as are to be found in "The Lake Shore Push," for instance, would have charged up San Juan Hill with a dash that even the Rough Riders would have had trouble to beat. They are not good political philosophers, or conscientious citizens, but in desperate circumstances they can fight as fiercely as any body of men in the world.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT TRAMPS READ.

In a superficial way tramps read practically everything they can get hold of. As a class they are not particularly fond of books when there is something more exciting to engage their attention, such as a "hang-out" conference, for instance, but they get pleasure out of both reading and writing. They have generally learned how to read as boys, either at home with their parents or in some institution for truants and "incorrigibles." Dime novels and like literature amuse them most at this stage in their career, and the same is true of tramp boys who are found in Hoboland, but they learn to laugh over the fascination that such books had for them, as do more highly cultivated readers. As a rule, however, it is not until they have served a term in prison that they take a definite interest in the books that appeal to educated people. In all large prisons there are libraries from which the inmates can draw books at stated intervals, and the majority of the truly professional tramps generally serve at least one sentence in these institutions. As youths, it was their ambition to be successful thieves, crack burglars, pickpockets, and "Peter-men" (safe thieves), and they have usually experimented with the thief's profession long enough to get a year or two in a penitentiary. Some take a longer time than others to become convinced that they lack criminal wit, and are fitted, so far as their world is concerned, for nothing higher than tramping, but the majority of tramps in the United States arrive at this conclusion sooner or later, and degenerate into what may be called discouraged criminals. In the process of getting discouraged they have access to prison libraries, and can pick and choose their books as they like. In some prisons the wardens keep track of the kinds of books their charges call for, and I have seen interesting reports in which an attempt has been made to read the characters of the men from their different bookish preferences; but it is easy to make mistakes in such calculations. I know of prisoners, for instance, who have called for nothing but religious books in the hope that the "Galway" (the prison priest) would be so impressed with their reformation that he would recommend their cases to the Board of Pardons for reconsideration. Indeed, prisoners in general are such *poseurs*, in one respect or another, that not much faith can be put in conclusions as to their literary tendencies deduced from their selection of books in prison libraries. One must observe them in the open, and see what they

read when they are free of the necessity of making an impression, to discover their real preferences.

In summer they are almost constantly "in transit," and read very little except newspapers, but in winter they flock to the large cities and gather around the stoves and radiators in public libraries, and it is then that one can learn what kind of reading they like best. The library in Cooper Union, for example, is one of their favourite gathering-places in New York City during the cold months, and I have seen the same tramps reading there day after day. Novels and books of adventure appeal to them most, and it would surprise a great many people to see the kind of novels many of them choose. Thackeray and Dickens are the favourite novelists of the majority of the tramps that I have happened to talk with about books, but the works of Victor Hugo and Eugene Sue are also very popular. The general criticism of the books of all of these writers, however, is that they are "terribly long drawn out." A tramp who had just finished reading Thackeray's "Vanity Fair" once said to me: "Why the devil didn't he choke it off in the middle, an' leave out all the descriptions? It's a good book all right enough, but it's as long-winded as a greyhound." Robert Louis Stevenson, on the other hand, is admired by a Western tramp acquaintance of mine on account of his "big mouthfuls of words."

Detective stories like "Sherlock Holmes" and the books of Gaboriau are read widely by both tramps and criminals, and the ingenuity of their authors is often admired; but the tramp cannot understand, and no more can I, why the writers of such stories prefer to give their own conception of a detective to the "Hawkshaw" of real life. He believes, and I agree with him, that much more interesting detective tales could be written if the truth about police life were told; and there awaits the writer who is prepared and willing to depict the "fly cop" as he really is in Anglo-Saxon countries, a remunerative and literary success. No mistake has been made in portraying him as the King of the Under World, but some one ought to tell what a corrupt king he has been, and still is, in a great many communities.

Popular books, such as "Trilby," "David Harum," and "Mr. Dooley," almost never reach the tramps until long after their immediate success is over. The tramps have no money to invest in books of the hour, and the consequence is that while the public is reading the book of some new favourite author, they are poring over books that were popular several years back. There are roadsters who are to-day reading for the first time the earliest books of Mark Twain, Bret Harte, and other well-known authors, and the next crop of vagabonds will probably

read the works of writers who are now in the foreground. In Chicago I met, one day, a tramp who had just discovered Bret Harte, and he thought that "Tennessee's Partner" and "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" were recent stories. "I tell ye, Cigarette," he declared, enthusiastically, "those stories'll make that fella's fortune. Jus' wait till people get to talkin' about 'em, an' you'll see how they'll sell." He had read the tales in a sailor's mission to which somebody had donated a mutilated Tauchnitz edition of Bret Harte's writings.

In a county jail in Ohio I also once heard two tramps discuss for nearly two hours the question whether Shakespeare wrote his plays when he did or about two hundred years later. The tramp who favoured the latter theory based it on the supposition that the balcony scene in "Romeo and Juliet" could not have been possible so far back as "in Shakespeare's time."

"Why, gol darn it," he exclaimed, "they didn't have no such porches in them days. A porch, I tell ye, is a modern invention, just like dynamite is."

Next to the exciting novel or tale of adventure, the tramp likes to read books which deal with historical and economic subjects. It is a rather exceptional tramp who can read intelligently such a book as Henry George's "Progress and Poverty," but a number of roadsters have gone through this work time and again, and can quote from it quite freely. Indeed, it has been the cause of long discussions at "hang-outs" all over the United States. Any book, by the way, which "shows up" what the tramps consider the unreasonable inequalities in our social conditions, appeals to them, and thoughts in regard to such matters filter through the various social strata and reach the tramp class more rapidly than the reader would think. I have heard tramps discuss socialism, for instance, with quite as clear an insight into its weak points, and with as thorough an appreciation of its alluring promises, as will be found in any general gathering of people. They are much more entertaining when discussing a book dealing with some serious question than when trying to state their opinion of a novel. If a character in a novel has taken hold of them, they can criticise it intelligently and amusingly, and they have their favourite characters in fiction just as other people have, but only a few tramps read novels with the intention of remembering their contents for any length of time; such books are taken up mainly for momentary entertainment, and are then forgotten. Books of historical or political import, on the contrary, are frequently read over and over again, and are made to do service as authorities on grave questions discussed at "hang-out" conferences. Bryan's "First Battle" has been quoted by tramps in nearly every State in the Union, and some roadsters can repeat verbatim long passages from it.

A striking example of the tramp's fondness for what he would call heavy books was a man whom I met, some years ago, at a tramp camp in central New York. We had been sitting around the camp-fire for some time, discussing matters of the road, when the man called my attention to his weak eyes. I had noticed that the lids of his eyes were very red, and he told me that it was only with difficulty that he could read even large print. "Used them up in the stir" (penitentiary), he explained. "We had no work to do, and were shut up in our cells practically all of the time, and I simply read myself blind." I asked him what kind of reading he had enjoyed most, and he gave me a string of authors' names, whose books he had drawn from the library, which but few college graduates could beat. I have forgotten many of the books he mentioned, but Kant's "Pure Reason" and Burton's "Melancholy" were among the number. We talked together for over three hours about writers and writing, and I have seldom enjoyed a conversation more. The man was still a tramp in essential matters, and had no intention of becoming anything better, but his reading had widened the boundaries of his world to such an extent that in other clothes and with a few changes in his diction he might have passed muster in very respectable companionship. If he is alive, he is probably still looking for "set-downs" and "hand-outs," and discussing between meals with the hoboes the wonderful things that were revealed to him during the ten years he spent in his prison university.

Endowed with this interest in books of a serious nature, it would seem that the tramp ought eventually to take to heart some of the wisdom such books contain, and try to live up to it in his every-day life, but I am compelled to say that, in the majority of cases, he considers himself a being apart from the rest of the world, so far as moral responsibility is concerned. He likes to ponder over the moral obligations of others, and to suggest schemes for a general social regeneration, but he finds it irksome and unpleasant to apply his advice and recommendations to his own existence. Theoretically, he has what he would call a religion, but he no more expects to live up to his religion than he intends to work when he can get out of it. He has two worlds in which he lives,—one consisting of theories and fanciful conceits which he has got from books and his own imagination, and the other of hard facts, prejudices, and habits. He is most natural in the latter environment, but moods come over him when he feels impelled to project himself into the world of theories, and then nothing pleases him more than imaginatively to reconstruct the world in general as he believes it ought to be.

I have been asked whether he ever voluntarily reads the Bible. It is an easy book to get hold of, and in prison it is forced upon the tramp's attention, but it has no

marked fascination for him. I have known a roadster to beg a New Testament from a Bible House agency in order to settle a dispute about religious doctrine, but this is a very exceptional case. The average tramp knows no difference between the Old and New Testaments, and bases any religious convictions that he may have on personal revelations of truth rather than on inspired Scripture. In one respect, however, he conforms to conventional customs,—he likes to sing hymns. In jail or out, if he happens to be in a singing mood, it is only necessary to start such hymns as "Pull for the shore," "There were ninety and nine," "Where is my wandering boy to-night?" and this tattered and uncouth creature breaks forth into song. There is a grin on his lips while he sings, for he appreciates the ludicrousness of the situation, but he sings on at the top of his voice. At night, on a Western prairie, where he and his pals have built a "hang-out" near a railroad track, there is no more picturesque scene in all Hoboland than when he stands up, starts a tune, and the others rise and join him.

Equally amusing, if not so harmless, are the tramp's improvised schools. In the autumn, when the weather gets too cold for sleeping out, the country schoolhouse becomes one of the tramp's night shelters. He gets in through one of the windows. A wood-pile is near by, and what with a good fire and benches to lie on, he makes a very cosy nest. Let a crowd of ten or twenty appropriate such a place, and there is always a frolic before bedtime. One of the tramps is elected teacher, the scholars' books and slates are taken from their desks, and school begins. "Moike, oppen yer mug 'n' see if ye kin read," the teacher commands, and the burly pupil begins to paw over the leaves. Later comes a turn at spelling, writing, and "figgerin'," and a wild hobo song ends the session. A keg of beer sometimes helps to enliven things, and then ink-bottles, readers, and spelling-books are scattered about the room in great confusion. The wood-pile also disappears, and sometimes the building itself goes up in flames. I have often wondered whether the real pupils were not glad to find things so topsy-turvy in the morning. It must take time to put the schoolhouse in order again, and the boys and girls have a vacation meanwhile. The taxpayers grumble, of course, but, as the tramp says, "they ought to fasten things tighter," and until they do he will continue, I fear, to entertain himself at their expense.

An experience that I had not long ago illustrates the tramp's unwillingness to have his reading matter regulated by outsiders. I was making an investigation of the tramp situation on certain railroads in the middle West at the time, and one night, in company of some fellow roadsters, I went for shelter to the tramp ward of a poor-house. The room we were sent to was in the cellar, and we all passed a

very miserable night. In the morning we were given our breakfast in the common dining-room of the institution, and while we were sitting at the table the wife of the keeper gave each one of us a "tract," which we carefully tucked under our plates and left there. When we had finished, one of the tramps asked our hostess whether there was a place in the building where we could wash; the hole we had had to stay in over night was so dirty that our clothes and hands were covered with dust, and the tramp knew that any stream we might find outside would be frozen over. The woman looked at him severely, and said: "There's a brook at the foot of the hill." The tramp's anger was aroused. "Madam," he said, "I have always been taught that cleanliness is next to godliness. You have given us all tracts, but you won't give us a place to wash. Your religion and mine don't jibe. You'll find the tracts under the plates." We all got another severe look, and the next batch of tramps probably got the tracts.

Of the newspapers that the tramp reads there is but little that is novel to report beyond the fact that he begs for them in the same systematic fashion characteristic of him when looking for his meals. Not all tramps are anxious to keep up to date as regards the world's doings, but a fair proportion of them look for their morning newspaper immediately after breakfast. They go to stores and barber-shops, and do not hesitate to ask even newsdealers. In summer the newspapers which they get also serve them as beds in railroad box-cars; they spread them out on the floor of the car and lie down on them, their shoes and vests doing duty as pillows, and their coats as covering. Their favourite papers are of the yellow kind, but I doubt whether they take them any more seriously than other people do who buy them merely for particular items of news and then throw them away. They like spicy articles and glaring pictures, and scramble with one another for first chance at the *Police Gazette*, but this taste is not unnatural; their life is rough, vulgar, and sensational, and the wonder is that they can appreciate and care for the high-class literature which many of them read.

I have said that they get enjoyment out of writing as well as reading. There are a few well-educated men in tramp life, and they have been surprised attempting to make literature as well as to read it. In Germany it is quite a custom among the *Chausseegrabentapezirer* to keep diaries in which they jot down notes and comments on their life, and in this country, also, journals and essays by tramps have been discovered. One of the most intelligent criticisms of my tramp papers in *The Century* came from a Boston tramp, hailing for the time being from Texas. Excepting a few mistakes in grammar which many persons who are not tramps are guilty of, it was a very creditable production.

Once upon a time, not to be too particular, two tramps were shut up all alone in a jail in Michigan, and their sentences wore so heavily upon them that they found it very difficult to be patient. Their stories gave out, the jail fare became tiresome, there was very little to read, and they were by nature very restless. At last things looked so gloomy that they decided to spin a coin for a choice of two suggested pastimes,—writing a story, or planning and carrying out an escape. It was "heads" for the story, and "tails" for the escape. Heads won. True to their contract, these two men, one fairly well educated, and the other with a big imagination, sat themselves down to the task, pencil and paper being furnished by the sheriff. For ten days they wrote and wrote, then rewrote, until, as the man with the imagination said, their "poor brains seemed squeezed to death." Indeed, they had worked so hard that the man with a little education thought it would be worth while to try to sell the story; so, after it had been read to the sheriff and his wife, both of whom it pleased, sufficient postage was collected to send it to a periodical thought to be looking for such contributions; and off it went, and with it the solemn prayers of the authors. Three weeks later, lo and behold! a letter arrived in care of the sheriff. The two men opened it tenderly and fearfully, each tearing a little of the end off and then passing it to the other, saying, like silly girls: "I don't dare." But what was their surprise, the terrifying little thing once laid bare, to find in it a check for ninety dollars, payable to them jointly or severally, as if the editor had fancied that they might be turned loose at different times. Unfortunately, they were freed together, and two hours afterward the man with the imagination had so inflated it with whiskey that he wanted to storm the jail and free the sheriff. His story, however, was not disgraced. It is still quite readable. He, poor fellow, would probably like to toss up again for pastimes; when last heard of he was "doing" solitary confinement.

CHAPTER XII.

POLICING THE RAILROADS.

Engineers build railroads and are largely represented in their management, but both in building and operating them they are dependent, at one time or another, upon some kind of police protection. Indeed, there are railroads that could not have been constructed at all without the aid of either soldiers or policemen. The Trans-Caspian railroad was built largely by soldiers, and is still superintended by the war department at St. Petersburg rather than by the minister of ways of communication. The Siberian line is, in parts, the result of the work of convicts, who were carefully watched by police guards, and the Russian civil engineers in Manchuria have needed the protection of Cossacks merely to survey that end of the road. In Germany, practically all the railroad officials, from the head of the engineering department down to the track-walkers, have police power. The conductor of a train, for instance, can put an obstreperous passenger under arrest without waiting until a station is reached, and resistance to him is as serious an offence as is resistance to the ordinary *Schutzmann*.

In Europe, it was seen, when railroads were first coming into use, that police efficiency, as well as that of the technical railroader, would be required, if the properties were to be well managed, and it was secured at the start. Before the railroads were built it had been made plain, after long experience, that even on the public turnpikes policemen were indispensable, and the authorities decided to employ them on railroads as well. The protection of life and property is a very serious matter in Europe, where precautions are taken which in the United States would seem superfluous. It avails nothing in Germany, for example, for a director of a company to excuse the loss of money intrusted to his care on the ground that he thought he was acting in a businesslike manner. Inspectors, or commissioners, are appointed to see whether his transactions come up to the standard of what is considered businesslike, and if they find that he has not exercised good judgment, although there may have been nothing intrinsically dishonest in the way he has managed, his bondsmen frequently have to reimburse the stockholders for the loss that his mistakes have brought upon them. It is the spirit of carefulness behind such a precaution as this which goes to explain why the Germans have the systematised police surveillance of railroad

property referred to. Much of this surveillance is in the hands of the municipal police and rural constabulary, but the fact that the majority of the railroad officials have police authority shows how much protection was considered necessary to manage the properties carefully.

In the United States the idea seems to have been that the engineers and managers could be relied on to get out of railroad investments all the profit that was in them, and that the assistance of policemen could be dispensed with except as watchmen. It is true that, for a number of years, railroad companies have had on their pay-rolls what are called "railroad detectives," but up to a few years ago there was not a well-organised railroad police force in the United States, and yet there is no country in the world, at the present moment, where railroads are more in need of such auxiliary departments. A great deal of money would have been saved to investors, and not a few lives would have been spared, had the American railroads seriously taken up this police matter in the early days of their existence, and until they do, say what one will about the luxuries to be found on American trains, and the speed at which they run, American railroad properties, in this particular at least, are inferior to those of Europe in management.

The purpose of this last chapter is to call attention to the inadequateness of the police arrangements now prevalent on nearly all railroad systems in the United States, to show what has resulted from this inadequateness, and to interest railroad men and the general public in police organisations which will be equal to the work necessary to be done.

To bring out clearly the defects of the prevailing railroad police methods in the United States, it seems appropriate to take a concrete case, and describe the situation on a railroad which I have been over as a passenger and as a trespasser. It employs about sixty men in its police department, and is one of the most tramp-infested roads in the country. The maintenance of the so-called detective force costs the company about forty thousand dollars a year.

By way of illustration, I will give a résumé of conversations that I had respectively with a detective, a tramp, and a trainman that I encountered on the property. Each of these men was representative of his class, and spoke his mind freely.

The detective had started out in life as a brakeman, but his eyesight became faulty after a few years, and he got a position on the police force. He had just passed his fiftieth year when I met him, and was heavy, unwieldy, and inclined to

be lazy. His beat consisted of forty miles of track, and he generally went over it in a passenger train.

I asked him whether he found many tramps on passenger trains. He was not supposed to devote all of his time to watching trespassers, but they were so obviously a nuisance on the property that it struck me as peculiar that he did not ride on trains where they were more likely to be found.

"No," he replied, in a drawling voice, to my query, "I don't find many tramps in passenger coaches; but I know where their camps are, and several of us raid 'em every now and then."

"I should think you would want to ride more on freight-trains," I went on, "and catch the trespassers in the act, so to speak."

"I'm too heavy to fool around freight-trains; besides, I don't want to have a knife put into me. Some o' them tramps are mighty quick on their feet, and if I went at 'em they'd have a razor cut in me before I could turn round."

I asked him why, in view of his age and heaviness, he did not try to find employment in some other department of the road more suited to his abilities. Railroad companies are often very lenient with employees of long standing, and give them easy positions in their old age.

"This is the easiest department the road's got," he returned. "Besides, I'm my own boss."

"Don't you have to make regular reports to any one?"

"I go to the trainmaster's office every morning for orders, but he don't know much about the business, and generally tells me to do as I think best. We men haven't got a chief the way the regular railroaders have."

"Who is responsible for what you do?" I inquired.

"Nobody, I guess, but the pres'dent o' the road."

"How do you spend your time?"

"Well, I go to the trainmaster in the morning, and if he hasn't heard of anything special, like a car robbery or an accident where there's likely to be a claim for damages, I stay around the station a while, or go down into the yards and see what I can see. Sometimes I spend the day in the yards."

"What do you do there?"

"Oh, I loaf around, keep the kids away from the cars, chin-chin with the switchmen 'n' the other men, keep my eyes open for fellows that there's rewards for, eat my dinner, an' go to bed."

"Why don't you try to break up the tramp camps?"

"We do try it, but they come back again."

"Don't you think you would probably be more successful if you raided them oftener?"

"Yes, I guess we would; but, you see, there ain't any one who's running the thing. When an order comes from the superintendent to make raids we make 'em, but he don't send in that order more'n once in three months, an' the rest o' the time we do pretty much as we like."

"How do you think things would go if you men were organised and had a chief? Would better work be done?"

"Better work would be done, I guess, but it would be a darned sight harder work," and he smiled significantly.

My tramp informant was an old roadster of about forty, who had "held down" the railroad in question for a number of years. I asked him how long it had been an "open" road,—one easy for trespassers to get over.

"As long as the memory of man goes back," he replied, with a suggestive flourish of his hand.

"Are not some divisions harder to beat than others?"

"Once in awhile a division'll get a little horstile, but only fer a few weeks."

"How many tramps are riding trains?"

"I don't see all the trains, so I can't tell you; but I never seen a freight yet that wasn't carryin' at least five bums, 'n' I've seen some carryin' over a hundred In summer there's most as many bums as passengers."

"Is there much robbing of cars going on?"

"Not so much as there might be. The blokes are drunk most of the time, 'n' they

let chances go by. If they'd keep sober, 'n' look up good fences, they could do a nice little business."

"Do the police trouble you much?"

"When they round up a camp they're pretty warm, but I don't see much o' them 'cept then. 'Course you wants to look out fer 'em when a train pulls into division yards, 'cause 'f yer handy they'll pinch you; but they ain't goin' to run after you very far. I've heard that they have orders to let the bums ride, so long as there ain't too much swipin' goin' on. The company don't care, some people say."

The trainman that I interviewed was a freight-train conductor who had been in the employ of the company over twenty-five years. I asked him whether he had instructions to keep trespassers off his trains.

"I got the instructions all right enough," he said, "but I don't follow them. I'm not a policeman for the road. I'm a conductor, and I only draw a salary for being that, too. When I was green I used to try to keep the bums off my trains, but I nearly got my head shot off one night and stopped after that. It's the detectives' business to look after such people."

"Do you see much of the detectives?"

"Once in awhile one of them shows up on my trains, but I've never seen them make any arrests. One of them got on my train one day when I was carryin' fifty tramps, and he never went near them."

"What do you think ought to be done to keep tramps off trains?"

"Well, what I'd like to have done would be for the United States government to let all us trainmen carry revolvers and shoot every galoot that got on to our trains. That'd stop the thing."

"Do you think the company wants it stopped?"

"I don't know whether they do or not, but I wish to God they'd do something. Why, we men can't go over our trains at night any more, and be sure that we ain't goin' to get it in the neck somewhere. It's a holy fright."

I have quoted these men because their testimony may be accepted as expert. They know the situation and they know one another, and they had no reason to try to deceive me in answering my questions. In addition to their remarks, it is

only necessary, so far as this particular road is concerned, to emphasise the fact that the forty thousand dollars a year which the company spends for protection of the property are not protecting it, and are bringing in to the stockholders practically no interest. The police force is entirely lacking in system; many of the men are too old and indifferent, and the property is littered up with as miscellaneous a collection of vagabonds and thieves as is to be found in a year's travel. This is neither good management, nor good business, and it is unfair to a community which furnishes a railroad much of its revenue, to foist such a rabble upon it.

A more or less similar state of affairs exists on the great majority of the trunk lines in the United States. They are all spending thousands of dollars on their "detective" forces, as they call them, and they are all overrun by wandering mobs of ne'er-do-wells and criminals. There are no worse slums in the country than are to be found on the railroads. Reformers and social agitators are accustomed to speak of the congested districts of the large cities as the slums to which attention should be directed, but in the most congested quarters of New York City there are no greater desperadoes nor scenes of deeper degradation than may be met on the "iron highways" of the United States. A number of railroads are recognised by vagrants and criminals as the stamping ground of particular gangs that are generally found on the lines with which their names are connected.

Every now and then the report is given out that a certain railroad is about to inaugurate a policy of retrenchment, and the newspapers state that a number of employees have been discharged or have had their work hours cut down. The best policy of retrenchment that a number of railroad companies can take up would be to stop the robberies on their properties, collect fares from the trespassers, and free their employees from the demoralising companionship of tramps and criminals. To carry out such a policy a well organised railroad police force is indispensable, and as I have made use of a practical illustration to indicate the need of reform, I will advance another to show how this reform can be brought about.

There is one railroad police organisation in the United States which is conscientiously protecting the property in whose interests it works, and I cannot better make plain what is necessary to be done than by giving a short account of its organisation and performance. It is employed on the Pennsylvania lines west of Pittsburg, and in inception and direction is the achievement of the general manager of that system.

As a division superintendent this gentleman became very much interested in the police question, and organised a force for the division under his immediate control. It worked so successfully that, on assuming management of the entire property, he determined to introduce in all the divisions the methods which he had found helpful in his division. There was no attempt made, however, to overhaul the entire property at once. The reform went on gradually, and as one division was organised, the needs and peculiarities of another were studied and planned for. Suitable men had to be found, and there was necessarily considerable experimenting. The work was done thoroughly, however, and with a view to permanent benefits rather than to merely temporary relief. To-day, after six years of preparatory exercise, the "Northwest System" has a model police organisation, and the "Southwest System" is being organised as rapidly as the right men can be found.

The force on the "Northwest System"—and it must be remembered that this part of the property takes in such cities as Pittsburg, Cleveland, Toledo, and Chicago, where there is always a riffraff population likely to trespass on railroad property—is made up of eighty-three officers and men. The chief of the force is the superintendent, whose jurisdiction extends to the "Southwest System" also. He reports to the general manager, and is almost daily in conference with him. For an assistant to manage things when he is "out on the road," and to relieve him of road duty when he is needed at headquarters, he has an inspector, a man who has risen from the ranks and has demonstrated ability for the position. Each division has a captain, who reports to the division superintendent and to the chief of the police service. This captain has under him one or more lieutenants and the necessary number of patrolmen and watchman, who report to him alone. An order from the general manager consequently reaches the men for whom it is meant through official channels entirely within the police department, and the same is true of statements and reports of the men to the general manager.

Practically everything is run according to a well-understood system, and this is the secret of the department's success. Day in and day out every man on the force knows what he has to do, and expects to be called to order if his work does not come up to what is desired. Hunting down trespassers and thieves is but a part of the routine. The property is patrolled almost exactly as a large city is, and the men are expected to make reports about such matters as the condition of frogs and switches, switch-lights, fences, and station-buildings, to do preliminary work for the department of claims, to keep the property free from trespassers, to protect the pay-car, look out for circus and excursion trains, and generally make

themselves useful. They are all picked men, and have to come up to the requirements of the United States army as regards health and physical strength. Their personal records are known for five years previous to being employed on the force. They constitute for the general manager an invaluable guardianship. He has but to press the button, so to speak, and within a few hours the entire police force is carrying out his instructions. Through it he can keep in touch with a thousand and one matters which would otherwise escape his notice, and he can order an investigation with the assurance that he will get an exact and trustworthy report within a reasonable time.

Such is the organisation. Its performance, up to date, has consisted in cleaning up a property that, seven years ago, as I know from observation, was so infested with criminals that it was notorious throughout the tramp world as an "open" road. To-day that system is noted for being the "tightest shut" line, from the trespasser's point of view, in the country, and the company pays seventeen thousand dollars a year less for its police arrangements than it did in 1893 for its watchmen and detective force. These are facts which any one may verify, and it is no longer possible for railroad companies to explain their hesitation in taking up the police matter in earnest on the ground that it would cost too much. It costs less, not only in the police department's pay-rolls, but in the department of claims as well, than it did when detached men, without any organisation and direction, were employed, and the conditions at the start were very similar to those on railroads now known to be "open." It is to be admitted that the rabble which formerly infested this property has in all probability shifted to other roads, —gangs of this character naturally follow the lines of least resistance,—but it would have been impossible for it to shift had other railroads taken a similar stand against it; it must have vanished.

The time must come when this stand will be taken by all railroads. For a number of years there has been no more valuable contribution to the business of railroading in the United States than the demonstrated success of a railroad police force, and it is difficult to believe that the benefits it brings can be long overlooked. The question of methods to be employed will naturally occasion considerable discussion, and it will doubtless be found that an organisation which suits one railroad is not available for another, but I believe that the general plan of the police organisation described above is a safe one to follow. It is founded on the principle that the men must be carefully selected, thoroughly trained, systematically governed, and the scope of their work sharply defined. No police force, railroad or municipal, can do really good work unless due

regard be given to these very important matters.

For the benefit of railroad police forces which may be organised in the future, the following suggestion seems to me to be worthy of consideration.

The title "detective" should not be given the men. They are not detectives in the ordinary sense of the word, and to be so called hurts them with the public and with their fellow employees. Railroading is a business done aboveboard and in the public view, and its police service should stand on a different footing from that of the detective force of a large city, where, as all the world knows, secret agents are necessary. They may be necessary at times on railroads also, but there already exist reputable agencies for furnishing such service.

The superintending officers of the force should be superior men. In Germany a police patrolman has not the slightest hope of becoming so much as a lieutenant until he has passed a very severe examination, which practically implies a college education, and he consequently realises that his superior officer is entitled to his position on other grounds than mere "pull" or "seniority," and learns to have great respect for him. A similar dignity should be attached to authoritative positions in the railroad police, and to secure it able men must be employed.

The superintendent of the service should be as supreme in it as is the superintendent of a division. If he has been chosen for the position on account of his fitness for it, the supposition is that he knows how to fill it, and there should be but one superior to whom he must answer. I bring up this point because on most railroads the police arrangements are, at present, such that almost every head of a department gives orders to the "detectives." On some roads even station agents are allowed to regulate the local police officer's movements.

Whether an American railroad police can be organised on as broad lines as in Germany, where practically all the railroad officials have police authority, is a question which cannot yet be definitely decided. The conditions in the United States are very different from those in Germany, and it may be that the sentiment of the people would be against giving so many persons police power; but I think it would be advantageous to experiment with the track-walkers, crossing-watchmen, and gatemen, and see whether they can be incorporated in the railroad police. Great care must naturally be exercised in picking out the men to possess patrolmen's privileges, but an examination, such as all German railroad police officials have to pass, would seem to be a precaution which ought to

secure safe officers. If such an arrangement were made, the railroad police would admirably supplement the municipal police and the rural constabulary, and the requirements, physical, mental, and moral, of the examinations to be gone through would have a tendency to elevate the morale of the men, not only as patrolmen, but also as railroaders.

In conclusion, I desire to point out the opportunity of teaching by example which I believe the railroad police of the United States are going to have. Unlike the municipal police, they are free of the toils of politics, and ought to become exemplary. Their methods and efficiency will not remain unnoticed. The day that the railroad companies succeed in ridding their properties of the vagrant class which now troubles them, and thousands of this class begin to take up permanent quarters in the cities because they are unable to travel afoot, the public is going to make inquiries as to whence this undesirable contingent has come. They will then learn what a police force can do when it is not officered by political appointment and when it is made up of men who have been trained for the task imposed upon them.

A good thing cannot for ever go a-begging. Six years ago it seemed as impossible that a railroad could be cleaned up morally, as the one I have described has been, as it now seems that American cities can have police departments independent of politics. The trouble was that no railroad had taken the initiative. Ten years hence, I venture to prophesy, the railroads of the United States will not be the avenues of crime that they are at present. Some day a similar reform in police methods will be attempted and carried through in one of our cities, and if the railroad police have done their work well, and remained true to honest principles, not a little of the credit will belong to them.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

[2] A "Peter-man" is a safe-"blower," and Peter-work is safe-breaking.

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