

Contrast in Old Time and Present Day Police Methods



B EING a burglar is a business that cannot be said to have ever conducted in any considerable degree to health, happiness and spiritual tranquility. Neither has murder, robbery, battery or assault been attended by wholly safe and satisfactory circumstances. The grinning specter of the law lives always in the vision of those who prey and plunder, depriving them of repose and the comforts of home. Time was, in the days of yore, that the safety of society rested to a large extent upon the degree of punishment meted out to transgressors. Hence the minor offenses, such as swiping an embroidered handkerchief, and things like that, were punishable by death.

Came a day, of course, when capital punishment was limited to the more serious crimes; and then thieves and their brethren of less clever brain smiled broadly and plied their trade with great industry. They were swift of foot and cunning of brain and the match of the sturdy bluecoat, who walked his beat with club in hand. Life was letting up on them a little when a man in France mooned over a piece of machinery and made a dream come true; the dream of an engine eating gasoline and traveling on four wheels at a terrifying pace. The birth of the automobile and its coming into use all over the world may not have pleased criminals but fat policemen in every town have called down copious blessings on the little Frenchman's head.

"A revolution has come about in police methods in the last twenty years," said Henry W. Dunn, chief of the Omaha police force. "Police efficiency has been multiplied a thousand-fold. One man does the work of six, and does it so much better than six used to do it that there is no comparison. If somebody had told me these things would come about twenty years ago, when I first donned a uniform and began pacing a beat I would have probably arrested him on a charge of insanity."

"It was not an uncommon thing for a policeman to stand in the cold, hanging on to a drunk for an hour in the days before the auto patrol was put into use. Coppers were congratulated if they were able to answer the ordinary call in from ten minutes to an hour, depending on the length of the run. The trail was usually cold when they got to the scene of action. Now we can answer a call from any square of the 15,680 acres of Omaha within a few minutes."

There are those who declaim against the reign of the great god Speed; sacrifices they say are made in his name, a few killed, several maimed and many bruised. Fate seems to have so written and what fate has written the fools have said shall be so. However, there are also those who worship the great god Speed, and of these none are more devout than Chief Dunn, his captains, Mike Dempsey, Henry Heitfeldt and Chief of Detectives Steve Maloney. Since speed was harnessed to the Omaha police department, they say, lives have been saved by the score, criminals have been caught and their loot recovered.

"It used to be a hardship being a policeman," said Chief Maloney. "A copper ordinarily had to fight his battles alone. He had to lead his captives a long distance through cold, storms and rain. Now it's not—not exactly a hardship. As an instance of the speed with which we can work: About two years ago a call came to the station, saying a burglar was breaking into a house at Thirteenth and Castellar streets. I jumped into the patrol and we rushed out there."

"When we arrived at the house I detailed some of the policemen to guard the back of the house while the others entered by the front. We peeped in at the front door and there was the burglar at work. He made a dash for the back, found he was trapped and calmly came to the front door, opened



Henry W. Dunn

it and let us in. With a horse patrol we could, of course, never have done that.

"Then there was the time Red Murray's gang terrorized the people at Eighteenth and California streets. Murray, Harry Johnson and Cal Rolfe were robbing a house. We thundered out there in the police patrol and caught the burglars at work. A fight followed and Murray was shot and the others were captured. Without the auto these men could have robbed a house and escaped before we could have come upon them."

It is now a common occurrence to catch a burglar at work, said Chief Dunn. In the old days it was a case for congratulation, but now unless the men are caught at work or shortly after they quit and are trying to escape it is cause for regret. Said Chief Dunn:

"I remember one of the first fast trips we ever made. About 2:30 o'clock one morning a frightened woman called up from Thirty-second and

Francis streets, saying she was alone in the house and burglars were looting the place. We hopped into the patrol and dashed out there. When we arrived the woman was still talking to the station. We searched the house and found nothing more dangerous than a few rats in the basement, but the woman felt more at ease, for she realized she was almost within a minute's reach of the police."

Naturally, there are times when the auto sticks in the mud or something and there are naturally places where the flying squadron, as the motorcycle officers are known, cannot get, but the times are few and the places far between. Also, there are instances where only foot-work counted. Chief Dunn does not take an unparadiseable pride in his speed on foot. He believes life is too short to endanger it by hard running, but once in his life he ran on high as long as his breath lasted.

"J. J. Donahue and I were working together," said Chief Dunn, "when we heard that Fred Smith

had beaten up a man at Jimmy Adams' saloon and left the victim in a serious condition. We were ordered to catch Smith at all costs. We hit his trail and soon sighted him. Then began the most trying race in which I ever ran. We chased all over the downtown section of the city. Finally we began to close in on the fellow when he turned in at a gate on Capitol avenue. We followed as fast as our legs would carry us. Donahue was in the lead and just as he entered the gate the biggest bulldog I ever saw lunged at him with a ferocious 'wow.' I was hard behind Donahue and could not stop, so I pushed him right into the dog. We took some time to settle with the bulldog and then continued the search for Smith. We found he had been unable to get out of the back yard, which was surrounded by a high fence, and so we took him in."

Sam Riegelman and Eddie Morgan, the first motorcycle officers, smashed all speed records to

smithereens, but they rode the old style single-cylinder machines, and George J. Emery and L. G. Wheeler, who are the present veterans of the flying squadron, abide by no speed standards at all. They have been known to appear at neighborhood rows, free-for-all fights, in homes where wife-beaters were committing their deeds of violence and at houses where robbers were working with a quickness almost miraculous. And they have few such stories as Patsey Hovey tells of the first patrol put into use, and of its first long, fast journey.

"A call came in that chicken thieves were robbing a roost on Crownpoint avenue," said Hovey. "The old patrol was cranked up and went puffing away. With Andy Fahey and Dan Lahey urging the driver to greater speed. Around Twenty-seventh and Fort street, then unpaved, the machine stuck in the mud. The coppers got out and pushed and pulled and slipped and fell in the mud, but to no purpose."

"Finally they called the station and asked for advice. I told them to get Officer Sullivan's cow to pull them out. It was early in the morning and this seemed all right until Fahey called a half hour later and emphasized his opinion that it was a poor time for fooling. Shortly after that Sullivan wanted to know 'phwat the hell was meant by trying to rob him of his cow.' Finally the street car company was called and a car was sent out, the patrol hitched on and safely yanked out of the mud."

For all the speed of the automobiles and motorcycles there are policemen who maintain that some records were made by the old horse patrol. One of these is Jim Donahue, now an inside man, who claims to have driven thirty-one miles in two hours and twenty minutes in order to get possession of the horse on which Pat Crowe escaped to Plattsmouth after he had secured his kidnapping money. Captain Heitfeldt and Donahue hitched up a horse that had never been driven single before. They raced to Manaway to meet the rider of the horse, fearing Council Bluffs authorities would replevin it. It was a cold day and the horse driven at full speed all the way on a roundabout trip.

Mike Whelan became the guardian angel of this pony recovered from the Pat Crowe chase.

"That horse sure had a checkered career," remarked Patsey Hovey. "And he was the most obstreperous beast I ever saw. He used to get his tail over the lines and then raise old Cain. There was no controlling him once he got his tail over the lines. He was the bug-bear of every conservative copper for he had the habit of switching the lines under his tail at a critical stage of a drive, clamping down on the lines and taking the bit in his teeth and going as fast as he pleased and in any direction his fancy dictated. Whelan at last invented a safety device. He would tie the pony's tail to the singletree with baling wire whenever he started on a trip."

The mounted patrol were also capable of bursts of speed. A mounted copper, who is no longer on the force, sent in his call one night and was ordered to dash up to Twenty-ninth and Farnam and stop a fight. He was a Farnam patrolman and was supposed to be within two or three blocks of the scene of the battle, but he had wandered over to Twenty-fourth and Clark streets on business of his own and the next day his horse was out of commission, for he had gone to Farnam on a dead run.

There are times when even a policeman will be more than satisfied with the speed a police chauffeur can develop. On the night of the Overland Limited robbery the patrol went browsing around Sarpy Mills. It was early morning when the machine hit Farnam street, with Jim Donahue in the seat with the driver. All night the police crew had complained of the slowness with which "the (Continued on Page Twelve.)"

