

PARISIAN SECRET POLICE

Most of Them Are Old Soldiers, Honorable Men.

INVESTIGATING BRIGADE

Strangers in the City Constantly Watched and Acts Recorded So Close Are the Meshes of This Police—Not Even a Casual Visitor Slips Through.

About the words "the secret police" there is a pretty air of mystery. They unroll up pictures of cloaked figures, of men waiting in dark hallways and of stealthy steps behind curtains in corridors. They are woven into the tentacles of popular French fiction. The woman condescends, sunning herself in what Parisian doorway you please, feeds her imagination on tales of multiple disguises. As a matter of fact, this branch of the police, though disguised in plain clothes, is not at all occult. It has to do with plain and simple crimes. Most of the agents of the surete are old soldiers, honorable men. They are supplemented, however, by a band of quasi-police, known as indicateurs. These people, who are permanent auxiliaries of the service, are recruited among the street fakirs and and masterless rogues who foregather in Paris.

But behind these humdrum agents and these gloomy outcasts, their aids, there is a mighty "secret police," about which not one Parisian in a hundred has definite knowledge. The real secret police—today, as under the empire—is that which is known as the brigade des recherches—that is, the brigade of investigation. The members of this force are recruited in a far higher rank of society than the fellows of the surete. Indeed, there is no class—from the old nobility to the new fondality of finance—which does not contribute this occult system of espionage. It is not my purpose here to describe in detail the many ramifications of this ancient and potent order of spies.

A foreigner in France, if he associates frequently with people of importance, comes in time to know them well. They follow him in his comings and goings, report upon his acts and opinions, and sift his life with a care unknown in our careless republic. One of those who was sent out on my trail I came to know very well. What I was suspected of I know not, though during the troublous days of the Dreyfus case I fraternized with many men—one of whom, the Comte du Temple, an ex-deputy, was an aggressive royalist. Anyway, my spy and I came to know each other very well. He played a good game of billiards and was a companionable gentleman.

A little later Dr. W. J. O'Sullivan, visited me in Paris. He was greatly interested in the secret police. I could hardly persuade him that from the moment we met and shook hands in the Gare du Nord until his departure from the Gare St. Lazare every act of his had been noted. I got the evidence from my friend (my own pet spy) in the brigade des recherches. The doctor's record was singularly complete. He had not spoken with a man, he had not chatted with a woman, he had not dined out or breakfasted in my garden, he had not bought a pair of yellow gloves unseen by some ubiquitous spy. The amazed gentleman, when he learned how close had been the watch upon him, shuddered as if he had walked in peril, and went back to New York wondering. So close are the meshes of this police net that not even a casual visitor slips through.—Success.

Money Makes the Mexican Go.

In "American millionaire" a term has been found whose magic potency dispels effectively for the moment that peculiar procrastination in Mexican business methods so tersely characterized by the word "manana." People of this city, resident here but one year, have seen in the last week a hurrying Mexican servant for the first time. Those who have lived here for a longer time have seen it before—when a millionaire from America was here.

At the utterance of this term, as it passes from mouth to mouth, for a millionaire from the States must needs be advertised, every knee will bend or bow, hotel managers will take an actual or pretended interest in the management of the hostelry's affairs, cocheros will race their steeds that they may not be more than an hour behind the time, cargadores will accelerate their tortoise pace, waiters move as if more than half awake and the "bell-hops" even have been known to hop.

So great is the magic of this potent phrase that no vendor of dulces on the street, no seller in the shops nor curio merchant within the corporation limits of the capital, but has out his brightest sign, wears his blindest smile, adds to his usual insistent persistence a certain amount of alacrity, and one or two of the more eager have been known to postpone their feet of the laggards, as though each should be a latter day Mercury, the visitor has made of the rejuvenated Aztec a desecrating iconoclast, shattering by his moment of hurry all the idols and traditions of the ages.—Mexican Herald.

The Iowa experiment station made some investigations last year as to the best time for watering horses—before or after feeding. The results show no particular difference.

If a man is a coward he always claims to be conservative.

RUSSIA MAKES MADMEN.

Suspect Priest Confined Thirty-Two Years in Prison.

Madness is one of the spectres that grin athwart the dim twilight of the granite cells of the lonely prisoner. But sometimes madmen are set free. One such case was that of a suspect priest, named Peter Zolotnitsky. Having joined a non-conformist sect, he was sent to the monastery prison of Suzdal, two days before Christmas, 1865. Alexander II, was then Czar, and the tendencies of his government were, on the whole, humane.

But liberty of conscience has never been granted even by the most enlightened Emperor of Muscovy. Alexander II, vanished from the scene, and his son ascended the throne as Alexander III. An amnesty was granted to criminals, new measures were adopted and new men appointed, but the lot of the priest Zolotnitsky was not alleviated. He was left in his stone collar, cold, hungry, lonely, forgotten. In the fulness of time Alexander III, was called to his last account, and Nicholas II, donned the crowns of Muscovy, Kazan, and all the Russias, a new amnesty was proclaimed. But for the priest Zolotnitsky and his fellow prisoners the short days and long nights lost nothing of their sameness. His world was still narrowed down to the limits of his cell. In time the compass of his mind shrank to fit proportion to his wretchedness, and he lost his reason together with his health. Contrary to custom, the madman was then released; on April 15, 1897, after having languished for over thirty-two years in his dark stone cage.—Harper's Magazine.

An Acid Made of Wood Gas.

Aside from the deposits of metallic copper in the Michigan region, practically all the ores of copper, zinc, lead, and nickel consist of compounds of the metals with sulphur. In smelting, the sulphur is burned out and gives rise to enormous quantities of sulphur dioxide—that gas that has taught man to postpone for a moment the pleasure of his cigar when lighting it with a sulphur match, and has caused many a housewife to mourn for the untimely fading and passing away of her most cherished house plants. At Leadville, Joplin, Galena, Argentine, El Paso, and other sections of the country not only treeless but also grassless deserts have been produced by the large smelting establishments. Near Mount Shasta stretches of the finest timber land stand blasted because of this waste, which, were it utilized, would doubtless be sufficient to erect a new plant for the company every two or three years. By what is known as the "new contact process," this gas can be transformed into the best of sulphuric acid, and where smelting establishments are near enough to the manufacturing plants using this article large revenues are being derived from this waste product every year. However, since sulphuric acid is very cheap and freight rates very high, the economical utilization of the gas in the Shasta and other regions similarly situated, far removed from manufacturing centers, has not yet been accomplished.—Harper's Magazine.

Menu on Ocean Liners.

The chief steward and the chef determine the menus for the various and numerous meals of the following day between them and when this has been done the cards are turned over to the ship's printer who puts them in type and runs off whatever number may be required for the passengers. Copies of these are then distributed by the chef to his principal assistants—the head baker, the head confectioner, the head meat cook and so on through the list. Each expert proceeds to figure out the quantities of the various supplies—meat, eggs, flour, vegetables, or what not—he will require to carry out his part of the program. These estimates are submitted to the chief steward and as soon as they receive his endorsement become orders on the ship's store-keeper.

Of course, it requires a tremendous amount of foodstuffs to supply 2,000 persons blessed with generous sea appetites during the course of a transatlantic voyage. When any one of the big liners leaves New York for Europe, her storerooms are likely to contain something like eight tons of beef, three tons of hams and a similar amount of bacon, two tons and a half of butter, two or three thousand quarts of milk, six thousand dozens of eggs, a hundred and fifty or two hundred barrels of flour, thousands of bushels of each of the different kinds of fresh vegetables and fruits, and other eatables in proportion. In the height of the summer season when transatlantic travel is at floodtide the figures will be even greater than these in the case of the larger liners. The marketing bill for kitchen supplies in the case of an organization like the International mercantile marine company, which operates the largest of the Atlantic passenger fleets, amounts to several million dollars in the course of a year.

Pearl Fishing in Ceylon.

The use of the X-rays has proved a valuable adjunct to pearl fishing on the coast of Ceylon. By this application it is possible to discriminate between valuable oysters and those containing no pearls. Oysters useless for commercial purposes are thrown back into the sea.

It is easier for a married man to pack his trunk than it is for a bachelor—because he has less to pack.

The fool never puts off until tomorrow what he shouldn't do at all.

THE PRAIRIE SOD HOUSE

Life on the Solitary Stretches of the Western Plains.

WOMEN AGE QUICKLY

Settlers Grow Careless of Their Appearance and Lose Ambition. Creates a Worthless Mental and Moral Sordidness—Field Mice Burrow Through Walls of House.

Life in a sod house away out on the plains, where for months at a time there is not a thing in nature to cheer the eye or vary the monotony, is certainly close to first principles, says Stanley Raymond. When the corn waves on thousands of acres, or when the plain is green with growing wheat, there is something to interest the sod-house dwellers, but from October to May no class of intelligent Americans live more dreary lives than these. One wonders what livelihood, what future prosperity or pleasure can repay a man and wife to live in such huge sameness. The shifting clouds by day and a sky of fine stars at night are for weeks the only sights to be seen. Yet some of the most contented and aspiring people we have ever seen are men and women who live among such flat surroundings and dead solitude for years.

To realize in how primitive and solitary a fashion people can live and be happy one has only to imagine a man and wife in a sod house, fifteen miles from the nearest village, in one of the sparsely settled districts of western Nebraska or Kansas. For days, and in some seasons for weeks, they see no human beings outside of their own household. Even herding Indians and tramps are almost unknown in this country. Prairie dogs cast up their mounds and found towns in the unmolested spots about the place; gophers and field mice burrow through the sod walls of the house; not infrequently snakes swing themselves down from the rafters inside, or crawl in at the door to get at any milk pans standing about. At night coyotes and some of the gray wolves come up through the canyons and skulk about the poultry yard or howl close to the windows. Through the day while the man is in the fields the herding usually falls to the woman's lot. Probably each takes a noon luncheon in a paper, to save coming back to the house until night.

The woman attends to her necessary household duties, throws a gunny-sack over her broncho's back, jumps astride, rounds up her cattle, and drives them down the canyons to graze on the steep sides, or in a low strip beside a creek. Canyons are not sociable places; one can scarcely have a conception of the primeval unless he has walked through a canyon; he thinks of the dawn of creation, of the races of extinct mammoths, and wonders if centaurs have not merely retired into the inner caverns. What the sod-house woman thinks about, all day long in solitude like that, is hard to tell—probably the mortgage on the farm, diseases among the stock, the prospects of crops, the time when they can put up their frame dwelling, the hard, unadorned facts in the treadmill of her life, new plans for the work, work which is her sole law of existence. Perhaps she has memories of another time, other surroundings, but they must seem vague and far away. Even the weather is monotonous; there is practically always the cloudless sky, the brilliant sun, the strong, dry wind that curls the leaves of the young corn, and turns the buffalo grass brown.

Living on the dreary plains and amid such monotony, with never a thing to appeal to one's esthetic, social or literary nature, is wearing upon most settlers, even if they are contented. The life makes women, particularly, prematurely old. A few years of residence apart from their sex usually makes them careless of their appearance, dulls their ambitions and creates a sordidness. Such a life must have its inevitable mental and moral effect. All the sensitive, the esthetic, sometimes the moral sense itself, becomes atrophied. The tragedies of a city are uncharted and brought to light, but the silent tragedies of these desolate lives are swallowed up and lost in the remoteness and immensity of the prairie wastes.

New Wireless Station.

Another very desirable addition to the resources of wireless telegraphy we may shortly witness, it is hoped, by the installation of stations in the Azores. These islands are by nature a sort of half-way house between Europe and America, and lying within touch by wireless telegraphy of the routes of the ocean liners they can do good service for both continents. The King of Portugal, Don Carlos, may be trusted to interest himself in this measure, as it was largely due to his Majesty that the Meteorological Observatory was established in the Azores. A station for wireless messages would largely increase the value of that institution.—London Telegraph.

Aid to Navigators.

The development of marine signaling promises to be one of the chief aids to the navigator which the immediate future holds in store. By means of submerged bells and telephone apparatus for picking up the sound signals may be sent and received over considerable distances. The system has been installed on four lightships between New York and Boston, and many government and foreign officers have visited these ships during the past year.

CALIFORNIA WILD GEESE.

Men Employed to Keep Them Moving—Not Allowed to Shoot.

Wild geese are still so abundant in California that they are an actual pest to the wheat growers of the great interior valleys. During the Winter season they are so numerous on the largest ranches of the Sacramento valley that men are hired to ride over the fields with rifles and shoot at them frequently from daylight until dark in order to keep them moving and prevent them from grazing upon the tender young grain.

The birds at times congregate in such immense flocks as to seem to cover countless acres of ground. Their destructive powers are so great that in less than an hour, and sometimes, it is said, in a few minutes, they completely strip from the field upon which they rest all the shoot of grain above ground.

The men employed to keep the geese moving are called "geese herders." They are not expected or required to shoot the birds, but to keep firing at them, and so, as much as possible, drive them from the grain lands.

The occupation of the goose herder is far from exciting or agreeable, and is one of the most despised of all rural employments in California, says the Los Angeles Times. The herder must sally forth when daylight appears, for at dawn the geese begin to feed in the grain fields. Some of the wheat ranches are many square miles in extent, and one upon the west side of the Sacramento River, in Glenn county, embraces over 4,000 acres.

The herder must ride many miles in a day, and pursue his calling in all sorts of weather. Upon the largest ranches half a dozen or more herders find steady employment during the Winter season. It may happen that in the course of months of steady work a herder will not shoot even one goose, although perhaps firing 50 or 100 shots a day.

The geese are wary, and do not allow any one to approach them within a few hundred yards. For this reason it is necessary for the herders to use rifles, so that the bullets may strike the ground where the geese are feeding and put them to flight.

It is a fine sight to see the wild geese upon the wing at certain hours of the day, when they are flying to or from the river or some body of water where they drink. The sky at times seems filled with long, waving lines, where the birds are flying in their peculiar V-shaped flocks, and the air is laden with their discordant calls.

Trackless Trolley.

A trackless trolley line is being built by the community of Moonbult to Langefeld, and will be about two and one-half miles long, with two short branches intended for freight purposes.

The roadway from Monnheim to Langefeld is about twenty-three feet wide, with a good basaltic cover about fifteen in width, running almost in an air line, with the exception of a few curves. A special contrivance for coupling will be provided in order to keep an exact rut of all the cars. The power will be conducted to and from the cars by means of two rotary poles, placed on the top of the cars, and sliding blocks enabling the train to give way from ten feet to twelve feet.

For entering farmyards lying close to the road there will be used, instead of the regular wire, a connector and flexible cable fifty feet to seventy feet in length by means of which the current will be transmitted to the motor car.

The trains will consist of an electric locomotive for drawing two or three cars, driven by two electric motors of from twenty-five horse power to forty horse power. The conducting crew will have its place on the locomotive. The cars for carrying freight have a capacity of about five tons. Some of the cars will be open and some closed, and all will be fitted with brakes. Couplings will be provided for attaching farm wagons.—Electrical World.

The Mummies of Venzone.

Mummies have been found at various times in the tombs connected with some of the old European churches, their formation being due to natural process and not to any methods of embalming. By far the most notable place in this respect is the old parish church at Venzone in the northern part of Italy. In this church there are thirteen tombs which appear to have the power of mummifying the bodies placed in them. These mummies seem to be the dried residues of the original bodies with all their organs in place. They are very light, weighing from 6½ to 13 pounds. Various attempts have been made to give some adequate explanation of the cause of this unusual process, explanations which took into account the possible desiccating action of the mineral constituents of the earth around the tombs. The true reason appears to be the activity of a certain fungus (Hypha bombastica) which is always found growing upon the bodies and forming dense dark yellow masses on the surface. It has been found possible to induce mummification of various animals by inoculating their dead bodies with this fungus. The process is analogous to the so-called calcification of the silkworms in the case to which they are subject caused by a fungus pest of the genus Botrytis.

Before obtaining a license St. Petersburg drosky drivers have to take on oath to be civil and not to overcharge.

THE LODGING HOUSE EVIL

Conditions Good for Spread of Consumption, Says Report.

DIRT OF BEDS APPALLING

101 Lodging Houses in New York City—Sanitary Conditions Prejudicial to Health—Mattresses Crumbling to Pieces—Not Uncommon to Sleep With Boots on.

A lengthy report has just been made public by Mr. Paul Kennaday, secretary of the Committee on the Prevention of Tuberculosis, relative to the sanitary condition of New York city's lodging houses. Mr. Kennaday's investigation, which was searching and thorough, was undertaken with a view to discovering to what extent the city's cheap lodging houses were responsible for the spread of consumption in the community. The result of his inquiry Mr. Kennaday sums up as follows:

"If the course of this inspection has given no direct evidence of tuberculosis among the lodging house population, nor of house infection, it has sufficiently demonstrated that in not a few instances conditions are absolutely inimical to health and quite ideal for the rapid progress and communication of disease."

According to Mr. Kennaday's statistics there are in the Borough of Manhattan 101 lodging houses, with a licensed capacity for 16,470 beds.

The prevailing type is a four story brick structure, used as a store in front. There are two recognized kinds of lodging houses, those with individual rooms and those where the inmates are all herded together. In both classes Mr. Kennaday has found the ventilation, as a rule, excessively bad, although the ventilation in the second of the two classes is apt to be better than when the rooms are separate. The sanitary conditions are usually prejudicial to health, he said, and only forty-nine of the lodging houses were found to possess free baths.

The dirtiness of the beds in ordinary use was appalling. The mattresses in many instances were crumbling to pieces. "As to the blankets," says Mr. Kennaday in his report, "eight houses were found to be very clean, fifty-five clean, twenty-three dirty and fourteen very dirty. I was assured many times that the blankets were washed 'at least' twice a year; no thought of cleaning them oftener seems to have occurred to the proprietors, although lodgers often go to bed with their boots on, and the floors are swept in such a way that the dust at once settles on the blankets, which, as a rule, are unprovided with coverlets."

"By requirements of the Board of Health," Mr. Kennaday continues, "each lodging house must have an isolation or hospital room which must not be used for other purposes than the reception of such persons as may become sick while lodging in the house. In twenty-four houses the room was either used as a general storeroom for blankets or used as a sleeping room by the day or night clerk."

The remedy which the tuberculosis expert suggests for the present state of affairs is a more stringent and frequent inspection of the lodging houses by the Board of Health.

In defining his position, Mr. Kennaday remarks:

"While the city charter provides that it shall be the duty of the Board of Health to cause a careful inspection of every lodging house at least twice a year, inspections of some houses are actually made much oftener than this. But the character of these inspections must be faulty if, despite the fact that the majority of the houses show an adherence to regulations, so many positive violations can be found and conditions of such a shocking character permitted to exist. In addition to more thorough inspections, a higher standard of needful cleanliness should be adopted by those inspectors who it would seem, have sometimes adopted the theory, often advanced by lodging house keepers themselves, that the condition of the men they harbor is a sufficient excuse for the truly abominable conditions sometimes found."

Trepoff's Black Record.

Gen. Trepoff is notorious rather than famous. He is said by those who are in a position to know the facts to be the most detested man in the Russian army, the soldiers having nicknamed him "Iron Heart." When only a lieutenant not many years ago he sabred his orderly for a trivial breach of etiquette. His next exploit—according to his own boast—was the shooting of five men with a revolver.

With this record it is not surprising that he should a few days ago have been the victim of an attempted assassination at Moscow, where he was chief of the police and where he had put down some disturbance in a particularly brutal fashion. He is a very big smoker, fond of wine and of making speeches to his troops. In every speech the expression, "Obey your commanding officer" frequently occurs.

The czar is fond of Trepoff, and has been heard to remark: "He is one of the few men I can rely on."

Trepoff is married but is separated from his wife.—London Daily News.

When it comes to a quick parting the fool and his money are a close second to a woman and her secret.

Some men waste a lot of valuable time explaining their actions.

PIGEON POSTMEN IN WAR.

Bird Which Carried 800,000 Words on Its Tail Feather.

It is a curious link with long-gone centuries that the beleaguered people in Port Arthur have been using carrier pigeons to keep in touch with the outside world, just as the good folk of Modena did not much less than 2,000 years ago.

But the most interesting use of pigeons in war was undoubtedly when they did such excellent service during the siege of Paris a generation ago. The pigeons, it may be remembered, were sent out of the doomed city by balloons—363 of them; of these, 302 were liberated, but only seventy-three set foot again in Paris. It is amazing, even in this age of miracles, to think that a single one of these pigeon postmen carried no fewer than 40,000 messages, each containing on an average 20 words. This means a grand total of 800,000 words or the equivalent of half a dozen fairly long novels, as the burden of a single bird.

How was it done? Part of the mystery vanishes when we say that the weight of all these dispatches was actually less than a gramme, about one-twenty-eighth of an ounce, and that they were contained within a goose quill one and three-quarter inches long, which was attached by a silk thread to one of the bird's tail feathers. The puzzle, however, remains how it was possible to get over three-quarters of a million words within this tiny compass.

The secret of this seemingly impossible feat was microscopic photography. The messages were first printed in ordinary type, and then reduced by photography several hundred times. The photographs were taken on thin films or pellicles of collodion, each of which, though it was less than two inches square, could thus contain 50,000 words. Of these pellicles a pigeon could easily carry a dozen without interfering with its comfort or speed, and, as we have seen, one bird alone conveyed 40,000 messages.

But a pigeon has carried as much as three-quarters of an ounce for a short distance. This weight would represent something like 800,000 messages, or 16,000,000 words; so that under these conditions, it would be quite possible for a pigeon to carry a small library of 120 volumes on its tail.

So impressed were army men generally with the usefulness of the pigeon as demonstrated in the Franco-German war that it was not long before practically every nation in Europe had its trained military pigeons; and today there are more than 60 military pigeon stations in Europe.

We were among the last to adopt this simple and efficient method of carrying messages in time of war; but now we have excellent lofts at Portsmouth, Dartmouth and elsewhere, where birds are kept and trained in a most scientific manner.

In the Portsmouth lofts, which are in the Royal Clarence Victualling Yard at Gosport, is an office where the official log-books are kept with the utmost detail and precision. There are stud registers, and report books in which the doings of every pigeon are chronicled; one volume is devoted to a record of times of liberation, another to pigeons homing at the loft, and in another volume the various messages carried by the birds are listed. Among these it is interesting to notice many that have been sent to the lofts by members of our royal family when crossing the channel. The moment a bird enters the loft it is automatically shut into a box by the dropping of a noiseless slide, and an electric bell summons an attendant to take the message it has brought.

Poisons in Vegetables.

In preserving foods the natural colors of food products tend to fade and diminish with time. In order that this fault be remedied, the use of coloring matters has become almost universal in some forms of food products. For instance, some time ago I was unable to find in the city of Washington a single pound of uncolored butter. Tomatoes and other red vegetables and fruits are often colored with eosin; preserved peas and beans, as is well known, have the green fixed and accentuated by the use of a very objectionable substance, namely, sulphate of copper. Added red coloring matters are often found in wines. Preserved cherries are first bleached so as to become white, then colored a beautiful red, and many other objectionable practices of similar kinds are indulged in.

It is probably true that the palatability of foods is increased by having them presented in attractive forms, and to this end the natural colors which food products have and which are regarded as indexes of purity and excellence should be retained as carefully as possible. This, however, does not seem to justify the practice of artificial deception by the use of artificial colors for the purpose of imitating in a poorly colored food product the attractive and more pronounced colors which characterize the better kinds of food of that character.—Doctor Wiley in Pearson's.

Navigation of the Colorado.

The problem of navigating the tortuous waters of the upper Colorado river and the lower Green and Grand rivers and so opening up to exploitation a district of great mineral and prospective agricultural wealth has long baffled Coloradans. It is now claimed at Denver that a specially designed gasoline motor boat has proved equal to the task, and that a new empire will be opened up in which possibly a second Cripple Creek will be found.