

mv 30

LONDON AND NEW YORK:

15996

THEIR



CRIME AND POLICE.

F 6 A 2 6

BY J. W. GERARD.

MARCH, 1853.

NEW YORK:
WM. C. BRYANT & CO, PRINTERS, 18 NASSAU STREET.

1853.

INTRODUCTION.

THE following articles were published in the Journal of Commerce, during the month of February, with a view of calling the attention of the citizens of New York, to the startling extent and threatened increase of crime in this city, and the inefficiency of our present Police Force to meet and counteract it.

The discussion has aroused public attention, and our Municipal Authorities and the Legislature have taken up the subject in earnest, and seem desirous of applying the proper remedies. At the request of a number of friends, in whose opinion the writer has confidence, he has been induced to publish them together, for a more extensive circulation. They were written without regard to style or diction, and with the sole view of setting before the public, the state of crime in the city of New York, of the extent of which, doubtless, a large proportion of our citizens are ignorant; and if their publication shall lead to an improvement in our City Police the writer will be amply compensated for any time expended in their compilation.

The writer is happy to say that his proposed *improvements* in the Police, as set forth in the *third* article, meet the cordial co-operation of the Executive of our

City Government, and that the present bill before the Legislature, re-organizing our Police, introduced by Mr. Shaw, one of the members from this city, will be amended so as to incorporate them in it.

But as opposition in the Legislature may be expected from interested quarters, it is hoped that the press and the citizens at large will speak out in their favor, and advocate Mr. Shaw's Bill as amended.

NEW YORK, March, 1853.

No. I.

LONDON AND NEW YORK—THEIR CRIME AND POLICE.

In a brief visit to Europe the last summer, I spent five weeks in London with a view of observing the institutions of England and their working on the masses of the people; and, above all, the operations of the system of *police*, introduced into London and all the principal cities of England by Sir Robert Peel, when Secretary of State, about the year 1830, and now in force over more than half of the counties of England.

In England I saw much to admire—some few things to condemn. In many respects behind the age, they can yet learn much from us, if not too much wedded to their old ways to learn. But in one thing, and that most essential to the welfare and comfort of a city, and the protection of the lives and property of its inhabitants, they are a century ahead of us, and that is in their admirable system of *Municipal Police*, which I have no doubt is the most perfect in the world; and to show the nature and efficacy of which, with a view to the improvement of that of New York, is the object of this communication.

It will be borne in mind, that London in a condensed mass, comprising *two and a half millions of people*; a population nearly equal to the whole of our Empire State, *four times* as large as that of the *city* of New York, and spread over a surface covering *three times* its area. In other words, it is about *nine miles long* and *six miles wide*. The imagination can hardly grasp the idea of so large a city. I had a bird's eye view of it on a clear day from St. Paul's Cathedral dome, and it *does* embrace a mighty mass of houses and human beings.

In that over-grown city, there are tens of thousands, who, when they rise up at morning, know not where they shall get their daily bread, nor where at night they shall lay their heads. Houseless and friendless, they are tempted to crimes of robbery, burglary, theft and violence, by the most pressing of all necessities, *want*. The poverty, helplessness and degradation of tens of thousands of its inhabitants, outcasts of society, without a hope ever to change their position, are terrible; and yet, London is, I have

no doubt, the most *quiet*, the most *orderly*, and the *best regulated* city of any size in the world. The cause is the *efficiency* of its *Police*; not merely its *physical* power in *detecting* criminals *after* crime is committed, but its *moral* efficiency in *preventing* crime by the force of *its character*. It is a Police that is *feared* and *dreaded* by a criminally-disposed population, not from the personal severity, moroseness or harshness of the men, (for a more mild, forbearing, and respectable looking body of citizens I never saw,) but by their well-known intelligence, activity, unflinching firmness, and incorruptible *honesty*. Under the protection of that admirable body of the guardians of London, its streets and courts, its parks, squares, lanes and allies of a *thousand miles* in extent, are as orderly, as quiet, and as free from insult by night and by day, as our most private and fashionable streets. There is no outward rowdyism in London; neither the thing nor the name is publicly known there. If there are *B'hoys* in London, they keep within their dens, and do not trouble the people by their presence. I have traversed the highways and byways of London, at all hours of the day and night, to watch the workings of its police, and its effect upon its mighty mass of people of all kinds and degrees, and I felt more safe and secure in my person, with a greater consciousness of freedom from insult, than I would in walking the Bowery, or even our Broadway, at eleven o'clock at night. I saw the police, and knew them by their *uniform*, walking their ceaseless round, at every turn I took. There is something assuring to the citizen and the stranger in their steady, solemn tread of two miles an hour, resounding in the quiet street—a signal to the law-breaker to beware, and to the peaceful inhabitant that the eye of the policeman is watching over his safety. You do not see there, as you will nightly in our broad thoroughfares, four or five rowdies walking arm in arm abreast, filled with liquor and deviltry, with segars in their mouths elevated at an angle of 45 deg. and their hats cocked sideways at 30 deg. cracking their coarse jokes, or singing their ribald songs, and who if you come too near them, may jostle you in the way, and if you say a word in reply, or prepare to defend yourself, if a knife is not drawn you are well off; the chances are much in favor of your being knocked down. As far as I could observe in London, around their theatres, their gardens, their parks, and their lanes and alleys, no such things are to be seen, not even in the Haymarket and its purlieus, where the abandoned of both sexes resort, at all hours of the night. However they may offend propriety, they never dare offend outward decency. The eye of the Policeman, in his steady, ceaseless round, is on them.

While I am speaking of the Police of London, I may say almost as much in favor of that of Paris, (from which that of London was in a great degree copied,) and of every city of Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and

Italy, which I visited. However the Governments of those countries may bear down upon, or oppress the People, one thing is certain, that their cities are all admirably protected by their local police: Of the hundreds of Americans and English that I met in the cities of those countries, great and small, I never heard of a single instance of violence or rudeness to any one of them, by night or by day; and travellers feel a perfect assurance of their safety, from the watchfulness of those who have their cities in charge. And shall it be that this city, of whose greatness, prosperity and growth we are all boasting, and are so proud of—the third city in Christendom in point of population, and the second in Commerce—shall longer labor under the reproach of the inefficiency of our Police system, in preventing to a degree the mass of crime and violence which are committed in it by day and by night?

Look any and *every* day in the week, at your morning paper, and see what a black record of crime has been committed in your public streets the day and the night before, what *stabblings*, what shootings, what knockings down, what assaults by slung shots and otherwise; insults to women and other disgusting details of violence! Why should these things be, and be endured, as they are, in silence and with patience? Our police, considering its organization and its numbers, does much, and I will give them full credit for their exertions, in the course of my investigation; but the defects are in the system itself, and in the small number of men—defects which I will show how to remedy. In London, from the inability of a large portion of its population to get employment, arising from its overgrown population, there is more stealing and offences against property than in New York, two to one; but in instances of violence to the *person*, and of the higher grade of crime, we far outnumber them. In acts of violence committed on the person, I believe there are more than in either London or Paris; and that there is more use of the knife in New York, more stabbing than in all the cities of Italy combined. Just read your morning paper, and I venture to say, that for the last six months, hardly one can be taken up which records the crimes of the day, that does not record a case of stabbing or shooting. Look to the record, and you will find it so. I annex, by way of a sample, a paragraph from the Herald of 21st of December last:—

“Sunday evening, about 8 o'clock, Mr. James Mason, of the firm of Valentine & Mason, stevedores, doing business in Eighteenth street, near avenue B, was assaulted in avenue A, about Twenty-first street, and stabbed in the hip, receiving a deep wound which will confine him to his bed for a long time. The perpetrators escaped.”

*“More Rowdyism—Another Stabbing case.—*At about one o'clock this morning, Mr. Joseph Bunting, who resides at No. 199 Duane street, was passing through Greenwich street, on his way home, with a couple of friends. As the party arrived at Franklin street, a man—unknown to them—came up and excited a slight altercation. Immediately afterwards the stranger drew a knife, and stabbed Mr. Bunting in the forehead, inflicting a serious wound. He then wounded him twice in the back with the same weapon, and ran away. Mr. Bunting was taken to the station house of the Fifth Ward, where he was attended to by a surgeon and his wounds dressed. The perpetrator of the deed is not arrested yet.”

It is very commonly answered, that these acts are done by foreigners recently come here, and not by our citizens: granted, and what is the commentary? Why do not these foreigners commit these acts of violence in their own countries? Why do they commit them when they come here, in this land of liberty, where they have more rights than they ever dreamed of enjoying? The answer is obvious, and found in the weakness of our police. It shows that the stringent laws of the cities of Europe, firmly executed, strike fear into these men, and prevent them from committing crime: they fear the police of Europe, for they know them to be efficient and numerous; they do not fear our own, because from their small number and other reasons, there is neither a physical nor a moral power about it. It shows that either our laws or our execution of them is not so well adapted to curb the passions and criminal instincts of foreigners, as the laws of the lands from which they came. And remember that more than one-third of the population of this city is composed of foreigners, and thousands are weekly flocking to our shores. And remember, also, that New York is the house of refuge for a large proportion of thieves and housebreakers, as the police of London make that city too hot for them. In London there is less murder committed, in proportion to the population, than in New York, as I will show by statistics. Look at our prisons: the felons' cells are filled with the accused and convicted for taking life—young men who begin their career by street rowdyism, and end it on the gallows. You have had three within a fortnight. I do not speak these things to underestimate the high character of the great part of the population of our city; but I wish to awaken our citizens and our magistrates to the alarming growth of crimes of violence, that they may look the evil in its face, may see it in all its hideousness, so that they can apply the remedies. And these are simple. With very little more expense than we now pay, New York may have as efficient a police as any city in Christendom.

Look also at our sister city of Philadelphia, which used to be called the city of brotherly love, from the quiet of its streets, and the order and propriety of its population. And what has Philadelphia been for the last ten

years? Misrule and riot have reigned there, to the defiance of its magistrates, and have made its streets hideous. Assaults, and shootings, and murders, arising, among other causes, from the gangs of rowdies attached to, or running with their engines, who, when they had no one else to attack, have, for years, attacked, maimed and killed each other — so that the fire-alarm bell there has been, for years, a signal for a deadly fight.

Look at Baltimore, and what scenes have been presented there for the last six months? Violence of the most savage kind, so frequent, so daring, and by such powerful gangs, as to overawe, openly and publicly, the magistrates and police of the city; and the citizens, to protect themselves, go armed; and, if they are compelled to go out at night, do so with a fair chance of a personal encounter. Such was the daring of the disturbers of the public peace in Baltimore, that it was currently circulated in the papers, that the Mayor of that city had determined to resign, in despair, of being able, with all the aid of the police, to put down rowdyism. But it was a false report, for he has stood by his office, and fearlessly done his duty, and is wiping off the reproach from Baltimore, that it could not protect itself against its street marauders. If New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia will only take a few practical hints from the experience of London, they will soon give a moral power to their police, which it does not now possess.

In my next article I will give, from official documents, detailed comparisons of the crime of London and New York, to support the position which I have laid down, that there are more crimes of violence to the person committed in New York than in London; and the statistics will be worthy the attention of every citizen who has a regard to his own security. I will also show wherein the moral power of the London police consists over ours.

J. W. G.

No. II.

LONDON AND NEW YORK—THEIR CRIME AND POLICE.

I now proceed to give some statistics of crime in London and New York, and keep constantly in mind that London has two and a half millions of people, more than four times as many as New York, and covers a territory three times as large.

In order to show that the present number of our Police is inadequate to the work to be done, I state that the force is only 1,040 officers and men all told, while that of London is between 7,000 and 8,000.

To show that we have good material for a Police, if the system was improved, and that they would have no sinecure of their place, from the greater

violations of law in New York than in London, in proportion to their population, I state that in London there were arrested by its Police, for all breaches of the law and city regulations, and all matters within their cognizance, in the year 1850, 70,827 persons; while the arrests by our Police in New York, for all matters that came within their cognizance, for the year 1851, were 36,226,—more than one-half as many as London, for less than one-fourth of its population. Of that number more than 6,000 were for offences of *violence* against the *person*.

In England four-fifths of the indictable crime is theft without violence. In New York, from the official reports before me, it is just the *reverse*; the acts of violence upon the person over larcenies of property, being in the ratio of three of the former to one of the latter—a sad commentary on the rights of *personal security*.

During the year 1851, of the arrests in New York, 36 were for murder; 189 were for assaults with intent to kill, and 45 for threatening life. You may judge of the increase of murder in New York from this fact. For the six years previous to 1851, the arrests for murder averaged 15 and one-third a year, when, as just stated, in the year 1851 they were 36, just double. Those were *actual* arrests for murder. Of course that number does not include the numerous cases which our papers so often record, of persons found dead in the streets, and floating in our waters, from wounds inflicted by persons who have never been arrested, for want of knowing who the wretches were. I may safely say that such cases are of almost weekly occurrence. The Evening Post of Tuesday evening, records a case of highway robbery, with the attempt to throw the person robbed into the river.

Now what are the statistics of England in regard to the crime of murder. I have not those of London separately, but will give those of England at large. In all England and Wales (a population of fifteen millions, 25 times that of New York City,) the whole number of arrests for murder from 1835 to 1840, were 315 for the five years; from 1840 to 1845, they were 347; and from 1845 to 1850, they were 365; making an average of seventy a year for a population of fifteen millions; while New York City, in 1851, supplied 36 arrests for a little more than half a million of population. In New York, the arrests for murder for the year 1852 were also 32. Thus, while in New York arrests for murder for the last two years jumped up to double what they were for five years before; in England they just increased with a steady and almost a conventional ratio with the actual increase of population.

Up to 1822, there was no day Police in London of any kind, and the night watchmen, (the Charleys of that day,) slept most of the night in their

snug watch boxes, until they were overturned and awakened by the gay boy of London, in their sprees on their way home from taverns, full of liquor and fun. Their was neither physical nor moral force in the parish watchmen of those days.

But that we may not be discouraged in our efforts to make New York as safe and as orderly a City as London, I annex extracts from a recent English work before me, as to the condition of England at the beginning of the present century, while it was under the parish constabulary, and before they were blessed with their present admirable system of police. And what a picture of violence and crime London must then have presented!

“The lowest blackguards were accustomed to assemble round the doors of places of worship, to insult those who were going in. Gangs of fifty or sixty boys used to gamble on Sundays in the streets; indecent songs were openly sung in public thoroughfares. Bad as the dens of infamy in London still are, they are not to be compared with those older places of hideous profligacy, which the hardened police officers speak of as “most dreadful.” There were streets into which a constable would not have ventured without a guard of five or six men. In the most disorderly parts of the town, such as St. Giles, Covent Garden, and Holborn, the streets every Sunday morning exhibited the most outrageous scenes of fighting, drunkenness, and depravity, which the parochial authorities were unable to repress. It will hardly be credited, says a witness in 1831, that within seven years of that time, on the occasion of West End Fair, the police were set at defiance, people were robbed in open day, and women were stripped of their clothes and tied to gates by the road side. Crimes too are greatly diminished in atrocity. The large gangs of desperate robbers, thirteen or fourteen in number, now no longer exist, partly from being broken up before reaching the most advanced stage of criminality, and partly from not being driven to desperation by the unsparing resort to capital punishment. There is something quite appalling in Townsend’s evidence before the committee of 1816. He remembered when there were frequently ten or fifteen highway robberies in a week; he had seen forty persons hanged at one time, in two batches; he had heard the Lord Chief Justice Eyre charge the Grand Jury, at Kingston, thus: ‘Whatever bills you find, if the parties are convicted of a capital offence, I have made up my mind, I will execute every one;’ and, Townsend adds, he did so, he never spared a man or woman. There were four men and three women convicted of robbing a pedlar, who afterwards escaped by jumping out of the window; they were all hanged in Kent street, opposite the door,—and, I think, on Kennington Common eight more, making fifteen,—all that were convicted were hung.”

Can this be the London which I have lately seen and travelled over by day and by night, without either seeing or hearing of a case of violence, disorder, or rowdyism, in its interminable miles of streets?

As I have said, the present police force of London, including a circle

with a radius of fifteen miles each way from the Strand, is between seven and eight thousand. The whole is under the organization and direction of the General Government, (except that of the city of London *proper*.) The bureau of the Secretary of State for the Home Department has the general charge; while the actual working heads are two commissioners, with one chief superintendent, 18 superintendents, 585 sergeants, and between 6,000 and 7,000 men. 1,800 at a time are on duty by day, and 3,700 by night. During the night they are obliged to continue their rounds upon their beats (without being allowed to sit down) at the rate of two miles an hour: (hence their peculiar heavy tread, which is so striking in the stillness of the night.) There is a constant communication by telegraph from the great station at Whitehall to all parts of London, so that in two hours 5,500 men could be concentrated at any given point; radiating and connected like a spider's web from the chief office as the common centre, to all the ramifications of the great metropolis.

Everywhere, by day and by night, you see the policeman of London conspicuous from his uniform; in every emergency you can find one at the instant and on the very spot where required. They seem to spring up, as it were, from the very ground, when they are wanted; not, as with us, where a person may be assaulted, knocked down, or robbed, and you will seek for a policeman in vain; if one should be in the neighborhood, you would not know him from his dress, nor unless you were near enough to see the little star on his breast. In London you see them every where; they have charge of the Houses of Parliament, of the London docks, the naval yards, the Palaces, the Tower, the Parks, the Theatres, the gardens, and the Steamboat and Railway stations, and they everywhere throng the streets. They regulate the Omnibus drivers, the Cabmen, the crowds of vehicles that fill the streets. In fact, you find them as the great public regulators of that mass of people; and by their *moral* more than by their physical power, they have introduced a system of public manners and public decorum which we may well imitate. Every man in London seems to pay a deference to the rights of others, thus begetting a general tone of public manners; and I remarked more than once to my countrymen, that the Londoners were emphatically a law-loving and law-abiding people: a phrase which we are in the habit of arrogating *exclusively* to ourselves.

To show how they attend to the minutiae of business, a friend of mine told me that he saw a Policeman stop an omnibus, lift up the collar of one of the horses, and thus address the driver:—"I told you yesterday not to have that horse out again until his neck got well; if you bring him out tomorrow I will arrest you."

With all their power and consciousness of power, there is nothing rude,

brusque, or overbearing, in their manner, but every way the reverse. They are emphatically the stranger's friend, and take the greatest pains and pleasure to put them on their way, and to give information and aid in the transaction of their business. Their vigilance is shown by the small number of thefts that were committed in the Crystal Palace, at the late Exhibition in London, which was visited by upwards of six millions of people; there were only *eight* cases of picking pockets, and *ten* of pilfering, although there are said to be 6,000 professional thieves in London.

The Police is divided into three separate departments, although all under one general head. 1st, the Preventive or Patrolling Police, which includes its great body. 2d, the Detective Police, whose sole occupation is to hunt out criminals after crime has been committed, and who, under various disguises, mingle among the quarters and haunts of thieves and felons and their associates, and with the sagacity and instinct of the blood-hound, ferret out crime. The third branch is the River Police, whose sole duty is to watch and protect the Thames and its millions of property and miles of extent. The want of a River Police with us I will make the subject of a special article.

The wages of the London Policeman are three shillings sterling a day, less than six shillings of our money, while the total expense of the whole seven thousand in 1850, was £380,000 sterling, about one million eight hundred thousand dollars. Our men get six hundred dollars a year, twice as much as those of London, and our 1,040 cost us two-thirds of a million a year.

The Commissioners in London started with a high standard of qualification required for their policemen, and they have maintained it; in that respect they have greatly the advantage over us. The candidates for the place must be men of character and intelligence; they must be young and vigorous, sober and ambitious, of a forbearing temper, and of unquestioned honesty. Before they are received they undergo a medical examination, to see that they are sound in body, and have a constitution which can stand the required duty. Of the candidates not one in three possess sufficient physical strength for the labor to which they are subjected.

They next undergo a moral examination; their character must be above all suspicion, so that the warrant of a policeman is a sure guaranty that his life has been irreproachable. That examination includes temper: for mildness of disposition and self-control are indispensable requisitions.

He next undergoes the intellectual ordeal, for his strength and good character are unavailing, unless he has education and intelligence sufficient to understand his duties, so as (unlike Dogberry of old,) not to interfere with the just rights of the citizen.

When received, they are placed under military instruction; they are drilled to walk in regular and compact bodies, with the lock-step; to march and counter-march, in platoons, companies, and large bodies; to exercise with the broad-sword, so that, in case of public commotions, they may exchange their short club (which is never visible) for the sword, and be as effectual as the military in suppressing riots. They are never allowed fire-arms. You may see them in London any hour of the day, being detailed on duty, in squads of six to a dozen, marching in silence with their lock-step, and by their quiet demeanor, and simple, neat uniform, inspiring respect.

Such is the police of London. In my next article, I will endeavor to point out the defects in our own system, and the remedies. J. W. G.

No. III.

LONDON AND NEW YORK—THEIR CRIME AND POLICE.

THE NECESSITY OF A DISTINGUISHING COSTUME.

From the facts set forth in my preceding articles, I presume that every man who has read them is satisfied that *some* changes in our Police system are necessary, to add to its efficiency, to meet the rapid increase of crimes of *personal violence* in this city, passing by, for the present, depredations upon property.

We have in our city as good material for forming an efficient Police, as the city of London. There are plenty of young men of intelligence, of character, of physical energy and courage, who would gladly accept the position; for the compensation and the office are honorable.

We have now at the head of our city police a man of unquestionable efficiency, intelligence and character, a favorite with all parties, and a partisan to none. A man, who by the faithful discharge of his duties, has had for years, in his responsible and trying situation, the confidence of the whole community. Only give Mr. Matsell proper powers, and he will find the men to give us such a police as will make New York too hot for the numerous classes of felons, thieves and law-breakers who now infest it, who commit the most gross outrages upon our citizens, who depredate upon our property, and make night *hideous*.

We have in our present police a large proportion of men worthy of their place, and it is not just to make a wholesale condemnation of the present incumbents. There are no doubt many among them who do not come up to the proper standard of requirements, either physical, intellectual or moral. Let them be gradually dropped, either by their terms expiring, or if they have not the requisite qualities, by discharging them.

I will now suggest wherein our present system is deficient, and what I consider are the remedies.

First: The body is *not sufficiently numerous*. We are utterly deficient of a River Police. We have miles of wharves, and millions of property almost entirely unprotected. Our mercantile and business men pay a heavy and private taxation for night watchmen of ships and goods, when they ought to have protection from the public for the tax they pay for supporting the police. So little confidence have those in the upper part of the city in any benefit from the police in protecting their houses at night from burglars, that a private police or watch is now very generally being established in the region of Union square, Madison square, Gramercy park, and a large portion of the eighteenth ward, which costs each house six dollars a year, when we pay heavy taxes for that very security. The whole body of police comprises 1,040, officers and men. From which deduct about 150 for captains, assistant captains and sergeants, and deduct the average of twenty-three men a day for sickness, and you have 867 policemen in the ranks. Of these, 168 are detailed for special duty such as attending on the courts and ferries, as stage, hack, and cart inspectors, and inspectors of junk shops and pawnbrokers, &c., as bell-ringers, dock-masters, and street inspectors, and you have 679 men of rank and file for general patrol, besides the officers; half of that number from sunrise to sunset are allowed to be off duty; so that the force of patrolling men actually on duty at any given time, by day or night, is utterly inadequate to the expanse of the city, even if our authorities do not establish a river police, which is indispensable.

I therefore suggest that the number be increased by adding 500 more, or 300 more at least; especially, if you wish protection to our piers and slips. It will cost, of course, more than we pay at present. The compensation now allowed of \$600 a year to the men, and more to the officers, is fair and honorable. Now if it does add to our taxes, we will have something to show for it. We are always taxed heavily for something or other; that seems to be our destiny; and if we, the people, do not get some good of the money, others will. It had better go that way than in being squandered, (including pickings and stealings,) by the hangers-on of the City Hall. I therefore say, *increase* the number, so as to make it tell; and the increased expense will be saved, by not being called upon to expend an equal amount in trying, convicting and supporting criminals,—let alone the improvement in the morals of the city.

The *second* remedy I propose is, to alter the *mode* of their *appointment*. It is now done by nominations from the Aldermen and Assistants of each

ward to the Mayor, who *must* appoint from such nominations. The law now before the Legislature retains the vice of the present system, viz., that all nominations must come from the Aldermen and Assistants, and from no other persons. Neither the Mayor nor the Chief of Police have any power to appoint a man, who is not first presented by the Alderman and his Assistant; consequently they are very often driven to *Hobson's choice*. What is the natural consequence? A bargain is struck, expressly or impliedly, before the election, between the Alderman and his Assistant and the would-be policeman—you make *us* Aldermen, and we will make you policeman.

Then the machinery is set to work in some corner grocery or groggery, a primary meeting is called, the officers of the meeting and committees are all arranged and packed before hand, everything goes on smoothly, the committees report their candidates, election day comes on, the Aldermen and Assistants are elected, and they are hardly warm in their seats, when nominations are sent in for their friends, the would-be policemen. That is the natural course of events, and I venture to say that in numerous instances it is the *actual* state of things. Now the man who is *responsible* for the character of the police, should have the *nomination* of his men. By the proposed law, the chief only has a check, viz.: by refusing his *certificate* to the men whom the Aldermen and Assistant may nominate.

I would reverse it, by altering the proposed law thus: let the Mayor still have the power of appointment, but let the nomination to the Mayor come from the Chief of Police, give him his own men, and let the Alderman and Assistant, if they must have any thing to do with it, have a check upon his nominations by requiring the candidate to have their certificate of approval of the chief's nomination, before the Mayor shall appoint them: and that is the extent of the power I would give them; the proposed law should be altered accordingly.

If the Chief of Police has the nomination, you may depend upon it you will have a higher standard of qualifications in the men than you now have. That the standard which the Aldermen and Assistants have established is not a very high one, is apparent from the fact that from the first day of July, 1851, to the first day of July, 1852, the number of complaints *against policemen* was 286, of which 206 were *suspended from pay*—six were *dismissed from office*—twelve *resigned* after complaint was made, and sixty-two of the complaints were dismissed. A still better mode of appointment is that now proposed as an amendment to Mr. Shaw's bill, viz.: by a Board of Commissioners, consisting of the Mayor, Recorder, and Chief of Police.

The *third* remedy I recommend is, to make the appointments during *good behavior*, instead of the fixed term of four years as it now is. And, by a singular coincidence, those four years generally expire about the time of

the elections. You, therefore, have the political jugglery and bargaining of which I have spoken. If a man is worthy of his place and has gained experience, keep him in for any number of years; but if he proves to be unworthy and inefficient, do not have him saddled on the department for four years, but out with him at once. This remedy is introduced in the law now before the Legislature.

The *fourth* and last remedy which I propose, and which is paramount to all others, is, that the whole police department, men and officers, should all be required to wear a *distinguishing costume*. This is the crowning remedy of all, and without which you may *double* the number of your men, you may have men of a *higher standard*, but, unless you make them *distinguishable* by their dress to our citizens and strangers, the radical vice in the system will not be cured. In London and in every city of Europe, the police have a dress by which they may be known at a distance. That of the police of London is very neat and simple; it consists of blue cloth pantaloons over boots—a blue cloth coat, single breasted, with white buttons up to the neck—standing collar, and the number of the man and the company to which he is attached are worked in white worsted upon it. A varnished leather belt around his waist, and (owing to the frequency of rain) a crown oil skin over the top of his hat, with a large cape of the same over his shoulders in case of rain. They, therefore, all look and dress alike—the dress is respectable, and they *feel* respectable. It inspires respect in others, knowing that they respect themselves. Their costume is a sure guaranty that they will never disgrace it; they know that they are known by it, and, therefore, while they are watching others, that they are watched themselves. They take good care, therefore, not to enter tipling shops, or visit any places or do any acts which will disgrace their uniform. It strikes fear into thieves and felons; and the great *moral* power of the policeman of London in preventing crimes lies in *his coat*.

I appeal to the experience of every man for the truth of what I say, that there is no *moral* power in our police—there is nothing in their dress that strikes any terror into the thief or felon—there is nothing in the dress of our policemen to distinguish them from the mass of people among whom they are mingling. You cannot tell them by day, unless you are near enough to see the twinkling little star; and when night comes, that little star does not shine out, but is in *total eclipse*. I ask, if you want a policeman in the night time, how are you to know him or find him? How can you tell at night whether the man whom you see standing at a corner, or walking slowly along, is a policeman or a robber?

If you want one suddenly, by night or by day, where will you look for him? And look at their style of dress; some with hats, some with caps,

some with coats like Joseph's of old, parti-colored. If they were mustered together they would look like Fallstaff's Regiment. They inspire no respect, they create no fear. To prove that, look again at the statistics. Hardly a day passes but the thief or felon turns round and attacks the policeman, and during the last year they actually killed two or three of them, and wounded many others. From the first of July, 1851, to 1st July, 1852, there were 224 arrests for assaults upon policemen. There is as much difference between the police *without* costume, and the police *with*, as there is between a company of militia in citizens dress and a dress company of a regular army. This was so well known, that when our present system of police was established, (and I believe under Mayor Harper,) our policemen *had* the precise costume which I have described, of the London police. It was of blue, with the single-breasted coat, with white buttons and standing collar, upon which M. P. (Municipal Police) was wrought in white worsted.

It was discontinued,—why, I never knew. If the motive was, that they might not be known, the disuse of it well answered the purpose.

A distinguishing uniform costume will, I am sure, add to their respectability. They ought to, and will be proud to wear it. The policeman should be honored and respected; for his situation is a responsible and honorable one; he is the chosen guardian and protector of our lives and property; and no well disposed man would object to wear it, for he would feel that it gave him a moral force over that worthless class of the community upon whom he must impress a sense of his power. I venture to say that the policeman with his costume on would not be assaulted, as he now is, two days out of three during the year. I know, and have seen and felt myself, the moral power of the costume of the London police; and it is, therefore, because I know its necessity, that I wish to impress upon our Mayor and Chief of Police, and the members of the Legislature, its paramount importance. In itself it will cure a number of abuses; without it, my firm conviction is, that no system will have any efficiency. I have suggested all the remedies, which, it will be seen, are easily applied.

In my next and last article on the subject, I will take up exclusively the necessity of a River Police.

J. W. G.

No. IV.

THE NECESSITY OF A RIVER POLICE.

In this my last article on the subject of our Police, I call upon the Ship-owners and Importers of New York, to urge upon our Common Council the formation of a RIVER POLICE, so indispensable to protect their property; and the establishment of which has been so long neglected. Every merchant who reads this article will bear me out, that the startling facts which I will state, are true, and that their interests have been overlooked by their City Fathers. I have it from the official head of our Police, that there is more larceny of property committed in a line East of South street and West of West street, than in the great body of the city between those lines; in other words, that there is more stealing on our wharves, slips and piers, than there is *in the body* of the city. The wharves and the piers are the great *nurseries* of thieves. There be *land rats* and *water rats*, land thieves and *water thieves*. There are three hundred professed and professional thieves, the scenes of whose depredations are our wharves and rivers. They are scientifically divided into two classes, *dock* thieves and *river* thieves. The former are generally younger, and are *apprentices* to the art; the latter are *master workmen*, older, most daring and skilful in their depredations, and generally go armed to take life in case they are detected. To this latter class belonged the three desperadoes, Saul, Howlet and Johnson, who were professed river thieves, and who being detected by the watch of the vessel into whose cabin they had entered to plunder, deliberately murdered him, for which the two former were hung a month ago, and the latter is in the State Prison for life. They were types of a large class now existing on our wharves and rivers, and who at the time I am writing this article (past midnight) are prowling about our vessels, in their nefarious schemes of plunder.

By a River Police, I mean a branch of our regular police, which shall be *exclusively* devoted to the watching and protecting our ships at our wharves, and the millions of property which are nightly exposed on them. In London they had a River police on the Thames, to protect its commerce, as early as the year 1800, thirty years before Sir Robert Peel introduced his admirable system into the body of London; and until a few years past, it was perfectly independent of the Municipal Police but is now incorporated into it.

In the City of New York we have no *River* Police at all. We have on the margin of our two rivers six miles at least of wharves, piers, and slips, and millions of property without any protection except that which can casually be given by the *mén* of our police in patrolling their rounds on West

and South street; but our long and numerous piers have not a man stationed *on them*. It is not merely to protect *property* that a River Police is required; it is to protect life, and those who are compelled to be on or near the Rivers at night from robbery and violence; for some of the most daring outrages have been committed on and near our wharves; and no doubt many a poor fellow, emigrant and sailor, has been first robbed of his money, and then thrown into the River, for dead men tell no tales. This accounts for a great number of the hundreds of bodies which are annually found floating on our Rivers, of which we only have the stereotyped verdict of the Coroner's inquest, "found drowned."

Another subject connected with this, which calls for the immediate action of our Common Council, and which has been too long neglected, is the want of lighting our piers with gas. There is not a light upon any pier on either River; and the darkness of the night shelters the River thief in his pilferings and the River robber in his plunder.

What are the ship owners and merchants compelled to do, to protect their interests? Hire each man, his private watch, to guard his ship and his goods. For their night watches our merchants are taxed hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, and yet hundreds of thousands of dollars of property are annually stolen from them.

It is not the fault of our Chief of Police that we are destitute of a river police, and that our piers are in Egyptian darkness. He has several times brought the subject before the Common Council, in his reports to the Mayor, and as yet nothing has been done. He sends his reports to the Mayor; the Mayor sends them to the Common Council, and the Common Council resolve that they be accepted and laid on the table, or rather, throw them *under* the table, and that is the last we hear of them.

I will now give some extracts from the official reports of the Chief of Police to the Mayor; and if the people are not startled by what is nightly taking place in our rivers, they are torpid indeed.

In his report of the 2d of September, 1850, he calls attention to this evil, larcenies on the rivers, which has so long been a subject of solicitude with his department, but which, with his means, he has not the power to abate. He says "that the river thieves who infest the slips and harbor, by means of the boats with which they are provided, are enabled to escape detection and arrest."

After showing the millions of property that are yearly landed on our wharves, and much of which is necessarily exposed at night, he sums up by saying, "that at least one million of dollars' worth of goods at a time are upon the piers and slips within our corporate limits, independent of the immense number of vessels afloat upon our waters. He is compelled to

say that the mercantile community has not received the supervision of their property while on board ship, or on our piers, which [its magnitude and importance demand. He states that the river thieves pursue their nefarious operations with the most systematic perseverance, and manifest a shrewdness and adroitness which can only be attained by long practice and the impunity they have for years enjoyed. He says that nothing comes amiss to them, from a ship's anchor to a case of silk goods, a mainsail or a bale of cotton. In their boats, under the cover of night, they prowl around the wharves and vessels in the stream, and dexterously snatch up every piece of loose property left for a moment unguarded. In conjunction with the dock thieves, they plan and execute audacious robberies even in broad day; and that ship-keeper must be a sharp one, who is not often entrapped by the cunning of their confederates to some remissness of duty sufficient for their unlawful purpose. The river thieves (he says) procure the skiffs, yawls, or scows, with which they skulk silently around the city (with muffled oars) during the hours of darkness and repose, from confederates who keep small groceries, low grade boarding houses or junk shops, in streets adjacent to the rivers, who buy their ill-gotten plunder. They not only steal (he goes on to say) from piers and vessels, but they rob the stores along South and West streets, their plan being to watch the policeman on patrol, and after he has passed the block the stolen goods are hurried down to the wharf and dropped into the boat in waiting, and which instantly pulls off into the stream and baffles pursuit and detection." He says, "I have conclusive evidence that some of these thieving boats come from a distance, and that not unfrequently a good sized smack is lying off in the harbor, which acts as a *receiving* vessel for the night, shifting her anchorage with the early dawn. He states that the vessels which suffer most belong to foreign ports. They are boarded at night by one of the gang, who noiselessly casts into the water small anchors, blocks, small chain cables, hawsers, logwood, pig iron, and any other article that will sink; and after the vessel has left the port, the articles are raised by grappling irons, and sold with impunity. Barrels of beef, pork and cheese, firkins and pails of butter, are stolen from canal and tow boats. Ship yards are robbed of their tools, of iron bolts, spikes and copper. Instances have come to my knowledge where they have butchered swine, sheep and calves, while penned up on the ends of the dock, and carried them off without being detected. These pirates have been known to unshackle the cables of vessels ready for sea, and who could not stay to drag their anchors; and when they had gone, they would get up the anchor and sell it. They went on board the ship *Harbinger* at night, and removed the large bell, and carried it away."

"Cases have been known where private watchmen having been employ-

ed to watch liquor lying on the docks, the river thieves have gone underneath the bridges of the docks at low water, and by boring holes through the casks, have emptied them of their contents without being detected. Young confederates assist them, and divide the spoils. Merchandize landed from a vessel and piled upon the dock, is watched, and at a favorable opportunity rolled over into the river, when the river thieves quickly transfer the articles to their boats."

"It becomes a matter of the first importance, not only to the commerce of our city, but to the best interests of the community generally, in preserving the morals of the city, that some effectual remedy should be adopted without delay. Then, in addition to the large amount of property which can be saved from pillage, a large number of persons who now subsist, and even grow rich, by purchasing stolen merchandize, will be *compelled* to become honest, and follow more worthy pursuits. He winds up that report by requesting the organization of a River police, which shall be furnished with boats, to pursue the water thief upon his own element."

In the Report of the Chief of Police to the Mayor, of November 15th, 1851, he says, (speaking of the piers being without light,) "As they are at present, it is time lost by a Policeman to patrol the piers, as he cannot detect or frustrate the operations of the River depredators who are screened from his view by the darkness of the night. In the reports made to me, it is stated that thirty-five persons were rescued from drowning in three months; but these cases have mostly occurred during the day time, whereas, the Coroner's Inquest can better tell, how many more might have been saved, had the piers of our City been properly lighted. They are traversed at night by sailors and emigrants, also by boatmen, and by hands on board of coasters and foreign vessels whose crews live on board. These persons, he says, are constantly exposed to accidents, and frequently in passing on board of their respective vessels, are precipitated into the River, many of whom would undoubtedly be saved, if the policemen were furnished with the necessary lights to enable them to see."

In his Report of May 27th, 1851, the Chief of Police justly says, "if the tradesman is protected from the sneaking thieves who prowl around by day, or the daring burglar who seeks his prey under the cover of night, the merchants and ship owners whose property is necessarily much more exposed, have a right to demand an equal share of protection."

Since I had written the above, I understand that this important subject of a River Police, and of lighting the Piers, will be brought up before the Board of Aldermen at their next session, the Board of Assistants having already passed upon it. I do beseech the Aldermen to pass a law promptly, which shall give protection to our mercantile and shipping interests. I have now done

my duty in bringing before the public the defects in our Police system, and the remedies to be applied, which are both few and simple. If the public is not aroused, and the authorities do not act, it is not my fault. But the public *is* aroused. I have reason to know that since I have called public attention to the subject, the authorities are alarmed, and our Aldermen feel conscious that they have not paid sufficient attention to the qualifications requisite in the men whom they have nominated to the Mayor to serve in the Police. I am happy to say that the Mayor is up and doing, and is alive to the importance of reform. I am gratified to learn that, within the last two weeks, the Mayor has rejected a number of nominations, and that the Aldermen now name better men, and that before nomination they are happy to consult with the Mayor and with the Chief, as to the men they would like to have nominated.

But my firm conviction is, that all reform is useless without a costume, by which they may be distinguished from the body of the people. I am happy to say that, from various communications I have received, *public opinion* is *universal* in its favor, and *clamorous* for its adoption. I have reason to believe, that the Mayor and others in authority are convinced of its necessity, and are ready to adopt it; and I am pleased to hear that the great body of the police themselves, men and officers, all who wish to appear respectable, and thereby inspire respect in others, are desirous of having it. It will, doubtless, be opposed by those who may not wish to be known when on duty, and of such I say, "off with their heads."

Albany is ahead of us on that subject. I understand, that the police of that city has recently adopted a costume, which adds much to their efficiency and respectability. I therefore trust that those who have the power here will adopt it.

J. W. G.

[ADDENDA.]

Since this pamphlet had gone to press, a document has just come into my possession being the return for the year 1852, to the Governors of the Alms House, of the number of persons *actually received* into the prisons of our city during that year. It is a *fearful* document—showing *an increase* and *mass of crime* in our very midst, that is heart-rending to the philanthropist, and most alarming to the citizen.

I make a few extracts from it:—

The number of actual commitments to the *Tombs* during that year, were 19,064, men and women, black and white; in the other two district prisons, 6,501, making the grand total of persons committed to our prisons, *in this city*, for the last year, *twenty-five thousand three hundred and sixty-five*; in other words, supposing our population to be 550,000, it comprises more than a *twentieth* part of our whole pop-

ulation, of which number 5,601 were *natives*, and 19,764 were foreigners, and these are independent of those charged with crime who have found bail without being committed to prison.

If these facts do not shew the necessity of a more numerous and efficient Police than we now have, and a Police that must be clothed in a costume that shall have a *moral* power upon the mass of *foreigners*, who have been accustomed to see the Police of *their own* country in a costume, and *fear* it, and *obey* it, then, though one rose from the dead, they would not believe.

J. W. G.