

CHIEF CONSTABLES CONVENTION.

The Convention of the Chief Constables Association of Canada was opened in the City Hall of Montreal with an address of welcome from his worship the Mayor, Commissioner Marcell and Chief Belanger of the City Police, to which the President of the Association (Chief W. R. Whatley, of Hamilton) made an excellent reply.

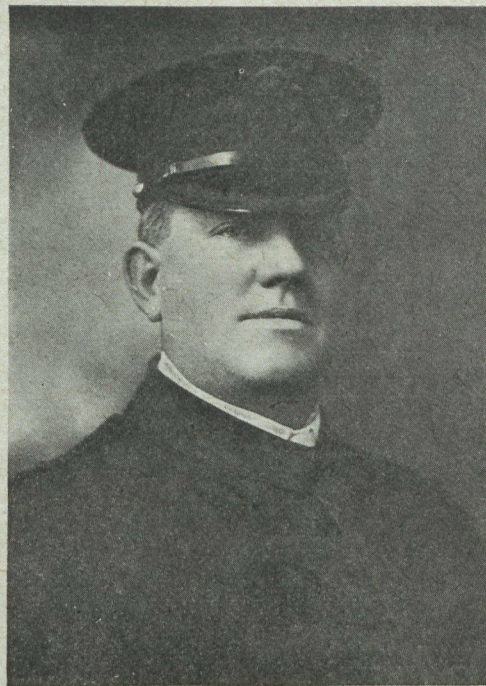
The first business session of the association was held in the afternoon at the Windsor Hotel when Chief Whatley delivered his presidential address. The president, in the course of his remarks, pointed out that the past year had been an exceptionally busy one for police officials, the closing months of 1920 and the early months of this year having witnessed a wave of crime which would probably not find example in the memory of their oldest member. The automobile, he noted, was a prominent factor in this phenomenon, armed youths figuring largely in the criminal exploits. Due to these causes the police profession, during the last twelve months, had been particularly arduous and hazardous. Several good men had sacrificed their lives and many were wounded in the fulfilment of their duties. Thanks to their Association of Chief Constables and the earnest co-operation obtaining among them, he thought it could be said that the worst was over, for the present at least. The speaker also acknowledged an indebtedness to assistance rendered by the public and the press.

Suggestion was made in the president's address that the association should frame a recommendation to the Minister of Justice that the provincial penitentiaries be officially designated as "execution centres." As argument for the necessity of this reform, he cited the unfortunate occurrences involved in the escape of Garfield from the Woodstock jail, and the escape of Frank McCulloch from the jail at Toronto. He also mentioned the terrible Kowalski case at Hamilton and the Garfield escape as argument for his plea that the assembled chiefs should pass some resolution, along the lines suggested, looking to a correction of these troubles, in the centralization of responsibility for the guarding of prisoners condemned to capital punishment. He observed that the Provincial Sheriffs' Association of Ontario was already on record in favor of the suggested reform.

Reckless Driving.

The Chief suggested that the Criminal Code or Motor Vehicles Act be amended so as to give the police magistrates or judges power to cancel the licenses of persons deporting themselves in such a way as to become a menace to public safety, by reckless driving, speeding, drunkenness, etc. He also suggested the advisability of empowering a traffic officer to order the inspection of brakes on motor vehicles when he had reason to suspect they were defective. He further suggested that insurance companies might withhold risks until satisfied that the applicant was competent to drive.

Accentuation was also given in the address to the desirability of the closest co-operation between federal, provincial and municipal police activity, in this connection suggesting that a federal reserve force of several hundred trained policemen should be held



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in readiness for dispatch to any part of the Dominion in time of need.

Altogether five sessions were held at which a number of excellent papers were read and important resolutions passed. Those papers, of special interest to the municipal councils, will be published from time to time in the columns of this journal. One of the resolutions urging the authorities to send condemned murderers to the penitentiary to await execution, instead of as at present, in the county jails, gave an opportunity to one or two of the chiefs to express themselves strongly on the wasted sympathy of the public towards notorious criminals. Inspector McKenney, of Toronto, referring to this attitude as "maudlin sympathy" said:

"People must either be with the criminal or the non-criminal class," he said. "There is no neutral ground. And those who make reflections upon jailers when a criminal escapes should bear in mind how thankless a job a jailer's is when clergymen, members of parliament and prominent citizens are all signing petitions for the release or mitigation of sentence upon some notorious criminal, whose escape is further aided by direct help from those outside. It is inconceivable, yet true, that the very jurymen who have found a man guilty of murder and have sat through a trial in which the most damnable facts are shown up against him, will next day sign their names to petitions for his release. The position is unthinkable; discouraging alike to the heads of the police departments, the constable who makes the arrest—sometimes at great personal risk—and to all persons of a sane and level head who see no use in laws if they are to be continually tampered with to benefit some murderer."

As regards the repeated offences of auto drivers, of which one of the most frequent and obnoxious is that of driving the car when under the influence of