

Notes on Recent Cases

WHILE MANY fires of incendiary origin are reported from different parts of the Dominion from time to time, it is fortunately seldom that a deliberate series of outbreaks such as occurred recently at Antigonish, Nova Scotia, come to our notice; for in the short space of eighteen days no less than thirteen fires were reported to the authorities.

Investigations were immediately commenced from the time that the first fire was reported but due to the absence of clues and lack of apparent motive, the matter of determining the identity of the guilty person presented some difficulty.

After elimination of the majority of suspects, the question that had to be decided by the member of the Force investigating the case was whether or not a particular individual could set four fires on a certain night when in fact he was supposed to be undergoing a short term of imprisonment in the local gaol.

After taking into consideration all details as to how the fires were prepared and set, also the location of the various outbreaks, the member conducting the investigation came to the conclusion that an individual named Neil McDonald—commonly known as "Felix the Cat"—was the person who had started the fires, notwithstanding the fact that he was apparently confined to gaol and that the gaoler had stated that he was suffering incarceration on the night in question. Despite this statement, however, the investigator continued his enquiries and decided that a good purpose would be served in interrogating the person he suspected—who by that time was at liberty, having terminated his period of imprisonment. On being interviewed, McDonald at first denied all knowledge of the fires but later admitted his guilt and confessed that he was responsible for twelve of the outbreaks. The mystery surrounding the setting of some of the fires, during the time McDonald was serving his prison sentence, was dispelled when he disclosed how he had been able to escape from the lock-up, light the fires, and then return to his cell! He was subsequently charged with arson and was sentenced to seven years imprisonment at Dorchester Penitentiary.

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In field military training, recruits are always instructed in the importance of taking advantage of "cover" in the form of intervening high ground, when manoeuvres are carried out in the open as distinct from trench warfare.

This same principle was applied by members of Amherst, N.S., detachment, when blockading a roadway along which it was expected two liquor laden vehicles would proceed during the night of June 9th, 1938.

It was ascertained that the loaded vehicles would probably be escorted by a pilot car, the driver of which would signal back if police patrols were encountered, also that the loaded cars would trail each other at considerable distances apart.

The police patrol decided to place their blockade at a point just over the reverse side of a rise in the highway, so that, in the event of the pilot car being first stopped and identified, the driver's signals would not be visible to the loaded cars. In due course the car was intercepted and the occupant was recognized. He immediately got out and waved his flashlight in the