

BOSTON POLICE COURT.

LARSEN REPORTS SOME OF HIS EXPERIENCES IN THEM.

He Finds that Humor is a Characteristic of Magistrates There as Well as Here—The Probation System and How It Does a Large Amount of Good.

BOSTON, Nov. 5.—Police magistrates in all parts of the continent have a weakness for getting in jokes at the expense of people who come before them.

Humphrey Gilbert one old time magistrate of St. John had a keen sense of humor and gave readers of our local papers some choice entertainment on days when there was no news. B. Lester Peters, who was as dignified a man as ever sat on a bench anywhere, also had this weakness, and many a time when reporters were half asleep while the evidence in a tiresome case was being put in he would size up a witness, and lead him on until his answers to the questions were of a decidedly amusing character.

Mr. Peters enjoyed a joke, but aside from a twitching of the lips he never allowed the dignity of the court to be impaired. He had the happy faculty of bringing out the funny business of what was looked upon as a very serious matter, in a way that precluded any stopping over, as it were, but enlivened the proceedings and made the case worth printing.

The present police magistrate, Mr. Ritchie, as everyone knows, takes a joke and will have it, so that the St. John police court has always been a fertile field for good newspaper stories.

Without doubt the greatest and most famous judge in this respect was the late Justice Duffy of New York, and he has had his imitators all over the country.

It is hardly fair to say that as anyone who has had any police court experience can readily understand how judges fall into this habit of looking at the humorous side of life. They can't help it. The police court is as different from other courts of justice as a variety show is compared to a Henry Irving production.

Here they have all sorts and conditions of men, women and children—all in a box and anxious to get out of it the easiest way possible; offering the most remarkable excuses, telling the most plausible, or most improbable stories. Men and women who are their own lawyers, questioning the witnesses who testify against them, and nine times out of ten telling the judge a story he has heard every day for a year.

The victims of the police court in the main, are of peculiar make-up. If this were not they would not be there. That expression of injured innocence is all prevailing, and the judge with experience who sees beneath the surface, often gives judgment, and imposes sentences in a way, which to the ordinary mind is surprising—sometimes apparently unjust, and unwarranted, or again, venient past all understanding.

With this knowledge of human nature which develops a keen sense of the ridiculous, the magistrate is prone to go even further than is absolutely necessary.

There are seven or eight judges of the municipal court in Boston, all of whom sit in the big building on Pemberton Square, and hold two criminal sessions at the same time every day. With one or two exceptions, all of these have a keen sense of humor, and gratify it to a greater or less extent.

Judge Hardy is the best story maker of the seven. He is a dignified looking man, with a stern countenance, and deliberateness of speech which seems to expect of those who come before him. He is sarcastic, sometimes to the extent of being cruel, especially when he demands direct answers to direct questions.

He does not spare the police, and when a new man from one of the suburban stations—where officers do not have the experience of those in the city proper—come before him he is apt to be extremely cynical if they make a slip-up in presenting their cases.

I was in court a few days ago, when an officer from a Back Bay station—about a mile and a half from the courthouse—had a larceny case before him. It was the first case he had had of more importance than an ordinary drunk, and when he began to put on his witnesses the judge asked where the stolen property was.

"It's at the station," said the officer. "Why, didn't you bring it here?" "Because I understood the prisoner was going to plead guilty."

"Well, he hasn't pleaded guilty." "I know your honor, but I might run to the station and get it if necessary."

"How long do you think it would take you to run down to the station?" asked the judge, with emphasis on the "run."

The officer saw the slip he had made, but the judge continued the case until the afternoon, so that he could "run" down to the station and get the stolen articles.

Another day an elderly lady and her daughter were both witnesses in a case, and the former could not restrain herself from talking rapidly when answering the questions put to her, despite the fact that the judge had told her several times to go slowly.

When the daughter took the stand, she also started off at a rapid rate, when the judge interrupted her.

"Don't talk so fast," he said, "we want to try this case slowly. You see you are talking after your mother."

And so it goes on day after day. When the vast amount of business transacted by these judges is considered, remembrance of faces and former cases is remarkable. In the first session of the Municipal court, today, for instance there were 107 drunks besides those before the court for other offences.

Every one of these cases was investigated before the prisoners were brought into court, and in these respects Massachusetts, and particularly Boston, has a system different from and far ahead of any on the American continent.

There are seven probation officers, one of whom is a woman, and they have a constant watch over petty offenders. When a man or woman is arrested for drunkenness, for instance they visit them in their cell in the toms, learn their name and address, and look up the prisoner's record. They start out at 6 o'clock in the morning and look up all the addresses given and find out all about the prisoners. When each name is called, the probation officer makes his report on it. First offenders are discharged. Their names are recorded, however, for future reference. If the officers find that a man does not treat his family right they take him in hand; he is placed on probation and ordered to report to the court at a certain time, and if he does not carry out the promises he made, he will be sent to prison. In cases where the man does not give his wife sufficient to support the family, the probation officers make an arrangement by which she gets a certain sum from his employer, and the man has either to submit to such an arrangement or stand the chance of serving a sentence. The probation officers accomplish reforms in many ways similar to this, and the extent of their work may be imagined, when I say they have from 600 to 700 people under their care all the time. The police also have an eye on these probationers.

The greatest recommendation a man coming before the Municipal court can have is that he works every day. The judges have no use for idlers and seem to think they may as well spend their time on the Island as anywhere else.

But in Boston a man has every chance in the world to do what is right, so far as the police court judges are concerned. R. G. LARSEN.

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These are the figures given by Mr. J. L. Hayden, manager of the Institute in this city, and he claims that in ninety-five per cent of these cases there has been a permanent cure of the drug or liquor habit. It is a great record, and one can easily understand that the Murphy Cure comes to stay in every city where it is established. It is now recognized as a permanent institution in St. John, and has finally been adopted in quarters which are in every way adapted to the carrying on of its useful work.

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Manager Hayden, who has been in charge for several months, is very enthusiastic in his work, and as he is a good talker, one has no difficulty in finding out just what the Murphy cure means, as well as what it has done and is doing. In conversation with a representative of PROGRESS, the other day, he gave some information which will interest many who may have had this or that erroneous idea of the institution, its system of cure and its results.

"In the first place" said he, "the institution in St. John has been making rapid advances for the last three or four months. People are beginning to know it better than they did and to have a true conception of the way in which the work is carried on. They have seen the satisfactory results in the cases which have been treated, and we are in receipt of many letters speaking in the warmest terms of the good we have accomplished. I want it understood that our work makes no distinction of class or creed, but is for the good of humanity. It is not under the auspices of any church. We do not ask who or what a patient is. All who come here are accorded equal kindness and consideration whether they be rich or poor. They are received on an equal footing, but, of course, can consult their own tastes as to the matter of association after they come here. Our facilities are such that a person can have perfect seclusion if he so desires and be treated in absolute privacy. In the case of ladies—for we have some of them at times, chiefly from the drug habit—there are female attendants and surroundings which ensure every comfort."

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That the Murphy Cure has done and is doing a great and noble work is evident to all who have had any acquaintance with the evils caused by liquor and drugs in this part of Canada. It is an institution which not only sets a man on the path to a better life, but it puts him in such a condition of mind and body that he will stay there if he has true manhood in his nature. It places him where he was before he acquired the habit, save that he has the additional safeguard of experience and a realization that intoxicating stimulants are to be abhorred as poison. The Cure has freed him from bondage and given him strength to maintain his freedom.

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