

MY APPRENTICESHIP TO CRIME

An
(To the memory of my
Autobiography

Grace Maria Treadwell.

-by-

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CHAPTER 9.

The Royal Commission on the Police, 1908.
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such that only one result could be expected: whitewash. Some time during 1907, I had an interview with a representative of the Police and Public Vigilance Society, and was informed Earl Russell wished to see me, with reference to the police and public case which had attracted so much public attention. So I went to Gower Street, W.C., and had an interview with the secretary, a Mr. Timewell.

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I gave my consent to an application for leave to be heard by the Royal Commission on the Police, which was then sitting in the Guildhall, Broad Sanctuary, Westminster. I wanted the Tribunal to inquire into the gradual process of the manufacture of criminals, under the present police system in the Metropolitan Police. I quoted incidents in my early life, that I had been taken into custody something like 27 times without the police having any evidence to justify a court in convicting me. bound by the rules of evidence.

The Tribunal, after some deliberation, decided to hear only

one of the allegations which I had listed. By this decision they were able to prevent any evidence of systematic persecution being proved by documentary evidence. Instead of inquiring into facts, they allowed the police authorities to produce secret documents which the Tribunal admitted would not have been tolerated in a court of law, where the rules of evidence must be strictly observed. The constitution of the Tribunal was such that only one result could be expected: whitewash.

The police were represented by the most famous criminal lawyer of the day, R.D. Muir, deadly cross-examiner at the bar, Eldon Banks, K.C., etc. So, as always, the cards were stacked against the plaintiffs where the defendants are a Government institution.

Representing the Police and Public Vigilance Society was Earl Russell, who was a lawyer in name only; he did not have the legal skill and know-how to combat the police lawyers. To put it plainly, he was not in the same class as the opposition so from the start we were penalised. I am afraid it has always been so - the weak, the poor and oppressed of the land have always been without the means to fight against injustice.

In truth, the Tribunal allowed itself to be used as a court of appeal by the police against adverse decisions with the dice loaded in their favour, because they would not be bound by the rules of evidence.

The Tribunal announced they would only take the assault case of the 6th September, 1906. When I was summoned for an assault upon P.C. 47 H.R. while he was taking a prisoner to the station, while he was escorted by four other constables. The Tribunal, by ruling that this was the only case they would investigate, had really allowed the police to conduct an appeal against the magistrate's decision. The reply of the police to my allegation of persecution was to call a number of witnesses to testify to my bad character. All this evidence of character was contrary to the laws of evidence, could not be challenged because the police admitted it was hearsay evidence. The more I considered the case, one wonders why I was foolish enough to permit myself to be called as a witness. a police magistrate.

When the Tribunal refused to investigate my first conviction and the false convictions, I should have refused to have any part of the case. was a failure, very incoherent. He was permit Why should I complain about the court's decision? The magistrate's decision was against the police. Why should I give the police the chance to appeal against an adverse decision? This The magistrate who dismissed the police case at the police court was summoned before the tribunal to give his reasons for dismissing the case. He stated he "did not believe the police evidence, and was doubtful of the defendant's guilt".

I now realise that for a man in my position to jeopardise his future by going against the police at a public inquiry was very silly and about the dafest thing a man could do.

The result of the findings of the Tribunal can be seen in The Report of the Royal Commission on the Police, 1908.

Within a short time, the licensee of the King's Arms public house, a Mr. Smith, a respectable publican who had been in business for many years, had his licence taken away through the police objecting to the renewal of his licence.

Mr. Cluer, the magistrate, was criticised for his conduct of the case; some months later, he was removed from the magisterial bench to the County Court as a judge, although the salary was the same, about £1,500 a year, the magistrate lost his pension as a police magistrate.

What of the five policemen who gave evidence? P.C. 47 H.R. was found to be suffering from mental strain; as a witness at the hearing he was a failure, very incoherent. He was permitted to resign. P.C. 207 - a few months after, he was convicted and sentenced to nine months H.L. at the Old Bailey for causing grievous bodily harm by kicking a man on the ground. This cowardly crime he committed while on duty in Brick Lane. The three other policemen were out of the force before a year had passed.

After the publicity of the Royal Commission I knew the

police would strain every inch to get me convicted for some offence, so realising the need to protect myself from some concocted charge, I gave the police a wide berth. I held too long. The police officer I feared most was the C.I.D. Inspector in charge of H. Division - D.D.I. F. Wensley, known as "The Weasel", which was apt. He was not the kind of man one wants as an enemy. I had complained of his threats to me, which he strongly denied. He never forgot or forgave.

This is not true. Many men were convicted in the years from 1906 for highway robbery with violence and sentenced to 18 lashes with the cat and 5 years penal servitude. During those years 1906, 1907, 1908, garrotting was being used in the alleys and streets of Whitechapel, Spitalfields, the Highway and the Brick Lane area, for the purpose of robbing seamen. It must be realised that some sixty or more years ago, seamen often had large sums of money in their possession after months at sea.

The ladies of the town would often lumber a drunken seaman down a dark court or alley where the seaman would be strung up by the gang and robbed of everything of value, money, jewellery, etc.

The method employed was for the tallest man or the gang to go behind the victim, put his forearm round the victim's throat, and by using the other arm as a lever to bend the helpless man

backward, rendering him insensible by semi-strangulation.

The garrotter becomes very skillful in knowing exactly when to drop the insensible man; if the victim is held too long he could be very easily strangled, although I have never known it to happen.

CHAPTER 10.

Corporal Punishment.

I have often seen it recorded that after the end of the last century garrotting ceased in England and other parts of Britain.

A police officer of H. Division was prominent in sending many of these villains to prison; his name was Detective Sergeant Ambrose Rayner, who dressed as a seaman would and about the haunts in the worst districts, and was very successful in clearing the night prowlers from the streets. This officer had the reputation of being a very efficient officer for those years it was common to hear some villain had received five and a bashing for robbery with violence, for stringing up someone up, which was slang for garrotting.

It is being suggested today, 1969, some sixty years after these events that the only deterrent for violence by criminals in carrying out their raids on banks and jewellers' shops is to bring back corporal punishment. To give these criminals a taste of their own medicine.

I have known many men who were flogged in prison for attacks upon prison officers. I have knowledge of a prison officer who while a prisoner of war in South Africa was flogged by the Boers. By a strange irony of fate, this officer who had suffered the brutality of a flogging, volunteered to flog others who had