

MY APPRENTICESHIP TO CRIME

An  
To the Memory of my  
Autobiography

Grace Metalia Treadern.  
-by-

ARTHUR HARDING

littering for the purpose or committing a felony.

So we were charged and locked up in a cell from about 4 p.m. until 10 p.m. when we were bailed to appear at Stratford on the following day. While I was detained at Barkingside police station, my wife became worried when I did not arrive home at my usual time.

#### CHAPTER 24.

##### Suspected Person.

Some time after 7 p.m. she put the youngest children to bed; This detective, Gerrard, then told us we answered the description of two suspects and he was taking us to Barkingside police station. At the station this Detective Constable Gerrard ordered us to turn out the pockets of our clothes. I had some forty pounds in cash besides several sovereigns. The jewellery was also placed on the table. The detective Gerrard then ordered me into the police car and drove me to the Wanstead Park Road. A small group of women were talking together.

Detective Gerrard stopped the car and got out and approached the group of women and had a brief conversation with them, then one of the women came to the car and looked at me. She then said to the detective, "No, this is not the man." We then drove back to the station.

The detective Gerrard went to the phone and phoned C.R.O. After a brief interval he phoned Commercial Street police station. From the information he received from the C.R.O. and Commercial Street station, this detective considered he had sufficient evidence to charge us with being suspects

loitering for the purpose of committing a felony.

So we were charged and locked up in a cell from about 4 p.m. until 10 p.m. when we were bailed to appear at Stratford on the following day. While I was detained at Barkingside police station, my wife became worried when I did not arrive home at my usual time.

Some time after 7 p.m. she put the youngest children to bed; it must be remembered that we had five children under nine years of age. She was worried by fear that something had happened to me; she had been through the ordeal of the two gangsters threatening her life, the trial at the Old Bailey, so as the time got late her anxiety increased. Then a knock at the door and two strange men forced their way into the room. They announced that they were police officers come to search the flat.

They then informed my wife that I was detained at Barkingside police station. So they searched the flat and found a case of old silver and other pieces of jewellery, so they left the flat without taking anything. They apologised and left.

To get into the house they had to ring the front door bell, so the landlord had to open the front door to let them in and so they had to tell the landlord they were police officers and the reason of their visit.

When these two police officers got back to Barkingside

and told their story to the senior C.I.D. it became obvious that the Hackney Detective Constable Gerrard had made a mistake. For one thing, if we had been housebreakers we would have had gloves in our possession, secondly the uniform police sergeant had made his report which stated there were no suspicions attached to Milton - that is, the man who helped me - and myself.

The C.I.D. sergeant gave orders for Milton and myself to be released at once on bail so we were let out about 10 p.m. I was glad to get home to my family to explain what had happened to my wife. She was very worried when I told her the true story.

The next morning we appeared at Stratford police court. We were not legally represented. The Detective Constable Gerrard from Hackney was the first witness. His story was such a fabrication or lies that I was surprised at his ignorance of the facts, which was so obvious to the C.I.D. of Barkingside station. This was the gist of this P.C. Gerrard's story in the witness box.

"I was patrolling in a police car when we received a message that two men were acting suspiciously. We proceeded to Wanstead Park Road. I left the car and saw the two defendants acting very suspiciously. I kept observation on them. The defendant A.H. would enter the front garden of a house, knock on door and

look through the front window. Milton would stand outside the house looking up and down the road. I kept observation for some time and in one house I heard breaking of glass. I left to get assistance.

"When I next saw defendants they both ran to stop a bus. We followed the bus and arrested both defendants; on arrival at Barkingside police station defendants were searched. We found them in possession of a large quantity of jewellery and money. On that evidence I ask for a remand."

The bench of magistrates were so impressed by the sight of the jewellery, money and gold coins that they seemed on the point of complimenting the detective constable.

Then Det. Sgt. Rembrant went into the witness box and said, "The police have no objection to bail." The bench said, "Bail?" "Yes," replied the detective sergeant, same as before, so we were remanded for fourteen days on bail.

I wish to call attention to this remarkable fact. On the many occasions I was taken into custody in Commercial Street police station and brought before the court at Old Street Court, I was never allowed bail. This fact alone proves the prejudice which existed at Old Street police court.

On consideration of the detective's evidence and the very serious allegations made against me, I decided to employ a solicitor to conduct my defence. After reading the transcript

of the evidence it was decided to brief a well known barrister to represent me at the adjourned hearing. There was a possibility that the court might convict, so we had the appeal papers written up and signed to appeal to the Quarter Sessions. All these legal preparations cost me a good deal of money and I was very troubled about the possible outcome of the proceedings. After giving a great deal of thought to these matters, I remembered certain facts concerning my criminal past. When I had defended myself whatever the charge, I had always succeeded in getting an acquittal.

So I decided to act for myself and conduct my own defence without letting my legal advisers know. Being so worried on account of my wife and children, I decided to take certain measures to make certain the Commissioner of Police should have first hand knowledge of the facts. It was therefore necessary to have proof of the number of times I had been stopped, questioned and sometimes searched in the suburbs during the last eight years. That is why I always insisted on a record being made when I was stopped and questioned. Having done this, I was more hopeful of the outcome of the case. On the day of the hearing, the police were legally represented. When the case opened, the solicitor for the police arose and addressed the bench; he asked leave to withdraw the case, and for the two defendants to be discharged.

He went on to state, "It is true that the elder defendant has a criminal record some years ago, but it is known that he is living an honest life, that on this occasion he was pursuing his usual business in an honest manner." ~~I had~~ So what of the story of the broken glass in the door of the house? Remember the evidence of Detective Gerrard. This policeman from Hackney was not allowed to make any other statement. "So by my wise decision to let the Chief Commissioner of Police make his own inquiries and so avoid a police scandal I averted a good deal of publicity."

What compensation could I claim for illegal arrest and imprisonment, for the large sum of money it had cost me for legal expenses? These are the facts. No house had been broken into that day. No complaints had been made to the police. No jewellery or the description which I had in my possession had been reported stolen. But persons had been interviewed who said they had sold me some jewellery on the day in question. The uniform police sergeant who had questioned us and who had made notes of the circulars and the jewellery, who also reported seeing the two men get on a no. 96 bus, left no doubt that the C.I.D. man from Hackney had made up a false story to substantiate his charge of suspected persons.

When the Barkingside C.I.D. made their own inquiries of the

999 caller and the uniform police who had stopped us at first, they discovered the 999 caller had phoned because he had seen us looking at some jewellery we had purchased from a solicitor's wire. The C.I.D. interviewed the solicitor and verified I had purchased jewellery and sovereigns from his wire. I looked

Arter the case was over I read in the local paper, The All Independent, Leytonstone, a report of the case, with these words: "This man had a number of convictions recorded against him in the past." Result of that report - notice to quit from the landlord.

Can any person justify the editor of a newspaper permitting a report like that to be published, knowing, as he must have known, that he had insinuated that the defendant was in fact guilty of the charge, although the court had dismissed the charge? He, the editor, knew as well as the reporter that a defendant's previous convictions were only made known if the defendant has been convicted for the offence.

Having notice to quit from the landlord made it vitally necessary to find a house where we could live and educate our children, and where they could grow up without the knowledge of my past becoming known to them, outside the vicious influence of the East End. We found just the house, the school quite close to the house and transport very convenient to get to town.

So I paid the deposit and obtained a mortgage from the Essex

Building Society without any trouble. I was forty-nine years old without any regular employment, with a wife and five children to support. No Welfare State, no children's allowance. No social security and no free health service. So I had to work. I could not afford to have days off. Believe me, when I looked around at our new home, at our lovely children, I knew that all our troubles were nothing compared with the blessings of healthy children, a wonderful wife and mother, and a merciful providence that had given me good health and strength to be able to work for them. So I knew our ship had reached port safely after a very tempestuous voyage. So I knew our ship had reached port safely after a very tempestuous voyage. than 1935 would be the beginning of a new life, or one thing we were determined; the children were to have a good education so that they could have the chance of better conditions and good careers. The house had a good garden back and front, so I would have plenty to do when I was at home. In 1936, the family had increased by another boy, making six - three boys and three girls. The eldest boy would soon be eleven so more mouths to feed meant more money had to be earned. The Welfare State was still only a dream. Today I am rather proud that we did not have to seek charity to bring up our children long enough.

The great Gold Rush had petered out. The hungry people

had sold all their valuables even to the fur coats and pianos; they had bought these in the luxury days of the munitions factories of the 1914 War. If the investments had been made in Britain, which was made in foreign countries and Africa, we would have conquered the depression that swept the country to the verge of ruin.

1937 saw me back in my old business of wardrobe dealer. I was making a living; every class of the community was feeling the effects of the economic depression. City people were wearing their clothes much longer, so they were not in such good condition as before. The customer who bought second-hand clothes from the dealers had to give less for clothes than before. I listened to him. This was his story.

But things always seem to adjust themselves to the conditions which reign at the time, so the money I earned brought as much as before because prices had fallen.

I was now fifty years old, I was working seven days a week, six days to collect the clothes and Sunday to sell them. I was feeling fit, could carry a load of clothes weighing sometimes as much as a hundredweight for a distance of as much as a mile, because buses on the country routes were not eager to let you put the bag on the bus. It is remarkable what you can do if the incentive is strong enough.