

MY APPRENTICESHIP TO CRIME

An
(To the memory of my
Autobiography

Grace Maria Treadwell.

-by-

ARTHUR HARDING

service, so it was a possibility that he had seen me before. As I passed the station he stopped me by holding my arm. He said to me, "What's in the bag?" I told him, he was not satisfied, and I explained I had a wardrobe shop in Brick Lane and bought second-hand goods. I then took him into the

CHAPTER 28.

Stop, Search and Detain.

He then said, "I'm not satisfied." Well, I have never During 1942, another incident happened which caused me to been noted for suffering fools gladly so I told him what I make another protest to the Commissioner of Police.

In the course of my business I often received a letter or thought of him, which did not improve matters, so I put the goods back into the bag and said to him, "You know where to postcard from customers telling me when to call upon them find me," and began to walk out of the station yard. Now a as they had some clothes to sell. On the day in question I midday crowd had stood watching the proceedings, and I was had received a letter from a lady who lived in a Hendon district. annoyed. The P.C. got hold of my arm and arrested me, and So on this day I journeyed to Hendon and bought some part-worn took me into the station. He then had a conversation with clothing from the lady, just a couple of gents' suits and the station sergeant who said, "So he wants trouble?" a few dresses. The goods were not very good and looked part-

He came up to me and said, "Take your hat off." Now worn, not valuable. By no stretch of the imagination could I was never one to be scared of a policeman whatever rank he they be described as new goods or worth more than three pounds. held; it is sometimes policy to cringe to them when you are

I travelled back to Old Street station, that being the asking for favours, but when you are the victim of police nearest railway station to my shop in Brick Lane. The goods bungling and they are acting like bullies, then is the time were packed in my bag which I carried like a postman, over to express your feelings in the most contemptuous manner possible, my shoulder. As I passed the police station, a P.C. was just which is exactly what I did. coming out of the police station, which is next door to the court.

The sergeant so far forgot himself that he knocked my hat off. The P.C. was a middle-aged man with about twenty years' off. When I told him he would be sorry for that, he started

service, so it was a possibility that he had seen me before. As I passed the station he stopped me by holding my arm. He said to me, "What's in the bag?" I told him, he was not satisfied, and I explained I had a wardrobe shop in Brick Lane and bought second-hand goods. I then took him into the courtyard and emptied the bag.

He then said, "I'm not satisfied." Well, I have never been noted for suffering fools gladly so I told him what I thought of him, which did not improve matters, so I put the goods back into the bag and said to him, "You know where to find me," and began to walk out of the station yard. Now a midday crowd had stood watching the proceedings, and I was annoyed. The P.C. got hold of my arm and arrested me, and took me into the station. He then had a conversation with the station sergeant who said, "So he wants trouble?"

He came up to me and said, "Take your hat off." Now I was never one to be scared of a policeman whatever rank he held; it is sometimes policy to cringe to them when you are asking for favours, but when you are the victim of police bungling and they are acting like bullies, then is the time to express your feelings in the most contemptuous manner possible, which is exactly what I did.

The sergeant so far forgot himself that he knocked my hat off. When I told him he would be sorry for that, he started

threatening me with the cells and what would happen there. I told him I had had enough of his bullying and he had to listen to me. I had a certain phone number I was to ring if I was in any trouble, so I handed him the number and told him to ring and tell where I was detained. When the sergeant saw the phone number his behaviour changed completely; he said he was not allowed to ring the number. He immediately sent for the two C.I.D. men to make inquiries. Well, after spending some three hours or so in the police station, I left in a raging temper. The station sergeant apologised for his conduct. When the C.I.D. asked me to come upstairs to their room, they wanted the phone number of my customer at Hendon. I had to phone home to my wife for the number from the letter I had received that morning. The C.I.D. then phoned the lady and told her I was detained at Old Street police station. After spending some time in the C.I.D. room treated like a person in custody and being treated to a few insults, I was allowed to go. The C.I.D. thought they deserved a pat on the back for settling the matter. I left Old Street police station in a raging temper determined to make them rue the day they interferred with me. The lady at Hendon was so disturbed at the police inquiries and the annoyance they had caused, she refused to do

any more business with me. I sent a full account of all these matters to the Commissioner of Police, giving all details of what happened in the station.

A short time afterwards I received a visit from a police officer with whom I was friendly, who explained the Chief Inspector of Old Street police station wished to see me regarding the complaint I had made, concerning the conduct of the police. He advised me to go and see the Chief Inspector and to accept an apology. It must be understood that the police were always in the position of holding a winning hand. If I had recourse to the law and started legal proceedings for false arrest and imprisonment, then the publicity would be injurious to me. My name and address would be in the press and the result would be the publication of all my past history, so I stood to lose a good deal and the police knew this. I decided to let the matter drop. The police tendered me an apology for what happened. I signed a statement leaving the police full authority for settling the case, and destitute of which the parish of St. Paul's had its share. Before the War the appeals for help were generously responded to by the charitable public, money and clothing poured into the church and the vicar was able to acquire some property which he turned into a country holiday camp for the children. In the summer many children had a pleasant holiday at