

EX-POLICEMAN HARRY MORTON TELLS SECRETS OF POLICE GRAFT AS IT NOW EXISTS

Before Starting for the Penitentiary Convicted Patrolman Discloses Hidden Iniquities of Blackmail in the Tenderloin.

(Continued from First Page.)

A sprinkling of immoral women, immoral houses, gambling houses and crooks. A man who kept his eyes open, or rather a man who kept them closed, could pick up a good deal of money, even if he was no higher than a common patrolman, but I want to say that for the year I was there I did not graft a cent in any way.

I am not setting myself up to be any more honest than the run of men in my walk of life. But I was born of decent, God-fearing people and raised right. I guess maybe I inherited a few conscientious scruples. Besides, I was a single man with nobody dependent on me, and my pay as a policeman was a plenty. But most of all I was ambitious. I wanted to climb in the force and be something some day. As I figured it out in my own mind, the best way to climb was to keep straight and do my duty and stay on the job.

I was getting along pretty well. I made some reputation for the number of arrests I scored and I got two commendations for brave conduct. Once I stopped a dangerous runaway and another time I rescued five persons from a fire. For saving the people in the fire I won the gold star.

TENDERLOIN SPELLED HIS RUIN.

I guess I got along too well for my own good. Anyhow, two years ago I was transferred to the Nineteenth Precinct, in the Tenderloin, and made a plain-clothes man. My downfall dated from that time, although I did not really lose my moral hold for a good while after that.

What I had seen at Charles street wasn't a circumstance to what I found going on in the Tenderloin.

I found that among certain plain-clothes men in the precinct was an offensive and defensive alliance for the collecting of graft, the protection of those who paid blackmail and the punishment of those who refused to pay it. It was a regular organized machine—a sort of a close corporation.

If a man was honest when he started in and refused at first to crane into the combine, the old heads deliberately set about to corrupt him. Usually they did it with a woman, but there were other ways. It made it safer, of course, for all hands to be in on the deal together.

My work as a plain-clothes man was supposed to be mostly keeping the streets and saloons clear of immoral women. I don't know of my own personal knowledge what tribute the gambling houses and tough dance halls and lemon-game workers and petty crooks paid, although, of course, I heard plenty of stories, and I had an idea or two. That was the big graft, as you might say.

The graft from the women went to the men lower down. I have been told that small gamblers and lemon-game workers and the cheaper grade of confidence men and the like paid \$5 a day for protection. I have heard, too, that certain thieves and pickpockets—a limited number—gave up \$25 a week each for protection. But, as I say, of my own knowledge, I only know about the woman part of it.

The ordinary weekly tariff was \$5 apiece from each woman. A plain-clothes man might have ten or twelve women giving him \$5 a week each—that was about the usual number—although he might have a good many more. But ten or twelve was about the average. What he got from them was his.

When a green man came on one of the older men in the combine would get friendly and then put the thing up to him, something like this: Suppose we call the new man Smith. Brown or Jones would take him aside after they had gotten sort of chummy.

"Old man" Brown would say to Smith, "There's some easy money for you on this job. You can get your bit every week from a bunch of these street-walkers without any danger or trouble. All you have to do is to come in with the rest of us and lay dead and keep your mouth shut. The other boys who are working the game say you're a good fellow, and we are willing to divide up the business with you and give you your share."

TRAP FOR THOSE WHO HELD OUT.

If Smith agreed he was made known to eight or ten girls, who were expected to pay their money over to him after that. If he had scruples against taking that kind of money the other men would start in to corrupt him. A good-looking girl would play stool-pigeon for the system. This girl would be given orders to get on intimate terms with the new man. It didn't make any difference whether Smith was married or not. The object was to get him involved with a bad woman. If the game succeeded the rest was easy.

As a general proposition his moral fibre was so weakened that in a little while he was ready to go as far as any of them. At any rate, if he didn't take the blood-money himself, he was in no position to expose the crookedness of anybody else.

Besides this the combine could always count high on the quarter (ten law or the rank and file that the men must stand by one another. It is this that keeps many a man who is personally honest from peaching on the crookedness he knows some of his fellow-officers are engaged in.

Well, now we'll suppose that Smith had started out with eight girls as his share. They were his—no other men in the game would bother them or try to collect from them. And it was all right for him to increase his following by recruiting new girls who moved into the Tenderloin. Here's the way that was worked generally:

One of the girls who was already contributing to Smith would meet him somewhere and say:

"Boss, here's a new girl; she's a friend of mine and everything will be O. K. if you'll look after her."

Looking after the new girl meant that Smith would give her protection and in return she would pay him the regular tariff of five a week. Sometimes the women would slip the money into the policeman's hand in person, but usually they sent it to him by a man or left it for him with some saloon-keeper whom both of them could trust.

Protection meant that the cop would not arrest her himself and if possible he would prevent her arrest by any other man. If she did get locked up he was expected to square the case in the court. That is, he would arrange with the arresting officer to have the case "thrown down."

When the woman was called up the principal witness would nearly always be the policeman himself. He would suddenly develop a bad memory or admit that he had locked the girl up on suspicion and had no real evidence against her, and the Magistrate would turn her loose. The girl was expected to provide her own bond if she did get arrested. Of course, the professional bondsman looked after that. But so long as a girl made her weekly payments regularly and didn't do too much stealing she wasn't in much danger of seeing the inside of one of the cells in the Tenderloin Station unless she happened to be caught in a raid on one of the dance halls, and even then she usually got the tip in time to get away before the police came.

HAD TO PAY OR LEAVE DISTRICT.

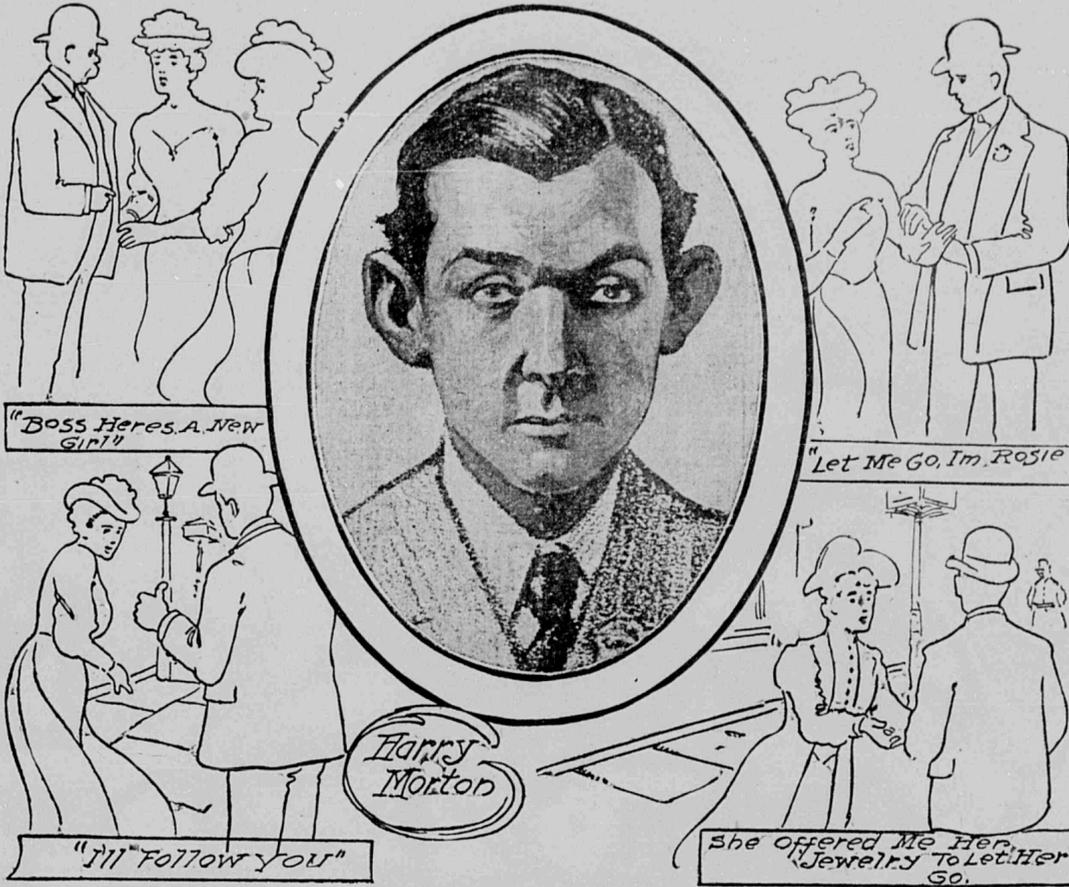
Protection also meant that women who did not pay the tariff would be driven out of the Tenderloin, which of course suited the women already established there.

A newcomer who could not or would not pay was spotted mighty soon. The word would be passed along, and some one or another of the men in the combine would arrest her every time she showed her nose on the street.

Maybe the person who rented rooms to her would be warned to put her out. That explains why the same women would be up time after time in Jefferson Market Court while others walked Broadway and Sixth avenue for months, plying their business openly, without being molested. It came mighty near being a lead-pipe, air-tight system.

Sometimes a girl would fall behind in her payments. Usually the cop to whom she belonged would give her a little time. Then if she still failed to come up he would close down and make life a misery to her. I knew one man—and he is still on the force, as are nearly all of the men I have been telling you about—who never showed any mercy. If a girl failed to send

HARRY MORTON AND SCENES OF TENDERLOIN BLACKMAIL.



him her \$5 on pay day—usually Saturday night—he would look her up. The conversation would be something like this:

"Where's my money?"

"I'm dead broke; haven't a cent. I haven't been able to find a sucker."

"Well, you go find one right away. I'll follow you."

Then he would actually trail her until she found a man who would give her \$5 or a drunken man whose pockets she could pick. Then he would make her fork over. I have heard of instances when this man was not fifteen feet from the woman when she stole or begged the cash from the "sucker."

There was still another source of revenue for the crooked man. Some night a man would come into the Tenderloin Station with a story that he had been robbed at a dance hall, or on the street perhaps. He wouldn't be so drunk but that he could give a pretty fair description of the woman who had touched him. The chances were the man detailed on the case would know the girl from the description the victim had given. If he was crooked, and she belonged on his list, he would go to her and force her to "split up" with him, sharing half and half in the stolen roll. If she belonged to some other policeman, he would pass the tip to him, and then the chances were there would be three sharing in the divvy instead of two.

The man detailed on the case would report back that he had been unable to find the thief. Naturally the same thing happened a good many times when the thief was a man, but I am speaking particularly of the instances in which women figured, because, being detailed to watch women, it was those cases that I usually knew about.

DECLARES HE TOOK NO CASH.

And now I'm going to tell you something that you may not believe. I was in the Tenderloin as a plain-clothes man attached to the precinct for a year and a half and later as a member of the Vice Squad.

In that time I did not take one red cent of that dirty money. I am not saying I was a saint—I got myself involved before I was through—but I could not take the blood money from those women. I did other things that were wrong—I kept my eyes and my mouth shut.

I saw plenty of things which it was my sworn duty as an officer to expose, and I was a passive witness to the grafting that went on among those women of the streets and their men.

But, as God is my judge, I did not share in the graft itself to the extent of a penny. I couldn't touch that sort of money. I told them so when they first came to me. I meant it and I stuck to it.

I saw the others do it, but I kept my hands clean of that.

This fact must have leaked out in the Department, because once when I had been at the Tenderloin Station a short time a roundsman whom I did not know came up to me and introduced himself. He told me he wanted to shake hands with me because he had heard I was the cop who would not take dirty money. That was what they used to call it—"the dirty money."

Here's another incident that shows my position in the dirty money business. I got on to a house at No. 140 West Thirty-sixth street, where a disorderly establishment was being conducted with fifteen or sixteen girls as inmates. I said at the station-house that I was going to close the place up as soon as I could get the evidence I needed. The news leaked out—it very often did in such cases.

A night or two after that I caught one of the girls from that house stopping men in a side street. I arrested her. She pulled me aside and said to me:

"It's all right—I'm Rosie."

I knew her name or the name she went by was not Rosie, and I told her so.

"You don't understand," she said. "Let me go. That's the word we agreed on, you know—Rosie."

I still couldn't make out what she meant and she explained that when they heard of my intentions every girl in the house had chipped in for a good-sized purse, and that the money had been turned over to a saloon-keeper to be delivered to me in case I would drop my plan to close up the house.

I went straight to Capt. Cottrell, who was then in command of the precinct.

PURSE DID NOT SAVE THE PLACE.

I told him what the girl had said. I told him also that I had never taken any of that sort of money and did not intend to rest under the suspicion of having done so. Capt. Cottrell went with me to the saloon-keeper and he denied any knowledge of the transaction. The records will show that I did close that house.

I used to talk to a lot of women who did not seem to be wholly bad, and urged them to quit the streets and lead decent lives. I was instrumental in getting some of them to do this, and in several instances I believe they are leading honest lives this day. One woman I arrested offered me her jewelry to let her go. It was the first time she had been arrested and she was badly scared. I refused to take her jewelry and took her before Magistrate Barlow. At my own request he gave her some good advice and let her go. She left the Tenderloin and never came back, so far as I know.

When I first went to the Nineteenth Precinct I was ambitious to make a record. For several months I led the rolls for the number of arrests made. One month Capt. Cottrell told me that fines resulting from my ar-

Patrolman Convicted of Perjury Declares Before Starting for the Penitentiary that Vice Squad Ruined Him.

I was arresting them I used to feel sorry for them. Then I got to taking a friendly interest in them. Then I got mixed up with them.

That was my fix when I went on the Vice Squad. Originally, I believe, there were thirty-five men in the Vice Squad, but later it was reduced. I was one of six members whose duty it was to work among the women of the Tenderloin. All six of us were young men, and it was the ruin of me and most of the others. I believe nearly every one of us was soon intimate with a woman. Some of them are still intimate with those same women to my knowledge.

As plain-clothes men attached to a precinct there were some bounds at least that would hold us in check. We had certain hours when we had to be on duty and certain regulations we had to observe. But in the Vice Squad the bridges were off. Once a day we reported to our superior officer. The rest of the time we were our own bosses, going where we pleased and when we pleased. We were practically responsible to nobody for twenty-three hours out of the twenty-four. Is it any wonder that we ran wild? We were exposed to the thousand and one temptations of the wickedest part of New York.

Often one of the Vice Squad would go to some wine-room or hotel and spend the whole day and half of the night with women, drinking. Then late at night he would go out and pick up four or five girls on the street in order to make a showing of activity in the courts next day and save his face. That was a matter of frequent occurrence.

One of the men with whom I was working prepared to go on his vacation. I told him that while he was gone I proposed to treat the girl with whom he was intimate as I would any other and that if I caught her stopping men on the street I would arrest her off-hand.

So when he went away he took her with him. He went to some town up the State—to Albany I think it was. Well, I had occasion to write him a letter while he was there, and of course I addressed it to him in his own name. When he came back I asked him if he had got the letter. He laughed and said that he had been afraid to claim it, and then he went on to say that at the hotel he had registered under my name and registered the woman as "Mrs. Harry Morton." That was his idea of a joke. It helps to show you what sort of moral views the members of the Vice Squad got to have after they had been on the job a little while.

SOUGHT TO ESCAPE FROM THE LIFE.

All told I was only in what we called the woman-chasing squad for about a month—from the middle of June of last year to the middle of July. It was during that month that Berthe Claiche killed Gendron and I first made the statement regarding the killing that has led to my arrest and conviction nearly a year later. By the middle of July I was sick and tired of the Vice Squad and of the way I was doing.

I wanted to get away from the Tenderloin and all that the Tenderloin meant. I was trying to break off with the life into which I had been falling for nearly a year. I made application to be transferred to the Mounted Squad in Central Park—a post that policemen who are looking for graft dislike. I got it and I stayed in the Mounted Squad until I was sent to do patrol duty at the Far Rockaway Station in January. I was there when they indicted me.

Now, all along I have been speaking in the past tense because I told you of things as they existed when I was in the Tenderloin a year ago and two years ago. A good many of the men who were mixed up in the things I have told you of are still on duty in the Tenderloin. So far as I know there has been no change in conditions there since I left it. In fact I know some of those conditions are still exactly as they were when I worked in the precinct. I do not see how any man constructed morally and physically like most men can go to work in the Tenderloin as a policeman and not be corrupted sooner or later.

This seems a

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