



Disease Lurks in Police Station Cells.



Magistrate Ommen Investigates and Finds Them Absolutely Unsanitary and a Menace to the Public Health.

There is a menace to health maintained by this city, and perhaps for the reason that it lurks in darkness it goes almost unnoticed.

Yet the evil members of the community are not the only victims. The foul menace often overtakes a law-abiding citizen, and does all in its power to infect him.

"If I were Commissioner of the Health Department I would immediately order the closing of most of the station houses in the city. They are absolutely unsanitary. The air is foul, and they are so unclean that some prisoners get lifelong disease."

In spite of the constant and rapid advancement in sanitary science—the abolition of all that is germ breeding and the substitution of all that makes for cleanliness and health—the police station cell as found in this city still continues to be damp, dark, filthy and mephitic. In

days the magistrates' courts close at 12 o'clock. If accused of a misdemeanor the officer at the desk of the station house may accept half of \$500 in cash or on the security of a friend.

"Saturdays and Sundays in the magistrates' courts are short days, when sometimes court is closed at 12 o'clock. If a man is arrested after that time he remains in the station house until 8 o'clock the next morning, and remains in the pen in the courthouse until the case is called, sometimes until 12 o'clock, which makes twenty-four hours, during which he has received no food or sustenance."

SOME TYPICAL CELLS.

The cells of the Delancey-st. station, one of those Magistrate Ommen especially condemned, are typical of those to be found elsewhere in the city. There are nine of them in the rear of the basement, and they were built nearly a century ago. The station house itself is 102 years old, being used originally in the days of volunteer fire companies by Engine Company No. 41 and Hose Company No. 4. The walls of the cells

the greatest variety of prisoners. The twenty-eight cells there are often so overcrowded that two and three persons have to be locked up together, and if one would sleep on the slab of wood the others must lie on the floor. Half the cells are for women and half for men.

The floors of the men's cells, which are below ground, and are ventilated from the basement air of the station house or through holes in the floor of the corridor of the women's prison. None of the cells receive any sunshine, and all are filthy from incrustations of dirt and filth that have accumulated for many years. For the reason that the women are imprisoned right over the men the inmates of the upper and lower cells are able to shout to one another, and some nights when many of the cells are filled with inmates the babel that they make would seem indeed to belong to an inferno.

The cells in which women are locked up in the Tenderloin station are of identical pattern with those for the men, the only difference being that they are painted a dirty white, whereas the men's cells show the bare stone. Though level with the ground yet the women's cells never receive a gleam of sunshine, and they are usually washed by simply being flushed with a hose. In hot summer weather the walls are constantly damp from the moisture in the air condensing on the cold stone. There is no place to wash, except in the water from the faucet in one corner of the cell; and no matter how filthy may be the rags of the worst outcast who is dragged in, she is laid down on the plank just as she was found.

At the East 35th-st. station house the women prisoners are kept at a considerable distance



MAY DAY IN WARSAW. THE MASSACRE OF STRIKERS IN JERUSALEM-AVE.

Our correspondent writes with regard to the terrible attack made in Warsaw on the strikers by the military: "The soldiers shot down a great number of peaceful people, including several women and children. It is said that more than two hundred demonstrators were killed and some three hundred were wounded. It is impossible, however, to arrive at accurate figures, as the police removed the bodies of those who fell at once. The attack was entirely unprovoked, and the utmost indignation is expressed on all sides at the action of the military."

principle it is the same as the dungeon of the Dark Ages. It is built on the old belief that the bad should be punished by what is bad, that the way to cure moral ills is to add to them physical ills, that blighted virtue needs not the sunshine to destroy the mildew, but more blight and more mildew.

While the Police Department is building a new headquarters which will cost nearly \$1,000,000, and which will house the chief officers of the force in splendor, the public that is accused of wrongdoing, whether innocent or guilty, must continue to endure the same prison abuses which have become a veritable menace to the community. Indeed, half the sum which is to be spent for the new headquarters, it is estimated, would replace the old stone cells of the police stations with airy, sunlighted steel cages, and provide them with sanitary accommodations in keeping with modern civilization.

WHAT MAGISTRATE OMMEN FOUND.

In calling attention to the unhealthy conditions of the city's station house cells Magistrate Ommen mentioned in particular those in West 30th-st., known as the Tenderloin station; in Delancey-st., Church and Liberty sts. and East 35th-st. The magistrate visited these station houses himself, and his characterization of them as "absolutely unsanitary" can be verified by any one who cares to go into them and examine things for himself. In them the inquirer will find the cells filthy with dirt and equipped with sanitary arrangements which are little better than the open ends of sewers. He will find the same cell used to-day by some outcast, picked up drunk in the gutter, suffering, as likely as not, from an incurable disease, and tomorrow it may be occupied by a citizen of refinement innocent of the charge brought against him.

are grimy with a filth which the squirt of a hose that is turned on them once a day only drives in deeper. No ray of sunshine has ever entered them. In each there is a thick slab of wood, wide and long enough for a man to lie on, and black from the dirt of unnumbered years. The arrests in this precinct are not many, yet usually on one of these slabs is sprawled a "drunk," who, in the parlance of the place, is "sleeping it off." If the presence of this guest is not made known by his curses or his moans, it is told to the visitor even more forcibly by the smell of liquor which comes through the bars of the cell door.

The only sanitary arrangements in these cells is a rough metal bowl, attached by an S shaped pipe to a drain connecting all the cells. Over the bowl drips a faucet, and on the faucet hangs a cup. If the cell has just been washed out it drips from ceiling to floor, drying so slowly in an air devoid of sunlight that it remains damp until the next deluge. If the prisoner would sleep he has nothing to soften the board but his bones. The only heat in winter is from a stove in the centre of the corridor on which all the cells face, and the only ventilation is through some slits through the corridor roof into the bottom of a stagnant air shaft.

In the Church-st. station the cells are still more uninhabitable. Here the prison gets so cold in winter that, as one officer said: "You can hear the poor devils chattering away like a lot of monkeys. They try to get warm by stamping their feet or slapping their arms, but the space is so small that they generally find it doesn't do much good. The steam pipes in the outer corridor throw out some heat, but it all leaks before it gets into the stone cells."

There are six cells in the men's and four in the women's row in the Church-st. prison. The women's cells have no better accommodations than those of the men, and though the corridor is a little lighter, the sun itself never shines in. The light for the men's corridor is reflected from an area in the rear of the north of the station house. The place is in miserable repair, the plaster hanging from the ceiling in many places, or entirely fallen away. The only air is from the gutter level of the street.

Yet, this station, which is one of the worst in the city, has been recently selected for the detention of federal prisoners, and hardly a day passes that a batch of them are not brought in and shut up in its darkness. The other station to which prisoners of this sort are taken is in Oak-st., where conditions are little better. The average number of prisoners a day taken to the Church-st. station is about half a dozen.

IN THE TENDERLOIN PRECINCT.

It is the Tenderloin Precinct station, however, to which are consigned the greatest number and

from the men, in a little brick building in the rear. The matron's room is adjoining, so that the inmates of the prison may have her attention by simply calling for her. But although the cells are above ground, they are almost as dark as those in the basement of the Church-st. station house. The corridor on which they face has only one door, and that opens to the north. No sunshine ever enters the cells. They have the same crude, unsanitary, foul smelling system of drainage as all the rest. The prisoners in them are never bathed before being locked up. The cells for the men are still worse, for they are in the basement, where the only air that enters comes from the ground level.

POLICE SUFFER ALSO.

The accommodations for the police in some of the stations are also to a great degree unsanitary, and many of the men are compelled to live much like soldiers in the rough barracks of some frontier post. In the Church-st. station, for instance, the section rooms where the reserve men sleep are without any heat in winter except a couple of gas radiators. The radiators, however, do not raise the temperature of the whole room more than a degree at most, and their influence is felt only by those who huddle close about them. There are no toilet accommodations for the patrolmen nearer than the basement, and no place to wash except in two small rough iron sinks in the sitting room on the ground floor. About fifteen men sleep in a room whose windows invariably have such battered shades or torn curtains that it might as well be bare of everything. The night squads who try to sleep in these rooms in the daytime, therefore, have to contend with difficulties that would drive a nervous man insane. As the building faces the south and west, the sun streams in through the windows, and without the elevated trains go roaring by every few seconds, shaking the whole ramshackle structure so that one may hear the woodwork squeak. This building was condemned by the Buildings Department a few years ago, but it was bolstered up and is still in use. Yet the structure is not especially old, having been built in 1870.

The men of the Tenderloin station have hardly more than a barn to live in. It is heated by a few coal stoves on the ground floor and gas radiators on the upper floors. The old structure was so built that the two large section rooms on each of the upper floors are separated by a hallway and an airshaft, so that in summer they are stiflingly hot. The annex, which was formerly a colored mission, and which is called by the police of the precinct the "miser mission," has big section rooms, which are well aired, but which are so close to a livery stable in the rear that they are constantly filled with the odor of horse stalls.

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