

## THE ENGLISH POLICE

HOW SCOTLAND YARD OFFICIALS TRACE MISSING PEOPLE.

Methods of London's Detective Force For Locating the Lost Ones, and Every Detail of How the Mysteries Are Unraveled.

Away along the embankment, close to the houses of parliament, is a big, businesslike red brick building, the headquarters of those whose business it is to solve mysteries.

Scotland Yard is the home of thrilling occupations and has many tasks undreamed of by those who regard it merely as the directing office of the army of blue coated London constables, and among those tasks is that of probing the mystery of lost persons—a mystery touched often by romance, often by tragedy and occasionally surrounded by a black obscurity into which no human ingenuity can pierce. It is part of the work of Scotland Yard to endeavor to extract from the bewildering human continent of London those individuals who have suddenly walked off the track of human knowledge, who in ordinary speech with friends and acquaintances in one hour have in the next, for no reason and without a word, disappeared.

Some of these mysteries never have been solved and never will be solved, but they are astonishingly few compared to those which Scotland Yard unravels every week. Only one case here and there is heard of, because the work is in the ordinary routine of the yard and the force has no eye for romance, rigidly restricting itself to practical thoughts and practical work.

Stretched over twenty square miles of London, with its population of a nation, are the nervous tentacles of Scotland Yard, ever alert for the work, responding in a moment to an impulse from that center of intelligence—the red brick, businesslike building on the embankment. Frequently throughout day and night the agents of Scotland Yard are scouring London in the search for missing persons. The great organization works like a machine.

To give an idea of the work it will be best to take an instance of what happens in an individual case.

A prosperous middle aged civil servant living at Clapham is amazed and alarmed to find that his son, a bank clerk, aged twenty-four, does not return home one night after business. He is a well behaved young fellow and has never before stayed away all night. In the morning his father hurries to the branch of the bank in Kensington where his son is employed and finds that he left at about half past 5 on the night before in quite his usual manner, giving no indication that he was not going straight home. From the time he left the bank door he has not been seen. His accounts are in perfect order; he was a young man on the way to promotion.

The bewildered father takes a cab to the nearest police station and relates his story to the inspector in charge. "Oh, I dare say he'll be found in a couple of days," says the cheery inspector. "We'll get on to it at once. What is his description?"

Thereupon the father gives a description of his son, running, perhaps, something like this: Height, five feet eight inches; fair hair, slight fair mustache, gray eyes, slim build, wearing silk hat, morning coat, dark striped trousers and glace kid lace boots. The inspector enters this in a book, together with some details as to the disappearance. He hands the book to a policeman clerk and turns to give another word of reassurance to the father. Within a minute the latter hears the "tick, tick, tick" of a telegraph instrument in the hands of the policeman clerk. The description he has given is being telegraphed to every police station in the London area and is also being sent to Scotland Yard. Thus within a few minutes the police depots from one end of the metropolis to the other are on the qui vive for the slim, fair haired young man.

But the process has only just begun. As soon as the father has left the police station the inspector calls out from another room two "special inquiry officers," who are expert searchers for missing persons and who have a wonderful knowledge of their district, with its doubtful resorts, low class clubs, boarding houses of shady character and other places where lost people drift. They hear the details, and they go out on their quest, starting first with inquiries at the hospitals within their reach in order to make sure that no accident has befallen the young man.

By the time they are in the street headquarters at Scotland Yard has the matter in hand. At intervals throughout the day the private printing presses at the Yard produce a printed sheet with the latest confidential information on police matters, and this sheet is distributed hot from the press to every police station in London, and as there are three or four issues every day only an hour or two elapses between each edition. As a result by midday the description of the young man has been printed and is being distributed broadcast to the police. Every expedient is used to get it

round quickly, and in the case of some of the isolated stations mounted men convey it from place to place.

As soon as the Gazette is received at a station the officer in charge sees the description and takes action. Every hour or two batches of constables are paraded before him previous to going out on duty in the streets. To each of these batches he reads aloud the description of the missing man, and every constable goes out to his work with a picture of the fair haired, slim young man in his mind. Within twenty-four hours every member of the force has heard of that fair haired young man and is looking out for him.

But perhaps there has entered the mind of Scotland Yard the idea that crime lies at the root of the mystery, that the young man has been murdered. If that thought comes to Scotland Yard, another part of the great machine is set to work. The criminal investigation department is invited to lend its aid, and a detective inspector, with a little band of clever subordinates, sets to work independently of all that is being done in other directions. The young man's employers, his relatives, his friends, his acquaintances—every person he has known to speak to during the past week is exhaustively questioned, and people against whom there may be some kind of shadowy suspicion are unobtrusively watched without cessation by careless young racing men, omnibus conductors or city clerks, all of whom are really Scotland Yard detectives. And, while the newspapers know nothing, the police force of London is humming with the search for that fair haired young man.

Perhaps after two days the Scotland Yard squadron gets a clew and, uniting with the local special inquiry officers, tracks the fair haired young man to a shady lodging house in North Kensington, where, half starved, dazed with the effects of drugs, he has been locked in a cellar for forty-eight hours. He has been by some plausible means lured to the house in question and pilled with drink by well dressed scoundrels, who believed he carried keys belonging to the bank. Finding he had not what they required, they had temporarily locked him up, with what ultimate object can only be guessed.

There are hundreds of simpler cases which are solved in a matter of hours. It will be safe to say that the chances are ten to one in favor of Scotland Yard finding the whereabouts of a missing person within a week.—Frank Dilnot in London Mail.

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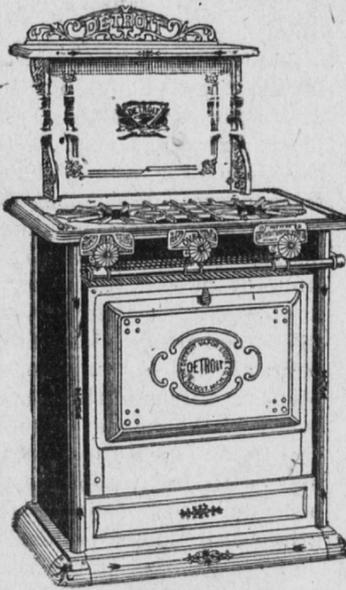
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