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d7 m6m 652

THE EVENING NEWS.

Thursday, - - Oct. 1, 1874.

The Ross Abduction and the Police.

The efforts of our best detectives, aided by the advice of the shrewdest legal minds, have ended in establishing the fact that the boy Ross has been abducted. This was something. It is so strange a crime to us—indeed we may say to this age—that at first we were incredulous and inclined to believe that the whole story was an unpleasant fiction, gotten up for some purpose other than the one appearing upon its face.

It is a fact, however, that a boy, the son of respectable and well-known parents, was picked up in a densely populated part of our country, in broad daylight, and carried off to parts unknown, and this for the purpose of forcing a ransom. To this end a correspondence has been obtained through anonymous letters addressed to the father and advertisements in the daily journals addressed to the abductors.

But beyond establishing the fact of the abduction the police, stimulated by a heavy reward and aided by immense sums of money and the most intelligent advice, have made no step towards the discovery of the child's whereabouts or the names of its cruel keepers. The letters from the wrong-doers are yet received by the unhappy father, and in a late one he is informed that this is but the opening of a new business in the United States. So far it has proved a safe investment, and from the anxiety to restore the boy, rather than punish the criminals, there is promise of its being lucrative.

This sort of crime is not uncommon in Greece, parts of Spain and the mountains of Italy. In these barbarous lands weak governments furnish enough police to aid in the crime. With us, however, we have yet to learn that our governments are weak. We have been taught that our police is something more than inefficient. The Ross abduction is but one lesson additional to many, proving conclusively that the force we have at such an enormous expense is not a police at all, but a political machine, kept up as a process through which parties in large cities are able to perpetuate their power. The most serviceable hacks about drinking-houses and other low resorts are put upon the police as a reward for past services and to be used in future contests. In the meantime men are murdered in their beds or upon the streets, robberies of the most insolent sort are perpetrated, and the wrong-doers go their ways unpunished—indeed, without detection. There is a belief, pretty well founded, that in all crimes involving money the police are in with the criminals, and we would not be at all surprised to learn that the very men employed in Philadelphia to arrest the abductors of this boy are the men concerned in the crime.

We are such a conceited race, so well satisfied with ourselves, that we can be taught nothing until we are fairly knocked on the head by some evil that it was impossible for us to see. The education of most nations is the education of self-depreciation. There is much to be learned by every people of the earth save this free-born people of the United States. We are born to knowledge that others have to acquire through hard study. But we know all about it. We are the bravest, best and most intellectual people on God's footstool. This is taught us in nurseries, schools, lyceums, churches and journals. We have a day set apart especially for the purpose of assembling and boasting. It is called the Fourth of July, and on that day we go through the ludicrous farce of bragging. It is hard to tell which is the most aggravating to a thoughtful mind, the noise of the exploding gunpowder or the senseless conceit of our blatant orators.

If the boy Ross is never returned to his heartbroken parents—or better yet, if the twenty thousand dollars are paid and the criminals escape, so as to fairly inaugurate the new business of kidnapping children—it will be a blessing to the country. We will have had the blow on the head that necessitates reform. This theft of little ones touches a tender chord, and will create much wrath, anxiety and excitement, and our amazed community will awaken to the strange fact that as against crime we have no organization.

To get this organization we must lift the police from the dirty political arena where that so-called body has been wallowing. The first step in this direction is to take the force from the town corporations and give it to the State, where it properly belongs. The next step is to put the police under the sole control of a commission for the entire State, composed of members appointed for life or good behavior. This power should extend to the appointment, dismissal and thorough regulation of the police for the State at large.

How to create, drill and control such an organization we can learn from England or France or Germany. It is a little hard that we of the free and perfect government should be forced to take lessons from an effete despotism. Nothing would drive us to this humiliation but a fear of having our republican throats cut in our beds—or worse, the danger of having our dear little ones stolen from us with impunity by the vilest ruffians. Rather than be subject to these abuses we will submit to a few lessons taken under protest.

The police of London is perhaps, take it all in all, the best in Europe. The board controlling it are not only active, intelligent and honest, but they have no motive influencing them other than their high duty. Politics has nothing to do with the police. The fact is, political patronage, as we enjoy it, is unknown to the benighted Briton. When Disraeli succeeded Gladstone in a political change far more radical than any change of administration could be with us, he found forty-three offices to fill—no more, no less. Poor creatures, don't we pity them! They do not know what a blessing it is to have ninety thousand officers to turn out of place every four years.

When a vacancy occurs upon the police, through death, incapacity, old age or resignation, the man appointed is selected, first, for his honesty, secondly, his intelligence; thirdly, his physical qualifications; and when once appointed it is for life or good behavior.

The man has found a pursuit on which to live, with a fund set aside and accumulating to support him in sickness, or when incapacitated through old age, for active service.

Under this system, life, limb and property are comparatively safe; crime before it is either held in check or gradually decreases. Nor is there any violence such as we suffer from the hands of our so-called police. The despotism is not felt even by the wrong-doer. An American is amazed at the patience and even politeness of these conservators of the peace. We have seen a tumult subdued and a crowd dispersed in London without one knock-down or a bloody head from the police. The turbulent and excited give way before this body, as a power that is impossible to resist. Ever in the right, always firm, yet patient, they feel back of them a great people and a powerful government.

But it is the detective department—the brain of the police—that challenges admiration. The men selected for their honesty and keen sagacity, anticipate crime in their knowledge of criminals. This body has become deservedly world-famous. A detective with us is generally a rogue who has failed in business and received his appointment on the lying axiom that it is wise to set a thief to catch a thief. He is an excellent man to know if one wishes to compromise with a scoundrel, and is ready to part with two-thirds of his stolen property so that he may regain the remaining third.

The police of our District are rather better than those of other cities of the United States, because the policemen are appointed and controlled by a commission. But there is no reason why it should not be perfect and a model to all the country.

In the meantime we hope the new business of child-stealing will prosper. We hope that all sorts of rascality will develop, until our people are driven to organize with a gleam of intelligence against wrong-doing.—*Washington Capital, Sept. 13.*

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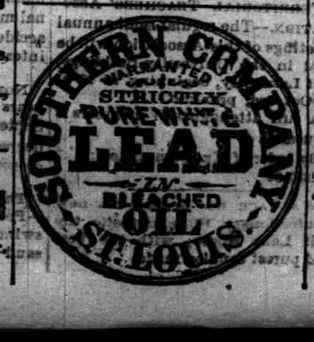

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