

LEAD AS CRAFTERS

Panaman Officials Put St. Louis Gang to Shame.

JUSTICE IS ALMOST UNKNOWN

Police Force is the Most Admirable Institution in the Republic, but a Generous Construction of Law Makes Them Idle.

MARTIN A. TEAGUE.

(Staff Correspondent of The Oregonian.)

LETTER NO. 12.

PANAMA, R. P., Dec. 22.—The most admirable institution in this republic is the police force. In intelligence, capability and personnel it is vastly superior to either the army or the navy, and for it the police has infinitely more respect than it has for either of the others. This force is composed of about 300 men, each a good specimen of physical manhood, distributed throughout the various cities and towns of the isthmus. It is commanded by Chief Arrango, who has his headquarters in this city and who directs its operations with ability. In Panama, Colombia and other larger cities in the republic the police are sufficiently large to be able to preserve order, while in the smaller towns and villages from two to six men are stationed. No town is too small to boast a little building in the center of the town in which is a sign bearing the legend, "Inspeccion de Policia," and while the force is essentially a non-militant organization, it does it works so well that public order is most excellently maintained.

The personnel of this force is restricted, in so far as restriction is possible, to native isthmians. Occasionally there is encountered a policeman who is not a native, but while the entire force is dark-skinned, the native element is far in the majority. Some members come from the southern department, and are comparatively well educated, and are, in fact, more or less a caste of men; but the \$30 (Colombian silver) paid as a monthly wage is sufficient to hold every member of the force in the most absolute allegiance to the new republic. The superior station the policemen occupy in the various communities is another anchor for their fealty. They are comparatively well lighted, their uniforms blue, with red trimmings, and white pipe helmets, are attractive, and they are looked up with such promptitude that the matter of public order is commonly regarded as quite the most comfortable berth procurable under the isthmian government.

An Orderly People.

Except that they are required to patrol their beats, which they do in a lazy sort of way, these men are not at all inclined to exert themselves, as the breaches of the peace are of infrequent occurrence. It is, in fact, quite remarkable that among a people so generally benighted as to be so much inclined to drink, and backward in their civilization, there should be a state of public order more excellent than is to be found in any city of consequence in the States, but such is the case. There are no public houses, no saloons, no street brawls, but these are of little moment, as they are limited to set-to's with the fists, and nobody can be seriously injured. Drunkenness is not looked upon as a public offense, unless the drunken man makes himself particularly obnoxious, for in this country drinking is the rule rather than the exception. Again, gambling is a common amusement, and places of ill-repute are never interfered with. These things, to be sure, that this police force has less work to do than in similar organizations in the States would be sufficient to explain the reason for here there is a very different and most generous construction placed upon what constitutes breach of the peace.

Methods of the Police.

The moment trouble breaks out the police blows his whistle and then mixes in the melee. That lightning pace of the police is a terrible weapon, and he uses it indiscriminately. Clipping is the method resorted to upon occasions for patrolling. When a policeman comes up with a crowd of street brawlers every body about can expect to receive a sound whack over the head from the mace. The greatest cause of trouble is the drunken man who makes himself particularly obnoxious, for in this country drinking is the rule rather than the exception. Again, gambling is a common amusement, and places of ill-repute are never interfered with. These things, to be sure, that this police force has less work to do than in similar organizations in the States would be sufficient to explain the reason for here there is a very different and most generous construction placed upon what constitutes breach of the peace.

Put St. Louis to Shame.

Admirable as this force is in itself, however, the administration of justice is little less than a travesty. It is administered under the immediate direction of the alcaldes of the respective cities and towns, and a rather sorry lot of officials these have proved to be in the past. Colombia made it a rule to appoint these men, and never to pay them. The result was that there developed a gang of grafters that would have put St. Louis to shame.

The business of the Alcaldes, who have been paid for nothing, is to turn his office to his personal account, and this the majority of them did with great success. Everybody knew that fines assessed against offenders were appropriated by the Alcaldes and applied to the liquidation of amounts due them for salary, and the same universal knowledge obtained with respect to the practice common among the Alcaldes of accepting small sums of cash as full satisfaction for sentences of penal servitude, but nobody ever objected or attempted a reform.

Instances of Police Justice.

Instances of these practices are most common, while the stories of what any other people would set down as outrageous exonerations of justice are bandied about with the utmost freedom. No white man on the isthmus will ever strike a native as to be blacken an eye or otherwise leave a mark on the native anatomy. The white men all have money and are afraid to turn his office to his personal account, and this the majority of them did with great success. Everybody knew that fines assessed against offenders were appropriated by the Alcaldes and applied to the liquidation of amounts due them for salary, and the same universal knowledge obtained with respect to the practice common among the Alcaldes of accepting small sums of cash as full satisfaction for sentences of penal servitude, but nobody ever objected or attempted a reform.

against him was conclusive, and he was sentenced to 60 days imprisonment. Kalesch felt satisfied; the ends of justice had been served. The next morning Kalesch's satisfaction changed to unbounded amazement when the burglar black turned up on the dock and asked to be put to work. Kalesch at once kicked him off the pier and then made some inquiries.

The sentence of 60 days imprisonment had been commuted to one night in the Colon calaboose in return for the payment of \$10 (Colombian silver), a sum the native's friends had raised and paid to the committing magistrate, who accepted it and signed an order for the thief's release. Since that experience Kalesch administers justice on his own account, taking care, by using his feet on the ankles of the offender's anatomy, to get a prima facie evidence against him.

Boot-Toe Justice Effective.

So summary and effective has been the justice that for months has oozed out of the toe of Kalesch's boots that now he has the hordes of black dock laborers reduced to a state of perfect subjugation. Order prevails about the pier; offenses are few, and the law is respected. The grand stands in terror of the big and powerful German. Kalesch is wise in his day and generation, however, and never since he became a dispenser of dock justice in Colon has he met foot in the native quarter of the town—there are too many blacks who would take chances on a long term of imprisonment for the satisfaction of running a knife into his back.

The foregoing incident is but one of many that might be cited, for all investigation confirms the fact that justice here is for the native and against the white man, who has money of which he can be sure. There are, however, exceptions to this rule, for once in a while an Alcalde will be found who believes in playing close to the white population. It happened so in Colon two or three years ago, when the first Governor of the isthmus, Molledas, was serving as Alcalde. Molledas is a friend of all Americans and the wisdom of nourishing that friendship in a city which is dominated by the white race is easily understood. One morning about 11 o'clock a crowd of Americans and Englishmen in Colon rolled out into the street from one of many saloons and entered a cab standing at the curb, ordering the driver to take them to a nearby gambling-house. The driver insisted that his services were engaged by another party, and refused to do the bidding of the unsought occupants of the cab. These men insisted upon going to the gambling-house, and the driver, in a fit of rage, was beaten almost to insensibility.

An Early Morning Trial.

The police came up on the run and the entire crowd of brawlers was arrested and hurried away to the station-house. Before the black cabdriver could enter a complaint against his assailants the latter had charged him with assault and battery and demanded that Molledas be sent for. Large, in the form of Colombian silver, the police force, and Molledas responded immediately to the summons.

It was decided to hold the trial at once, and Martin Higgins' saloon was selected as the courtroom. The crowd adjourned to that resort, where court was convened. Molledas took the stand, and the negro cabdriver, in charge of two policemen, was put in the dock. One of the Americans—the man who had struck the first blow—appeared as the prosecuting attorney, another undertook the defense of the prisoner, and the others in the crowd served as a jury. Champagne flowed freely during the session of the court, eloquent speeches were made by the prosecuting attorney, and the jury brought in a verdict of guilty. Molledas occurred in the verdict, sentenced the negro cabdriver to serve 15 days in jail, and the case was adjourned to the next morning, when the white man who had beaten him, unmercifully, went scot free.

A Sunday Morning Incident.

These two instances of isthmian justice are outside of a recent occurrence in the coast town of Nombre de Dios. Names of God—the oldest Spanish settlement on the isthmus. Business had been poor with the alcaldes at Nombre de Dios for many weeks, and he was in dire need of money. One Sunday morning the alcaldes from the mangrove mine a short distance in the interior jingling in his pockets a quantity of Colombian silver. The alcaldes summoned three policemen, gave to each a revolver, and putting a fourth in his own pocket, led the minions of the law on a hunt for the negro and his cash, a charge of disorderly conduct having already been framed against the fellow, who was entirely harmless and who had committed no breach of the peace. Turning a corner and seeing him a short distance ahead, the alcaldes called to the negro to halt. Instead of obeying the command the black broke into a run, heading back for the mangrove mine, and instantly the Sabbath-morning quiet of sleepy old Nombre de Dios was broken by a fusillade of pistol shots. The alcaldes and his three policemen were blazing away at that fleeing negro, desperate in their desire to corral the cash he was known to have on his person. To the fleet-footed negro and the poor marksmanship of his pursuers he owed his escape, for he succeeded in making his way back to the mangrove mine with his skin intact and the silver still in his pocket. He was followed by last report, still pursuing that particular alcalde.

System is to Be Reformed.

Under the republic there is a determination to correct these abuses and establish the administration of justice upon a more equitable and respectable basis. There is a feeling of general dissatisfaction, for, in fact, the officials are on other points, they are positive on this one. Their eyes are fully open to the necessity for reform in this regard, and they will be told whether they are fit to administer to the ill of people. The members of the board have not as yet made up their minds about what they are going to do with the osteopaths.

WILL SURVEY THE BAR.

Government Engineers to Ascertain if Channel Has Deepened.

Government engineers will make a survey of the Columbia River bar probably next week. Such was the information given out yesterday by Major Langitt, Soundings will be taken to determine whether the channel has deepened as reported by the pilots.

Stand on Constitutional Rights.

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo., Jan. 4.—The case of Prosecuting Attorney B. F. Stone of this county, charged with accepting a \$300 bribe, which went to trial today, was dismissed by Prosecuting Attorney Pro Tem. Brown because the prosecuting witness stood on his constitutional rights and refused to testify. The indictment charged that Stone accepted a \$300 bribe not to push the prosecution of one P. F. Ellis.

Dividend Shows Decrease.

NEW YORK, Jan. 6.—The directors of the American Car & Foundry Company today declared the quarterly dividend for February and May at the rate of 4 per cent a quarter, or 16 per cent annually. Last year the rate was 4 per cent. The regular dividend was declared on the preferred stock.

BOYS MORE FORAGE

Emergency Purchase of Hay and Oats by Government.

TO GO BY PRIVATE STEAMER

Shipowners Expect War in the Orient Will Soon Lift the Freight Market From Present Depression.

OREGONIAN NEWS BUREAU, Washington, Jan. 6.—The Quartermaster's Department today directed the Depot Quartermaster at Portland immediately to purchase 100 tons of hay for shipment to Manila by commercial steamer on the first of February. This shipment will not constitute a part of the contract for which

have his name heard and determined by three jurors selected by lot.

In the Province of Panama there will be two Provincial Judges for civil cases, and two of these of the criminal, with one civil and one criminal Judge in each of the Provinces of Colon, Bocas del Toro, Coclé, Chiriquí, Los Santos and Veraguas.

Each province will be divided into municipal districts, and in each of these districts there will be a municipal court for the trial of civil and criminal cases of a petty nature.

To each of these courts, from the lowest to the highest, there will be assigned a public prosecutor, to represent the state in the trial of criminal cases, and the right of appeal will be vested in the litigants.

This scheme for a judiciary provides for an organization greatly superior to that furnished by Colombia, and if the purpose of those in authority to free the courts of present corrupt practices is achieved, there will be an immeasurable improvement in all general conditions surrounding the isthmians, for heretofore the courts have existed largely for the purpose of mulcting the people, and justice has been as a howling farce.

RESIGNS AS LABOR ORGANIZER

G. Y. Harry Retires From American Federation of Labor Office.

G. Y. Harry, general manager of the American Federation of Labor, has resigned his position. The news has been

received with surprise, as he has been one of the most active and successful labor organizers in the country.

He has been in the service of the American Federation of Labor for several years, and has been instrumental in the organization of many labor unions.

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