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Police Science Book Reviews

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POLICE SCIENCE BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by

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HUE AND CRY, THE STORY OF HENRY AND JOHN FIELDING AND THEIR BOW STREET RUNNERS. By *Patrick Pringle*. William Morrow and Company, New York, 1956. Pp. 230. Illustrated. \$4.00.

This is an excellently told story of one of the most exciting and dramatic epochs in the annals of policing: the origins of professional policing in England about two centuries ago. This was a time in England's history when cities were lawless, when crime and robbery and rape were casual, when stealing bread was crime, and when the inhumane penalties of torture by fire were employed as desperation measures to preserve the peace. In the early years of the 1700's, England had no professional police forces. The once important sheriff and constable, who had done well in Norman times past, were decadent. The quasi-military police of the Cromwellian era had ceased functioning. "Municipal" policing was an unknown. Parochial and parish and merchant police in minor way attempted to control the objectives and incidences of crime. It is within this setting that two of the great pioneer masters of police establishment, Henry and John Fielding, began their great work of professionalizing policing. In brief, this excellent book is the story of the two brothers and their Bow Street Runners—the "thief takers" as they have come to be known in the literature of policing.

Within the 230 pages of this nicely illustrated and documented book, the author has given us a good and quite reliable view of the two Fieldings, their plans for the better administration of justice, and how they proceeded to organize policing as a first line of protection against criminality. In chapter heading sequence, the author describes: (1) London Life

and Death, (2) Thief-taker General, (3) Law and Disorder, (4) Trading Justice, (5) Mr. Fielding's People, (6) An Inquiry and a Plan, (7) The Blind Beak, (8) The Quality of Mercy, (9) P. C. Welch, (10) The Bow Street Patrols, (11) That Devil Wilkes, and (12) Extraordinary Pursuit.

The police officer will, I think, find Chapter VI (An Inquiry and a Plan), Chapter VII (The Blind Beak), and Chapter X (The Bow Street Patrols) of especial interest. One may recall that it was Henry Fielding's *An Inquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robberies, etc., with some Proposals for Remedying this Growing Evil* which focused the country's attention upon the causes of crime and which was influential in bringing about substantial Parliamentary reforms in the administration of justice. Chapter VI is an objective portrayal of this provocative "Inquiry." And while the "Inquiry" had not as much to say about needed reforms in policing, yet it laid the groundwork that contributed much to advancement of policing as a profession.

As the author points out, it was left to Henry's half-brother, John, to carry on in a systematic policing way the ideas expressed in the "Inquiry." Chapters VII and X, more particularly, describe the organization and the work of the Bow Street Runners, the vehicle through which professionalized policing was given its impetus. Nowhere is the Fielding philosophy and practice of policing better described than in one of the Fielding public announcements (pictured on page 112). Why do thieves and robbers and other criminals escape justice? For want of immediate pursuit. What to do about it? "Dispatch a set of brave fellows in pursuit, who have been long engaged for such purposes, and are always ready to set out to any part of this town or Kingdom on a

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Quarter of an Hour's Notice." Then, as now, good policing is based upon this same underlying principle—the swift and sure apprehension of those who violate the law.

This is a book which police officers (and

others, too) will enjoy reading. It will be a pleasant and fruitful experience.

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