

One of the worst cases that I have come across in connection with laxity in admitting men to the Police Force is that of a man named J. D., who was admitted as a probationer on the 15th November, 1905, and sworn in on the 22nd December, 1905. There is an extensive file relating to this case, and I have gone carefully through it, and the profound impression is left upon my mind that, had it not been for the pressure brought by a then member of Parliament, the man would never have been accepted. There are no less than three letters on the file from Mr. R. M. Houston, M.H.R., dated 15th April, 1903, 1st October, 1903, and 20th September, 1905, strongly recommending the man for selection. The inquiries about him were never satisfactory and were never properly completed, and almost every statement that the man made about himself was a lie, and he even went to the length of producing documents on behalf of himself that belonged to another man of the same name. He was finally allowed to resign as from the 13th April, 1907. It turned out that he had deserted his wife and family in England, and was a thorough bad lot. During the inquiries that were made before he was admitted to the Force, a constable reported that he had frequently seen him under the influence of liquor, and that once, when he was on a spree, he had an intimate connection with a certain forged cheque. Another constable reported that he was in debt in the district in which he lived, that he was of drunken habits, and very quarrelsome whilst drunk. One man said he was absolutely "no class," and totally unsuited for the Police Force. It is true that other people in various reports spoke of his good qualities; but, judiciously reviewing the whole case, I can see no excuse whatever for having admitted the man into the Police Force. I can only conclude, as I have said, that "political influence" was the deciding factor. The man, on the 16th November, 1908, actually had the impudence to officially apply for permission to get married in Dunedin, although he was known in the Department as a married man, having so stated in his application form. He finally left the Dominion with a woman. The Commissioner described him in his final minute on the papers as an unprincipled scamp.

I have gone through the files of a great number of applicants for admission to the Police Force with a view to satisfy myself as to the nature of the inquiries made. There have been so many instances lately of men after admission proving themselves to be perfect blackguards, and quite unfit for the position of constables, that it cannot be wondered at that one should be rather sceptical as to the real value of the preliminary inquiries made, even although they might appear *prima facie* to be most complete. I have dealt in detail with those cases where there was no doubt in my mind as to the admissions being due to errors of judgment. But I am profoundly impressed by the fact that, even in those cases where everything had the appearance of being satisfactory, and where the lapse appeared unaccountable, many of the reports obtained which have been so favourable have been by people known to myself in some instances as utterly unreliable. And herein I think lies the weakness. It is not very satisfying, after the event, to be assured by the Commissioner that every undesirable, so soon as discovered, has promptly received his *congé*.

Men entering the Force are dealt with as follows:—

The probationer at the present time goes into the depot, and remains there, being trained, for two months.

I recommend that the period be extended to three months, and that fortnightly reports be furnished by the Sergeant-Instructor as to the probationer's progress, character, and suitability for enrolment. Men with previous service should be required to go through the depot for such period, being not less than one month, as the Commissioner shall decide.

Each probationer while in the depot is paid at the rate of 6s. per diem, and, as I have already stated, out of this he has to pay 2s. 3d. per diem for messing.

I recommend that each single probationer continue to be paid at the same rate, and that each married probationer be paid at the rate of 7s. 6d. per diem. I consider that every encouragement should be given to married men to join, and under the existing conditions it is quite impossible for a married man to enter the depot, support his wife, and keep out of debt. I urge this as being a