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LONDON GAMING DENS

The Way the Police Descend Upon Them In a Raid.

SKILL, CUNNING AND DARING.

Absolute Secrecy Is Maintained by the Officials, and the Policemen Are Kept In the Dark Until the Last Moment—Getting Into the Club.

The police have recently carried out some sensational raids on big gaming clubs, and it may be interesting to learn how these raids are effected. This is how it is done in London: As soon as the detectives' suspicions have been confirmed they apply to the commissioner of police for a warrant to enter. The warrant authorizes certain officers mentioned by name to enter the club in the name of the king. Ordinary policemen are not permitted to carry out a raid, but the detectives can call upon them for assistance at the critical moment.

Absolute secrecy is enforced right up to the moment of entry. There is no excitement at the station on that day, and the men on duty have no suspicion of what is in the wind. Plans of the house are drawn and carefully studied by the raiding officers, for the doorkeeper of the club is prepared at the slightest alarm to send a warning to his customers, and every vestige of gambling apparatus will mysteriously disappear and the raid fail. A carefully planned ruse, therefore, has to be evolved which will disarm suspicion.

During the day a body of "reserve" policemen will receive a communication from the station that they will be required to parade at a certain hour, and they meet with no idea of what is expected of them. They are drawn up in line, and after names have been called over they are dismissed from the station one by one, with the injunction to be in the immediate neighborhood of a certain street in a couple of hours and not to get near the spot before the prearranged moment.

The first officer to appear on the scene is the one in charge of the raid. He is always disguised and usually looks like a well dressed man about town. He passes the club carelessly, but it is sufficient for him to learn from a confederate inside that gaming has commenced. A policeman then saunters to the corner of the street and stays there as though he were on "point" duty. Then, not till then, is the information of the precise club to be raided secretly conveyed to the attacking force in their hiding places, while the club, unconscious of its impending fate, pursues its gambling.

The first difficulty to surmount is to get past the burly doorkeeper. If this is not successfully done the raid will end in failure. Presently the sound of a drunken song is heard in the distance, and two apparently rough looking men come staggering along. As they near the entrance to the club they begin disputing and soon come to blows. The doorkeeper peeps through the wicket and orders the men away. One of the men rushes at the wicket and challenges the doorkeeper to "come outside like a man" and at the same time shouts out something about the character of the house. The combatants continue fighting, and the officer at the corner comes along and orders them away. The men return, however, to "have it out with the doorkeeper." The noise increases, attracting homeward bound gentlemen in evening dress, who gather round and urge the men on.

The doorkeeper by this time becomes alarmed, for the rowdy crowd will frighten away his clients. Perhaps just at this moment a member of the club arrives and seeks admission. The door is opened with the utmost caution to admit him. Before he has time to fasten it the two officers hastily secure the member and rush upstairs. The two combatants were disguised policemen and the onlookers detectives.

As soon as an entrance into the club has been effected the constable at the corner sounds his whistle, and before the sound has died away the whole neighborhood is alive with police. If the house boasts of a trapdoor on the roof, the flash of lanterns will be seen up there, the men having been concealed among the chimney pots since it was dark. The front door is secured, and the police form a guard around the house, so that escape is impossible.

Meantime the scene upstairs is one of the wildest excitement. The gamblers, intent on business, had not noticed the scuffle in the passage, and the first intimation they get of the state of affairs is when the door is thrown open and the officer in charge calls on them to regard themselves as his prisoners. Then they realize their position. The tables are overturned, and card counters and money roll all over the floor as the members endeavor to escape. They make for the street door, but, balked in this direction, hurry to all parts of the house to hide.

The crestfallen members of the club are conveyed to the station, each in the custody of two officers. Then the house is searched for the gaming apparatus. Every inch of the place is examined, for gamblers have remarkable contrivances whereby they can hide their apparatus in the event of being raided. Tops of tables are knocked off, flooring taken up and walls searched for secret cupboards. Yards of chalked string are regarded as prizes, and with these and more apparent proofs the case is ready for the magistrate. The evidence is laid before him, and the proprietor and members are charged and the sentence passed or a heavy fine imposed on the prisoners.—London Tit-Bits.

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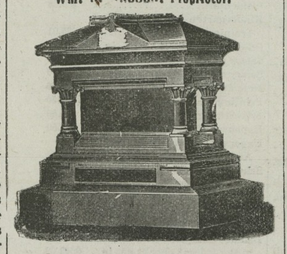

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