

URNS 500 RECRUITS INTO MODEL POLICE

West Point Captain Hopes That Pupils Will Set Pattern for the Future.

PLAN TO BANISH FAT MEN

Results of Two Weeks of Training Encourage Drillmaster, Who Praises His Class.

"The day of the old-time policeman of ponderous size and uncouth appearance has passed, and in his place it is proposed to have clean-cut men, polite, tidy, and energetic, whose personal appearance will inspire confidence and respect, whose conscientious efforts and attention to duty will relegate the time-worn jokes on policemen to the wastebasket, and put those who have blackened the entire force, because of the failings of the few, out of business."

These are the words of Capt. Herman J. Koehler, U. S. A., the famous drill master of the Corps of Cadets at the United States Military Academy, who has come to New York for the purpose of creating an esprit de corps in the Police Department. Capt. Koehler now has over 500 budding policemen under his immediate charge, and each day he puts them through the West Point system of physical exercises, talking to them, commanding them, urging them, and warning them, just as he does the "Plebs" at West Point. The room at Police Headquarters is entirely too small for Capt. Koehler's purposes, and so he has taken his 500 recruits to the armory of the Twelfth Regiment, where twice a day he drills them in the ways that have made the West Point corps the model organization of the kind for all the world.

Several months ago Major Gen. Thomas H. Barry, U. S. A., commanding the Division of the East on Governors Island, in a talk with Police Commissioner Waldo, suggested that it would be a fine thing for the department if a man of Koehler's stamp could be brought to New York to teach new policemen how to walk, how to run, how to stand still, how to dress properly, how to salute, and at the same time to instil in them pride in their organization, and impress upon them the necessity of hating graft, big or petty, in all forms.

And so it happens that Capt. Koehler received a month's leave of absence from his army duties and was told to come to New York and help Waldo put the recruits through a system of training such as no Police Department in this country ever has known. Commissioner Waldo returned only recently from a tour of Europe, in the course of which he inspected and studied the Police Departments of the great European cities. He paid particular attention to the methods of training and the administration of the departments.

"When the Commissioner," Capt. Koehler said yesterday, "returned, he said that in general efficiency, in the suppression of lawlessness and crime, the New York police force was more than the equal of any he had seen in the great cities of Europe. He confessed, however, that his trip had convinced him that the New York force was lacking in some things. The police of foreign cities, as a rule, make a most favorable impression upon visitors because of their general bearing. They inspire respect for the law and for themselves. The police of American cities do not inspire such respect. Americans, as a rule, do not hold their police in especial esteem.

"Realizing that the responsibility for this condition could not be attributed entirely to the attitude of the general public, nor, on the other hand, to the police, Commissioner Waldo set to work to remedy shortcomings of the New York police, so far as it lay in his power, trusting that success would bring about a changed attitude on the part of the people of this city.

Different Methods in Europe.

"In order to comprehend the magnitude of this undertaking it is necessary to describe briefly the composition of the police forces of the cities of Europe. Members of every large European police department are recruited from the military establishments of their respective countries and these recruits bring with them that sense of duty, and respect for constituted authority that can be learned only under military conditions. Having been soldiers and as such having been subjected to rigid discipline it is natural that these recruits should make good policemen. It is also natural under the circumstances that but little of their esprit de corps should be lost in their transmission from the military to the civil branch of the Government.

"Here in New York and in general in all American cities, such conditions do not prevail and since few of those who seek to join the police force have ever been connected with any military establishment there is an utter lack of appreciation on the part of the members of the force of the exceeding importance and value of this spirit in the development of the efficiency of a police force."

Capt. Koehler in his narrative omitted an important link in part of the story at this point because of his modesty. It is supplied for him. Commissioner Waldo, realizing that corps spirit was lacking in the force and that the men needed some sort of military training, decided to change the system of instruction of recruits and he made up his mind to begin with the 500 men then being prepared for the department in the old School of Instruction. He realized that Koehler was the man who could make the men of the police department of the future physically and mentally the superiors of those of today and at the same time imbue them with military spirit and bearing.

Koehler Long at West Point.

For more than twenty years Capt. Koehler has been in charge of the physical training of the cadets of West Point. Every West Pointer will tell you

that Koehler is in a class by himself and that he is the greatest physical instructor of the continent. Waldo wanted Koehler and he got him.

"Koehler was the only man for the job," said Commissioner Waldo a few days ago, "and I realized that he alone of all the men I knew could carry out the idea I had in mind. I had seen Koehler mould the rawest material into the most finished military product in the world, a West Pointer. I knew he was peculiarly qualified to train these young recruits and that I made no mistake is shown by the amazing progress of the five hundred recruits who are now being drilled by Capt. Koehler in the way they drill them at West Point."

And so Capt. Koehler came to New York. He was enthusiastic and he soon gained the confidence and respect of his pupils. They recognized in him a jealous guardian of the traditions and spirit of West Point. They realized that they were receiving physical and mental benefit. Capt. Koehler has a way of injecting pointed remarks into his work that make for the development of mental keenness and awaken a sense of honor, self respect and self reliance in those he is instructing.

Capt. Koehler now has had the police recruits in charge for two weeks. In giving his views of the work Capt. Koehler, continuing his narrative, said:

Capt. Koehler Had Misgivings.

"When Waldo first broached the plan to me I was very loath to tackle it. I, of course, knew the conditions abroad but since we are so far removed from being a military people I was skeptical not only as to the possibility but also as to the advisability of trying to give a military bearing to policemen. Then, too, my entire life had been devoted to the development of young men who are still at an impressionable age and I feared that I should find the material I should have to handle too old and not plastic enough. However, Commissioner Waldo's confidence in the ultimate success of the undertaking and his earnest desire to leave nothing that might possibly add to the efficiency of the force undone, finally persuaded me to undertake the task.

"My misgivings began to disappear when I was introduced to the first company composed of 125 recruits. I was most agreeably surprised to find that almost without an exception they were splendid types of young manhood; strong of physique and judging from appearances, much above the average in intelligence. What was true of the first company was true also of the others and I doubt if the equal of this body, for its age, can be found in any other organization in the country. The selection of these men is certainly a very great credit to those who are responsible for it, and the city is to be congratulated upon the acquisition of material that has every prospect of being transformed into reliable and efficient public servants.

"Personally, my interest in these recruits has been growing greater every day, for I have found them most responsive and enthusiastic and keen to do whatever is required of them to the best of their ability. I have taken particular pains to impress upon them that the object of this training is not confined to physical development; that while constant physical fitness and the ability to take care of himself in all emergencies are very important for a policeman, there are other things of equal importance which he must not neglect if he would contribute toward elevating the force in the opinion of the general public, thereby laying a foundation for a corps spirit now almost absent from the force.

"Nothing will bring this about so successfully as self-respect and proper deportment. The days of the old policeman of ponderous size, untidy appearance, and incorrect manners have passed, and in his place it is proposed to substitute clean-cut, tidy, energetic, and polite men, whose personal appearance and demeanor will inspire confidence and respect, whose conscientious efforts and attention to duty will relegate the time-worn jokes on policemen to the wastebasket, and put those who have blackened the entire force because of the failings of the few out of business.

"These and like matters have been impressed constantly upon the recruits, the greatest stress being laid upon the fact that, since they number about a twentieth of the entire force and are by far the greatest number that the force has ever absorbed at one time, the chief burden of the rehabilitation and rejuvenation of the force will devolve upon them.

Delighted at the Results.

"If actions, responsiveness, and earnestness count for anything and if my lifetime of experience in the study of human nature has taught me anything, I do not hesitate to put myself on record in predicting that the absorption of the 500 young men into the force will mark the beginning of a new era in the Police Department of New York.

"Capability on the part of an instructor counts for little when compared to the ability and willingness of absorption on the part of the pupils. And since these recruits have displayed a consistent eagerness to make the most of all that has been offered them, it is to them alone that the credit for their splendid progress is due.

"The Commissioner's confidence was not misplaced. A corps spirit has been engendered. How long it will last and how far-reaching its effect will be is now dependent upon the police officials and the public. If the former are conscientious in their efforts for the improvement of the force and if the latter will give the department a square deal and a little more commendation and a great deal less condemnation, there can be but one result—success and a department of which not only New York but the whole country will be proud. I believe that this will be the result."

Two more weeks remain of Capt. Koehler's stay with the New York Police Department. So successful has he been that the authorities are thinking seriously of bringing Col. Bethel, West Point's law instructor, to New York to teach the force what the law requires of them.