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City Document—No. 8.

ADDRESS

OF

His Honor John S. Sleeper,

MAYOR OF ROXBURY,

TO THE

Police Officers and Watchmen

OF THE CITY.


MAY, 1858.



ROXBURY:

JOSEPH G. TORREY, PRINTER.

1858.



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*To the Police Officers and Night Watchmen of the
City of Roxbury.*

GENTLEMEN :

You have just received your respective appointments for the current year, and have been duly qualified ; and I have thought it would not be inexpedient or inappropriate on my part, at this particular time, to address to you some brief remarks, faintly sketching your various duties, and reminding you that the discharge of those duties with fidelity and zeal, is important to the peace of the city and the welfare of the inhabitants.

You have been appointed Police Officers, or Night Watchmen, and are clothed with the authority of Constables. The object of your appointment is to secure the safety of the city ; to preserve the peace, and suppress disorders ; and it is expected that you will use the power with which you are clothed, on all occasions, to promote good order, to prevent crime

and the violation of the laws; and when crime is committed, to detect and secure offenders and bring them to justice.

You will act under the immediate orders of the City Marshal, who will receive his instructions from the Mayor and Aldermen. You will give close attention to his directions; confer with him in all doubtful cases; listen to his suggestions, and faithfully execute his orders. Any departure from his directions, or delay or negligence in executing them, will be regarded as a breach of discipline.

As our City increases in population, and our streets are thronged with travellers and passers-by, it becomes every year more important that the Ordinances should be strictly enforced. This is required for the public good. Irregular proceedings that might have been winked at or overlooked without much impropriety five years ago, may now be regarded as serious offences against peace, order or propriety, and call for the interference of the Police.

It will be your province to *report* each day to the City Marshal, to be entered on the record, every arrest made by each officer, with the circumstances attending it; the names of all suspicious persons, and all suspicious places; all shops, or other places of resort, kept open at a late hour in the night; all disorderly places, gaming houses, and tippling shops, or

those which are reputed such, with the reasons for such repute ; all disturbances of the peace, violation of the Sunday law, cases of drunkenness, or any other information which may aid in preserving the peace and safety of the City.

It will be your duty to *arrest* all persons detected by you while in the act of committing crime, and all persons, whom you have good reason to believe have committed crime, and are attempting to escape ; all persons guilty of gross Sabbath-breaking ; of disturbing religious or other assemblies met for moral or benevolent objects ; all who are guilty of a breach of the peace, assaults, fighting, disorderly or violent conduct, of breaking windows, lamps, or of other malicious injuries to property or persons ; all night-walkers, and drunkards found in the streets ; persons stealing swill, vagrants and vagabonds ; and all persons guilty of resistance or abuse to officers or magistrates in the performance of the duties of their office ; all persons who assemble in groups on the sidewalks, obstructing the passage and insulting the passers-by ; and all who being unlawfully and riotously assembled, refuse to disperse after proclamation made.

You will particularly direct your attention to the early discovery of fires and the immediate raising the alarm for the same ; to the detection of burglars, incendiaries and other crimes ; to noting violations of

the City Ordinances and the laws of the State. In a word, you will be unremitting in your endeavors to preserve the peace and safety of the City, and protect the inhabitants from those annoyances, depredations, and other evils, incident to a dense population, which always furnishes facilities for crime.

If you should require aid at any critical time in the execution of your duties, recollect that you have power to command any person or persons to assist you in such an emergency ; and any person refusing such assistance when duly required, is liable to prosecution and a penalty.

Vagrants, and those who are found intoxicated in the streets, suffering and helpless but peaceable and inoffensive ; persons who are destitute, and those whose offences are slight, may be placed in the lock-up any time during the night, and retained until morning, when they will be discharged, or sent up to the Police Court for trial, according to the nature of the case, and at the discretion of the City Marshal. *But none are to be discharged without his direction.*

It may sometimes happen that persons are discovered in the streets, overcome by sudden illness, and deprived of their recollection as well as the use of their limbs. Such cases, by a discriminating observer, can always be distinguished from cases of drunkenness ; and it is hardly necessary to state that it is the duty

of an officer to interfere promptly under such circumstances, minister to their aid, and ascertain the homes or friends of persons so afflicted.

There are some offences and violations of the City Ordinances, of a character, arising from indiscretion or ignorance, when a notification or an admonition from an officer will produce a salutary effect, and prevent a repetition of the offence. It will therefore be well to *admonish* all persons who ignorantly and unwittingly violate the City Ordinances, or laws of the State, and particularly those laws and regulations which forbid the discharge of fire arms ; the firing of squibs, crackers or other fireworks ; the shooting of birds ; placing obstructions in the streets or on the sidewalks ; fast driving through the streets ; leaving horses or vehicles on cross walks, or fastening horses to shade trees, injuring trees, lamps, buildings or fences ; throwing filth or impure water into the street ; digging up the street or sidewalk without permission ; blasting rocks without permission ; leaving coal or fuel in the street or on the sidewalks at night ; throwing rubbish in the gutters ; kindling bonfires in the open air, and making noises by outcries, singing or otherwise. And whenever you find that your admonitions are disregarded, you will enter a complaint for repetitions of the offence, and try what virtue there is in the penalty.

In cases of breach of the peace, fights and riots, you will, as I have already said, lose no time in making attempts to quell the disturbance, by commanding the parties to keep the peace, and arresting them if they refuse to obey. If resisted in the execution of your duties, call upon the by-standers for assistance if necessary, and if peace cannot be restored, or the offenders arrested on the spot, carefully observe their appearance and conduct, ascertain their names and residence if possible, and other circumstances, so that you can identify them if so called upon to do in a Court of Justice, and testify against their offences; but as soon as practicable rally a force sufficient to arrest them and bring them to trial.

When any fires occur in the City, by night or by day, threatening loss of property, it is the duty of all the Police Officers, not on regular duty, to hasten as soon as possible to the scene of action, report themselves to the Engineer in command, and under his direction, and with the assistance of the Officers in whose district or beat the fire may occur, render all possible aid in preserving order, repressing riotous demonstrations, and guarding any property which may be saved from the destructive element.

It is important to the peace of the City and the welfare of all good citizens, that any loud noises or disturbances *in the night time*, and particularly any un-

necessary discharge of fire-arms of any description, and especially of field-pieces, without especial permission, should be promptly checked, and the reckless offenders, who have so little respect for the regulations of our City, and the quiet of the inhabitants, should be arrested, and brought to justice.

You will be particular to look closely after all persons of equivocal character, or suspicious strangers; watch them, and learn their associates, their haunts and places of resort; ascertain their names and places of residence, and ostensible occupations, and be prepared to pursue, detect and arrest them, when in the commission of crime, and to testify to their identity, their presence, or connection with the crimes of others; and regularly report to the City Marshal all suspicious circumstances connected with their appearance and conduct.

Among the pests in a populous community, is a class known as receivers of stolen goods, who under the guise of dealers in miscellaneous articles, encourage theft, robbery and crime, of almost every description. There is reason to believe that this class has multiplied in this and the neighboring cities within a few years, and their nefarious business carried on under plausible cover, is reduced to a sort of a system. It will be one of the duties of the Police to watch narrowly all such sinks of iniquity, and keep a strict eye

on the owners or agents, or all persons in any way connected with them; and whenever a sufficient pretence offers, the premises should be strictly searched, which is often the means of detecting perpetrators of crime, who have long evaded the punishment they deserved.

In discharging his various and responsible duties, every person connected with the police department should maintain a firm, considerate, decided manner, avoiding all altercation, irritation, or exhibition of temper, simply stating the law and his duty in as few words as possible, and calmly but firmly requiring obedience to the law. He should perform all his duties with a due regard to the proprieties of life and the usages of society. In all cases notice should be given of the authority under which he acts, and under no circumstances should he allow resistance to lawful authority to go unpunished.

The conduct of a member of the Police Department should be exemplary in all things. He himself should strictly obey those laws, the infraction of which he is bound to punish in others. He should be vigilant and observing, prompt in action and energetic in his proceedings, and although the *outline* of his duties may be marked out, much must, of course, be left to his discretion; and although it may sometimes appear arbitrary, and be unnecessary, to insist upon the strict

execution of the law, yet cases often occur when he would be justified in going to the full extent of his legal responsibility, and enforcing the laws to the very letter.

He should be careful to avoid gossip; listen and observe every thing; know all that is going on, but be cautious in communicating that knowledge to others. And while it is presumed that in common with every good citizen, he will cherish definite opinions in relation to the political questions of the day, it is not expected that he will enter into warm political discussions, be the mouthpiece of a party, or enact the part of a demagogue.

A Police Officer or a Night Watchman in a City like Roxbury, with a numerous population, in the very neighborhood of the metropolis, and with but few preservers of the peace, will find his business, if properly attended to, no sinecure. He will have enough to do in perambulating the streets, preventing violations of the law, and executing his various duties. He should at all times remember that in his care, judgment, sagacity and vigilance, are reposed a weighty and important trust, the peace and quiet of the City, protection of the property and persons of the citizens, by day and by night.

I have thus, gentlemen, endeavored to give you a short sketch of the various duties which you are call-

ed upon to perform, and which you are bound to perform to the best of your ability, and in conformity with your oath of office. It will be seen from what I have stated, that the duties of a Police Officer or Night Watchman or Constable, are manifold and responsible, requiring qualifications not found in every man. And no one should enter upon the duties unless he is confident in his ability to execute them faithfully, and determined to do it. And you may be assured that in the strict and vigilant performance of your various duties, you will receive the approval, sanction and support of the Board of Aldermen, and the thanks of every friend of good order, of every honest citizen.

JOHN S. SLEEPER, Mayor.



