

It is noteworthy that the Indian police was a failure in all parts of the country as a rule, except on the Plains. This was because the plains Indians were familiar with the idea of police authority and therefore more ready to submit to their control. There have been instances where, when some very serious problem arose, the old warrior societies threw off their disguise and appeared in Indian dress. Thus when the Sun Dance was ordered suppressed on one reservation, the police alarmed their agent by doffing their uniforms and dressing themselves in the regalia of the warrior society. So garbed they went into the great camp of armed tribesmen and prevented the dance. Had they gone in their uniforms a fight might have resulted, but in the familiar costume of the warrior society, they were able to exercise their traditional authority, break up the campe, and prevent the dance. Afterward they washed off the warpaint and put on their brass buttons again.

The success of the Indian police on the Plains is all the more striking when we consider how far behind all other European institutions lagged among the Indians. This was partly due, of course, to the fact that there was no other American institution on the reservation which the Indians could learn to respect or admire. The Bill of Rights was not enforced there. There was no free speech, no authorized freedom of assembly, and no liberty of conscience. Even an Indian could see that the school system was ridiculous, and the ritual of the church offered little to parallel Indian ceremonies. But the police they understood, and of all institutions, it was most successful.