

PRISON REFORM.

The Efforts Being Made by Penologists and Criminologists.

LIFE IN A MODERN PENITENTIARY.

The Experiences, Views and Ideas of an Ex-Prisoner Who Served Eight Years Behind the Bars—The Parole Law of Ohio and How it is Utilized by Burglars—Life Prisoners, etc.

(The writer of the following was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Ohio Penitentiary for fighting a street fight in which the defendant of his family was killed. Paroled after eight years imprisonment, he proposes in the columns of the Globe to tell "an unvarnished tale" of life in a modern penitentiary.—EDITOR.)

There is a parole board in Ohio the members of which are the Board of Managers of the penitentiary—five in number. It takes a unanimous vote of the five members of the board to parole a convict. The board meets the first Tuesday of each month, hears applications and grants paroles. All first-class prisoners having served a minimum sentence of ten months are eligible to parole, except life prisoners for second degree murder. Life prisoners for rape and life prisoners under the habitual criminal act are ineligible, however. This discrimination against the life prisoners convicted of murder in the second degree works a great hardship and is unjust. Even its injustice was noticed by the tender-hearted McKinley, and in his last annual message to the Legislature he recommended that this class of prisoners should be made eligible to parole after having served ten years imprisonment. The shade of difference in Ohio between manslaughter and second degree murder is very slight, but the penalty attached to each crime is not made so. For instance, while the extreme penalty for manslaughter is twenty years, the prisoner is eligible to parole after having served ten months. When a prisoner is paroled he is set free and reports once a month on a printed blank his whereabouts, employment and circumstances. He is prohibited from leaving the State until the expiration of his original sentence, unless pardoned outright by the Governor.

During the McKinley administration Julius Whiting, of Canton, President McKinley's own city, was president of the Board of Managers of the penitentiary. He was a man of high character and more or less ineligible to parole he endeavored to violate the law in favor of some special friends of his behind the walls.

Among the number this eminent citizen endeavored to parole was the most notorious and desperate prisoner inside the walls, a villain named W. W. Varney alias Burns, the notorious jewelry thief and pal of Prentice Tiford, recently mentioned in the papers as robbing the post-office street boxes.

This fellow Varney's history was furnished the Board by the Missouri authorities, where he had done time, and President Whiting unable to secure his parole endeavored to get Governor McKinley to pardon him. Varney forged letters within and his pal without the prison walls, purporting to come from some of the most prominent men in Missouri recommending his pardon and alleging that it was heir to a large sum of money, and had at one time been private secretary to ex-Governor Francis. Mr. Whiting took, or pretended to take, stock in these letters, and Varney was about to be pardoned when the discovery was made, through Detective John T. Norris, that the letters were forgeries, and that Varney was well known St. Louis thief named Burns. Mad, and disappointed by his failure in this direction Varney, whose escape he had, with the assistance of confederates, dug clean under the walls, threw vitrol in the face of a fellow prisoner whom he suspected of betraying him. For the crime he was given additional years, but his friend Whiting, of the Board, and the warden, C. C. James, did not abandon him. The latter official appeared in court the day of Varney's sentence and pleaded with the judge to give Varney a parole, but had but two years of his original sentence to serve, for breaking the window of a jewelry store in Cincinnati and running off with a pair of diamonds, and many minister hints were floating around the prison that earnings won by the wives of certain officials, as well as the studs in the shirt fronts of the officials themselves, were a portion of the Cincinnati jewelry store. However, after the vitrol throwing incident and the maiming and disfiguring for life of his victim Varney was given complete charge of the clothing or tailoring shop of the prison. Here he made on an average of \$200 per month, which he divided with those who put him in charge. He got drunk when he pleased, reeled or was carried across the prison campus in a helpless state of intoxication the warden's wife remarking, on one occasion to some lady acquaintances who were her guests and were watching the prisoners march: "There is that Varney drunk again, as usual!"

Varney had special food prepared for him and went to bed at whatever hour of the night he pleased. His cell was never locked, and he and Mr. Whiting, as well as Warden James, have been seen promenading the prison yard, arm in arm, long after midnight.

Until the administration of Gov. Bushnell and the appointment of E. G. Coffin as Warden this state of affairs existed in the old Ohio prison, and under the administration of Gov. McKinley, who was made aware of these facts time and again by friends of the writer. Mr. Coffin put Varney under the discipline the other prisoners were subjected to, and after one or two attempts at suicide he finally died in the prison hospital. There never was a scandal in any prison to equal this Varney affair, not even when a female convict accused the Warden of being the father of her child.

But coming back to the parole system of the State. It is all right, but like every other good thing it is misused sometimes. For instance, a list of the paroles granted under the Whiting Board showed that 70 per cent. of the prisoners paroled were burglars by profession, but having been convicted for the first time in Ohio, and no knowledge existing of their convictions elsewhere, owing to the abolition by the Whiting Board of the Bertillon system, they were eligible. Why burglars are paroled at all is an unaccountable thing outside the Board of Managers, for it is a certain fact that burglars are not caught in their first attempt and that

they have committed numerous burglaries before conviction is just as certain. They invariably return on their release to their old trade and the prison receives them back as inmates sooner or later.

The violations of paroles under the Bushnell administration were less than 10 per cent., and the paroling of burglars was discouraged. Men who, in the heat of passion, in a general fight or temporarily laboring under a species of insanity brought on by the persecutions committed by a majority of its degrees, are as a class accidental convicts, that is, they are not criminals in the sense of moral depravity and professional following of crime for a subsistence. They may never commit another crime in their lives, as they have never violated the law except in the solitary instance of the crime for which they were convicted. Now, these men, if their crime is not too atrocious and deserving of the extreme penalty of the law, are the proper category for given paroles and a chance after a reasonable expiration behind the walls.

Of course, men who assassinate or who poison their victims, kill for money or for the possession of a paramour, are excluded from this category of eligibles and should suffer death or be imprisoned for life in fact as in theory. There are over one hundred life prisoners behind the walls of the Ohio penitentiary for murder in the second degree, and many of them have been confined for the past quarter of a century. These men have no influential friends on the outside, and it has been the custom in Ohio, time immemorial, to investigate the cases of the more meritorious among this class and present their names for a holiday pardon, Christmas day, Thanksgiving day, the 4th of July, and under Gov. Bushnell, Memorial Day were the days upon which these favors were conferred.

Gov. Bushnell inaugurated the practice of pardoning an old soldier life prisoner on Memorial Day. Gov. Nash, the present incumbent of the gubernatorial chair, who was a ninety-day soldier, has set this humane practice aside and pardons neither old soldier nor anybody else, either on holidays or week days. He will realize in the coming campaign in Ohio that inhumanity, towards the old soldiers especially, does not pay, and that it will be rebuked.

Among the life prisoners in the Ohio penitentiary are numbers of meritorious cases known to the writer, who had superior means to investigate not only the facts in the case, but to form a correct estimate of the characters of the men undergoing the penalty for the one sin of their lives. We propose in this paper to name a few from the number of those deserving clemency and whose grade of crime is but the mere caprice of a jury or is due to circumstances other than the direct testimony offered against them.

James Britton, a Highland county farmer and a man who was universally respected by the people of his county, whose family and connections are the leading citizens of that portion of the State, was a Christian character and a virtuous life within and without the prison walls is proven by the official investigations made in his case, has been twice rejected by the Board of Pardons for commutation of his life sentence or for pardon. These rejections are due solely to the fact that the friends of the victim of Britton's bullet are influential people and they are determined he shall die in prison if they can keep him there.

Britton's first wife died, and her relatives set up the allegation that she died from overwork on the farm. It was proven, however, that she always had servants, and even a carriage at her disposal.

Mr. Britton owned at the time one of the finest farms in the State, was rich and could afford the luxuries his wife enjoyed. But Britton committed the unpardonable sin of remarrying, and then another woman, his second wife, more specific, notably a brother of the deceased lady, who never missed an opportunity of hurling epithets at Britton wherever he met him. This went on until Britton was almost insane, but being an extremely religious man he turned to God for help, and his family, whom he dearly loved, was another restraint which kept him from violating the law.

One day, however, in driving through the town of Hillsborough his brother-in-law sat passed sitting on a chair in front of a hotel, and as he saw Britton he exclaimed: "There goes the hypocrite son of a — who worked and starved his wife to death." Impulsively Britton drew his revolver and fired in the direction of his brother-in-law. The bullet killed him on the spot, and Britton was, of course, arrested and tried for the crime. The first trial resulted in a second degree murder verdict, but his attorneys secured a new trial ordered in an adjoining county. Here for five years he remained in jail, and finally securing the services of the notorious criminal lawyer Charles Blackburn, of Cincinnati, he was advised to continue his fight, and a member of the bar \$1,000 to let the trial judge settle the degree of the crime, assuring Britton at the same time that the degree would be manslaughter, and that in view of his long incarceration he would get out in a few years in the penitentiary. Britton fatally consented, and the equally notorious "Dave" Pugh, of Columbus (now happily off the bench he prostituted), as presiding judge, after Britton's plea, fixed the crime at second degree murder and sentenced the unfortunate man to life imprisonment. Britton has now been in prison much longer than the ten-year period Governor McKinley fixed or recommended a life man should serve and be paroled.

If ever there was a real true Christian confined behind prison walls that man is Britton. He is president of the bible class of the prison and is universally respected by the warden and convicts, the most hardened of whom acknowledge the brand of Britton's Christianity as the genuine article.

Thomas Rice has been in prison about twenty years. He was convicted in Canton, where he was on a spree at the time of murder in the second degree, although the crime committed would be exaggerated if called manslaughter. Rice, who worked and lived in Zanewille, visited a friend in Canton, and the two friends went on a drunk. The friend became quarrelsome and repeatedly fought with Rice. The two men, finally, wandered out in the suburbs of the town, where they were again seen to quarrel and fight. Finally Rice broke away and was climbing a fence to get away, when his friend closed in on him with a fence rail and Rice, who had a pocket knife in his hand, struck out and cut him. Rice then left, not dreaming the blow he had struck was fatal. Subsequently arrested and tried for the crime in Canton, where he had neither friends, money, nor influence, he was convicted of second degree murder and given a life sentence, twenty long years of which he has served. He is a trusted prisoner and given charge of a gate, where he can run off any time he pleases, but Rice will wait for a pardon until a Democratic governor comes in or a humane Republican executive.

The most remarkable case of life prisoner in the Ohio penitentiary, however, is that of a mulatto who has already served almost thirty years and neither asks nor wants a pardon. He is employed in a little workshop by himself, where he repairs and mends furniture cell buckets. It is all the same to him who is governor of Ohio, and Governor Nash's lack of humanity or Governor Bushnell's humane and merciful disposition affect him not, he is independent of either and goes on day after day, mending his buckets as contented if not a happy man, where all others are miserable and anxious to regain their liberty.

Some of the life prisoners by devotion to study within the walls have mastered many of the difficult branches of the higher education and are accomplished men of letters. The members of this class were the chief contributors to the Prison News, the weekly organ of the big prison. Here is a fair sample of the poetry, contributed by a noted life prisoner:

THE CONVICT SEA LONGINGS.
The ocean's swell, the surf's white spray,
The rolling waves in stormy play,
I see with vision clear
The gathering cell buckets, it heall's cry,
The thunder's peal and sea gull's cry,
I see again and hear!

The scudding moon athwart the deep,
The lightning's flash, the tempest's sweep,
With sea and shore his broadcast a content,
The gallant ship with flowing sail,
The seaman's song, the masting hail,
I see again and hear!

Safe from the storm, my prison cell
These wild sea dreams can never quell—
To me so fondly dear,
To live on this, in this, in this,
Nor pine, nor spurn such safe retreat
Is what I—waking—hear!

Hail foaming billows' angry roar,
On treacherous rocks, the surf's shore,
With deafening breakers near,
To sink with ship and seaman brave
And find, at least, a stiller grave,
Than live a felon here!

This poem met with the commendation of William "Lord" Howard, the prison editor, when the poem was published. "Lord" Howard was, or had been, a poet himself, but in this branch of polite literature truth compels us to state that he was a rhymer and a good deal of a pirate. He was constructed for robust literature and plain criticism, as he lacked imagination in everything but rhyming schemes. In his poem he was an all round professor. The Globe is informed that he is again editing the Prison News, having succeeded in winning the confidence of the present Warden (Darby) as he formerly was and subsequently betrayed the trust reposed in him by Warden Coffin. Still, the Globe must, in justice, state that no better equipped prisoner than "Lord" Howard could be placed in the prison editorial chair, as he is an able writer and elementarily well grounded in all branches of English literature.

The "Sea Longings," quoted above, evoked from another life prisoner the following:

THE CONVICT SOLDIER LONGINGS.
The heart-throbs for a soldier's life,
In smiling peace or glorious strife,
The sailor's oar, the merchant's trade,
For some in chains, their martial rage
And soldier blood—of easy trace—
Betwixt the groom, the brigand, and
To ride a steed of mottled rind,
In dancing plume with eyes of pride—
And hearts to dare and do.
What bliss such a life would afford!
And if grim war unshakes the sword
What bliss and glory too!

To hear the roll of charging drum,
And see their lines exulting come,
With fury of the poet himself, but
To feel the curl when columns reel,
And see the sweep of flagging steel,
For glory or the grave.

Let those who'd live in sheltered cell
Their groans and tears in pity tell,
And sigh till latest breath,
Hail victor cheers when banners flee,
And waving banners streaming free,
For liberty or death.

The Spanish war was prolific of reams of all kinds of poetry while the writer was editor of the Prison News. The present paper must end with this tribute to Hobson by one of his convict admirers, which we accepted and published from a cord of similar poetic contributions:

HOBSON OF THE MERRIMAC.
Who steered towards the Spanish fleet,
And rivaled Cushing's daring feat,
Whom the world's eyes followed with delight,
Their fiery bolts to turn him back?
In Santiago's guarded bay,
Who held his course when the wind of day
And blocked that harbor's narrow way?
—Hobson of the Merrimac.

Who sailed "Old Glory" to the mast
As for a prize he fought the sea,
And "worked" the Spanish fleet at last
In a beautiful Gulf de Sag?
Who cheered his own country's van
As through the murderous fire he ran?
Oh! match his dauntless heart, who can—
—Hobson of the Merrimac!

Where duty calls or glory leads,
Columbia's sons no urging needs,
In honor's name, no fear of odds,
No lying face can ever black,
While Sanborn's harbor rocks,
A warning on the crooked member
The memory of his deed abide—
—Hobson of the Merrimac!

[To be continued.]

America's Relationship to Other Countries.

"For years I've been a self-appointed missionary to bring about the union of America and the rest of the world. I have sought to be a union of friendship and esteem and fellowship, an alliance of the heart which should permanently and beneficently cement the two peoples together. I've marked this mission of mine up with commitments to all peoples wherever I've been. They ought to be united. Behold America, the refuge of the oppressed from everywhere (who can pay \$50 admission)—anyone except a Chinaman—standing up for human rights everywhere, even helping to make China let people in free when she wants to collect \$50 from them. And how uselessly England has wrought for the open door for all! And how piously America has wrought for that open door in all cases where it was not her own!"

"How generous England and America have been in not compelling China to pay exorbitantly for extinguishing missionaries. They are willing to take products from them,—fire-crackers and such,—while the Germans must have monuments and any other boodle that is lying around. They've made Christianity so expensive that China can't afford German missionaries any more. "Any how, get to the rescue of Cuba, struck the chains off, and set her free—with England at our back in an attitude toward European powers which did us good service in those days, and we confess it now. Yes, as a missionary I've sung, my father, is an Englishman; by his mother, he is an American; no doubt a blend that makes the perfect man. England and America—yes, we are kin. And now that we are also kin in sin, there is nothing we desire. The harmony is complete, the blend is perfect."—City and State.

BENEDICTINE WINE.

The Real Fecamp Article and its Spurious Imitations.

MOST FAMOUS OF WINES.

The Secret of its Manufacture Preserved for Centuries—Recollections of its Unique Distilleries, Museum, and Surroundings—The Peculiar Benedictine Bottle, Label, and Other Interesting Things About Benedictine.

At Fecamp, France, is made the celebrated Benedictine wine, known to the world over. In California a Benedictine wine is distilled, which sells to the uninitiated for the genuine article, and if the imbiber knows no better he is, perhaps, as well pleased, or at all events as well off. However, he who has once tasted the Fecamp product can never be deceived. A visit to this historic town is recalled by the presentation to the editor, the past week, of a bottle of the Fecamp Benedictine. It is worth a visit to Fecamp to go through the distillery where this famous wine is manufactured.

To give a detailed account of all the curiosities and objects of interest in the distillery buildings would require a book, and that no small one. It is rather a pity that the contents of the museum are not catalogued for the benefit of visitors. M. Violet le Due, the famous architect, described it as "a veritable little Cluny," and the description is accurate enough. Statues of marble and stone, with strange Aegian smiles, carved ivory, old grescener tables, abbots' chairs, pyxes of different ages of ecclesiastical art, ancient chalices, coffers, clocks, sacerdotal woven gowns, seals, manuscripts, and a vast variety of objects, interesting not only to the collector, but also to the student of art, are to be seen there. And perhaps the most interesting of all these matters was a seventeenth century bottle stamped with the seal of the abbey, in every respect similar to that which holds the modern Benedictine. That was the ancestor of the vast and noble army of liquor bottles (last year 1,750,000 were sold) which has conquered every nook and corner of the planet in the name of St. Benedict and his monks. From such a bottle, the world's most famous Benedictine distilled the periscope cup from which Francis I., on his first and last visit to the Abbey of Fecamp, drank as he sat in the saddle before the arched doorway. This notable visit forms the subject of a fine series of glass windows in the abbey's buildings. In after years, hearing a Breton nobleman bragging about the wines of his native land, the King remembered the Abbot's cordial. "Sir," said the King, "your Breton wines are the greatest I have ever drunk, and are fit only to give a villain the colic. Ah! but if you had been talking about the good cordials made by the monks of Fecamp! On the word of a gentleman, never have I tasted anything better."

From such a bottle D'Arignani poured out a stirrup cup for his friends and for himself before they set out on a certain business. With bottles of the selfsame pattern poor people were comfortably doctored for three centuries, and the Benedictine brothers solved themselves whenever too much study had wearied the flesh. After the revolution, when Christianity was driven out of the monastery with a peasant's stick, the monks fled to the mountains, and the Benedictine system was organized on the decimal system, the monks of Fecamp went out into the bleak world, each bearing his bottle, and the steward of the abbey fled to Entretail with the famous recipe. In later years, the monks' parchment fell into the possession of M. Alexandre le Grand, a veritable Alexander the Great, leading forth an army of stubborn broad-based bottles to a world-wide conquest.

When, in 1863, the existing company, "La Benedictine" was organized (the \$100 share is now worth \$1,400, and last year's dividend was 34 per cent.), the bottle proved itself a champion, and vanquished a crowd of claimants to the kingdom of the Benedictine. The glass case, covering the whole of a wall in one of the distillery rooms, are between 600 and 700 of the vanquished rivals of the true Benedictine. All of them closely resemble the Fecamp Benedictine, but on close inspection, more closely inspected, slight differences in the labels and seals are discernible. For example, the three decorative letters to D. G. M. (Deo optimo magistro) above the little cross in the circular label are often replaced by two or three other letters, and these in many cases are merely the initials of the person or persons responsible for the fraud, who seem to have been ignorant of the meaning of D. O. M. and the cross below. To this crowd of evasive newcomers are constantly being added, for nowadays the law of trademarks shields this Napoleon of liquor bottles, and "Le Benedictine" never stints the money required for fighting imitations. In one recent lawsuit \$20,000 was spent, and it is probable that the conquest of these hundreds of imitations must have cost them more than \$500,000. And it would be more interesting to know how many of the money has been lost in the vain attempt to destroy the monopoly possessed by "La Benedictine." But a monopoly founded on sheer excellence and buttressed by the Church and the law is not likely to be overturned. Perhaps when the Charterhouse Company gets to work in downright earnest the manufacture of Benedictine will become less profitable.

The image of the Benedictine bottle is to be seen everywhere in Fecamp. Wrought in the stone and metal work of the huge pile of distillery buildings, worn as a badge by the workpeople belonging to the Distillery Band, gorgeously printed on the menu cards of the fete, perched proudly on the highest points of the town, such as the tower of the abbey, such arch was entirely composed of Benedictine packing cases—gloriously displayed in stained glass windows—one of these windows representing a meeting of the directors, and set for a sign in every cafe and in nearly every shop. There is no spot in the town where you cannot see at least one of these bottles or something exactly resembling it. Even if you leave the town and, following the footsteps of William the Conqueror, walk down to the beach between the lofty sheer chalk cliffs, you shall have no chance to forget it.

The distillery buildings are exceedingly well arranged and equipped. The actual process of distilling is carried on in a large laboratory above, in which there are ten gigantic tun-shaped vats, containing together about 110,000 gallons of the liquor. Immediately beneath is a series of large cisterns, in which are stored the reserve of old cognac, the vessels of carefully

chosen honey, the essences of certain herbs, a plant with a yellow blossom, common in the uplands of Normandy, was one of them—and other ingredients of the liqueur. The making and mellowing of the stuff requires at least two years. The product of the laboratory is driven by means of compressed air through a shining intricacy of pipes—refreshingly cool, picturesquely serpentine, splendidly polished—first to the storage vats, and then to the bottling room. From the bottling room the bottles are taken and stored in racks, some of which contain twenty thousand bottles.

As in all important distilleries, all the subsidiary processes are carried on under the same roof, and not a foot pound of power is allowed to run to waste.

What is the secret of the Fecamp process? Whatever it may be, it is most religiously kept. With the exception of Messrs. Le Grand (who hold 60 per cent.—a controlling interest—of the shares) and the other directors, and perhaps one or two of their trusted employees, nobody working in the distillery knows the whole process, and what they know they will not tell. But if there is a secret it is that the quality of the honey used is the chief point to be considered.

This honey, every pound of it, comes from certain districts in France, where, it may be assumed, some particular flower is common. To the presence of the aromatic scent of this unknown flower in the honey used is ultimately due the faint yet obvious, the definite though indefinable, flavor of the Fecamp Benedictine. It is no trick of distilling that is responsible for that romantic, aromatic bouquet. Assuredly, if there be a secret in the process, it consists in the fact that the late M. A. Le Grand took the bees, as he had taken the dead and good monks, into partnership in his undertaking. Only a bee could gather together parti-colored perfumes and bind them for a time and add a body to the soul, as it were, by perpetuating their evanescence in the form of honey. Look into the amber depths of a tiny goblet of Benedictine, and you will see there the busy shadow of the bee, poised above a straw-colored blossom.

If it is not their possession of this secret (there be a secret which has enabled the directors of La Benedictine to sell their stuff in Vladivostok and Lima, in London and San Francisco, in Johannesburg and Calcutta. If a company could buy the secret outright and manufacture a liquor in every respect similar to that made at Fecamp, they would soon be compelled to go into liquidation, partly because the Church would not help them to push their goods, but chiefly because they could not lawfully put their stuff into that sacred and hallowed bottle, to which we have already paid homage in terms almost inadequate.

Original European Languages.
It is said by philologists that there are 13 original European languages, the Greek, Latin, German, Slavonic, Welsh, Biscayan, Irish, Albanian, Tartarian, Illyrian, Arzigian, Chancian, and Finnish.

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