

PRISON REFORM.

A Problem Touching Women Up for Solution.

THE WIVES OF CRIMINALS

And the Wives of the Accidental Prisoner Banker, Lawyer, Editor, Farmer, and Public Official Who Fall, Contrasted by One Who Has Observed Them for Over Eight Years in Their Prison Visits.

Ninth Paper.

(The writer of the following was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Ohio Penitentiary for fighting a street duel in which the defender of his family was slain. Paroled after five years imprisonment, he proposes in the columns of the Globe to tell a plain, unvarnished tale of life in a modern penitentiary.—EDITOR.)

We have read, in a general way, about everything that has been written by criminologists on the subject of crime, its disease, from the point of view of one school, and its hereditary transmissibility from the Lombroso physical and mental scientific standpoint, but we have never read a paragraph nor even a hint on the phase of criminal manifestation which will be dealt with in this paper. For the eight years of our enforced servitude in the State of Ohio we have seen all kinds of kinds and conditions of men immured behind stone walls, the gamut of whose crimes emulated every offense known in the penal calendar. There were refined, educated gentlemen, and there were the Lombroso type of criminals, the "professional," it is even now painful for us to recall the distressing scenes we have witnessed in the guard-room of the prison, where the last parting took place between the husband, the public official, the lawyer, doctor, editor, farmer and other "accidental" criminal with friends and relatives. The anguish of wife, sister, brother and children or parents on parting from the loved one, who was about to pass through the iron and down to the interior of the prison would draw tears from the most callous and excite the sympathy of the coldest heart. One unread in the transient character of all earthly affections and unacquainted with the vagaries of human affection, could not feel a sacrifice to even doubt the genuineness of this grief and would be willing to pledge his soul to its lasting character while life itself remained.

But, alas! for poor, weak, human nature, the wife who has fastened to her husband's arms in that last embrace, within a few months has applied to the courts for a divorce on statutory grounds, viz: Her husband being a convicted felon, undergoing penal servitude. The children, who wept until their sobbing touched all hearts, have welcomed the new and forgotten the (natural) father behind the bars. Even the sister, sweetheart and brother have philosophically braced up, and, whereas, their visits for the first few months were regular, they gradually fell off, and as the years stretched out contented themselves with sending the father, son or brother an occasional letter.

We have seen the wife of a Cincinnati banker, a refined, cultured lady, live at the Washington residence for a week at a time during the first few months of her husband's incarceration in order to be near and see or speak to him. Her devotion excited the writer's warmest admiration, and we have learned our faith in the loyalty of this particular and exceptional member of the better or higher class, and felicitated ourselves that in this case faith and marriage vows would be sacredly observed by the woman for the fallen man. Fallen in the eyes of his destiny to surround her with the luxuries she craved, but which his salary as teller he was unable to gratify. Hence his fall, for, in the excess of his love and devotion he took the money of the bank, and, as in so many similar cases, his speculation failed, and his disgrace and the prison followed in their natural sequence.

Poor Cunningham was only a type of the members of his class; confident, loving and devoted to his beautiful wife, whom he knew would never desert him. To her credit, she did all that a loyal wife could do to secure his parole, and remained faithful to him for a whole year! Then he received the fatal notice by the sheriff to answer his wife's bid of worse. And so his romance ended, and his faith in all womankind except his mother. All prisoners, however depraved, except their mothers from their bills of attainder against women.

Three, four or five years is the longest term any of these "accidental" criminals serve as prisoners to the State. They are either pardoned, paroled, or their terms expire in from one to five years, yet the wives of their bosoms, in more than 90 per cent of the cases coming under our observation, divorced them on the statutory grounds of "criminal conviction" before the first year of their imprisonment expired! And this, too, where the large per cent had children whom one would naturally think might restrain the mother from putting this additional sorrow upon the broken heart of the husband and father, who was generally the least guilty of the two, for, in the larger number of cases, the extravagance, frivolity, vanity, etc., of the wife, or the expense of supporting the wife's relatives was the moving cause of the embezzlement or defalcation of the "accidental" prisoner.

We now come to the phase of criminal manifestation which we have nowhere found in the books on crime or criminals. And that is the loyalty and unyielding faith and devotion of the professional criminal's wife, "woman," sister, or brother, or other kindfol, but especially the wife or "woman," as a mistress is styled by these outlaws and outcasts of society. The more successful the crime the more loyal and attentive the wife or mistress to the man behind the bars. Every visiting day she trudges to the prison with a basket loaded down with eatables and a bouquet of all kinds in season, and even when rainy or high-priced, she procures some how for her husband, but not a thief, swindler or pickpocket husband, who probably never did an honest day's work since she knew him, and mayhap whipped her as many times as she had hairs in her head. She embraces him fondly when permitted, sits lovingly by his side, caresses him with hands over his, helps to pick out the nice bits in the basket to tempt him, and possibly receives an approving grunt or a semi-fervent smile for her reward. We have watched these scenes by the hour, noted the women and the wives of these men, whose profession is "crime," and marveled how the good God should so arrange matters that the heart-famished, high-spirited and noble-souled fellow peering anxiously

through the bars of the guard-room gate in longing expectation of a visit from wife or sweetheart, must turn away with a lump in his throat, disappointed, broken-hearted and utterly crushed.

On these visiting days, when under the modern humane system, the wives and relatives of prisoners are granted permission to enter the prison-yard or campus, and sit, talk, or walk around the interior of the prison with the unfortunate one in prison garb, nine out of every ten of the visitors are the wives and relatives of men who follow crime as a profession when at liberty. The percentage is greater and out of all proportion to the classes immured, for, as a rule, more than one-half of the prisoners are first timers, and the greater number of those are men who, previous to their convictions, were reputable citizens and occupied fair positions in the outer world.

To note the expressions on the faces of the unfortunately decent and well-raised prisoners, whom neither wife, relative or friend visits, is to feel the iron enter one's soul indeed. And misfortune it is truly that a man who is a convict has ever been decent, well-raised or used to the comforts of a Christian home and the caresses of wife and children. Better for him he had been an outcast, a pariah, a thief, a villain all his life, and have thus secured the unselfish love of even the "woman" or the weak-faced wife, who fondly and devotedly sticks through thick and thin, until the gates of the prison opens to him and she receives him in her arms. And she is sure to be on hand when his time expires, even if she has to tramp many weary miles to reach the penitentiary. We have known numberless cases of this class of women moving into the city from even distant States, and taking service as cooks or chambermaids in hotels and private families in order to be near their husbands and have the privilege of sending the well-filled basket of luxuries once or twice a week, and visit him on the Sundays allowed or to the prison. Every cent, or to the money earned by this menial service is at her husband's disposal, and she cunningly smuggles into him, despite the vigilance of lynx-eyed guards, the small bottle of whisky or cheap cigar. She will take any risk to see her stolid and apparently unappreciative husband or "man," but she is generally afraid to risk taking in the liquor, as discovery would bar her from all future visits. She is cute as a fox, and if her man insists on getting the liquor she surmounts the difficulty by securing a cook or some male friend or acquaintance to smuggle in the whisky. After all, there is very little of the stuff introduced clandestinely into the prison, for, after a certain period, the great or consuming desire of the prisoner is to get his wife or his very depraved old toper he will not permit, much less solicit wife or relative to bring in any.

It has been noticed that as a rule the wives of life prisoners wait a longer period before divorcing their husbands than any other class of prisoners. Life prisoners are usually a higher class of prisoners than their fellows in crime, excepting, of course, bankers and professionals immured for embezzlement, etc. The life prisoner has probably never dreamed of committing a crime until the moment when he took the law into his own hand. He would scorn to rob, embezzle, forge or swindle, and the crime of murder for which he has been sentenced is seven times out of ten done in the heat of passion to avenge an unbearable insult or in defense of his life.

The law of self-defense is only probable where the community is impartial, and no community is impartial where the homicide has been committed, hence the self-defense defense never succeeds in acquitting a prisoner above the Mason-Dixon line. No judge will grant a change of venue in the face of a public opinion which demands the trial and punishment of the prisoner in the city or town where the crime was committed. The public is usually misled by those interested in the conviction of the prisoner, and the press is influenced one way or the other to deceive the public and malign the prisoner. It is impressed on all that a signal example must be made of the homicidal to prevent a recurrence of such atrocious murders and as a deterrent to the commission of future murderous outrages upon our community. Hence he is usually condemned before being placed on trial, and the trial is a mere perfunctory preliminary to his execution or imprisonment for life. The State has unlimited resources, it has the press at its back, and cash in the treasury. The prosecuting attorneys are ambitious to secure a conviction, the judge falls in and rules with public sentiment, and the prisoner has nobody but a hired attorney and intimidated witnesses to face a hostile public, an abusive press, and jurymen whose minds were made up before entering the box.

In the cases of lesser felons—or lesser felonious crimes—the jury is influenced by the fact that if it fails to convict the cost of the trial will be paid out of the county treasury, while, on the other hand, if a conviction is secured, the State pays the cost. Of course, in murder trials, where the expenses of a trial are much greater, the jury is more than ever anxious to escape a mistrial or acquittal, for, as a rule, they are taxpayers and prefer that the State at large should bear the expenses rather than their immediate county.

Thousands of men have been convicted because of this unjust incentive to the selfishness of taxpayers in small towns and even cities, and the prosecutor's most brilliant plea when asking for conviction is a reminder to the jury of "the costs in this trial." But, all this is known to the intelligent layman as well as practicing attorney, and we can pass it as one of the "reforms" which calls to heaven and earth for immediate adoption. We return to the prison and the convict undergoing the penalty of his crime.

Life prisoners are the most trusted class of prisoners, because, as a rule, they are men with but a single crime, committed in the heat of passion, through provocation, drink or some cause other than jealousy, gain or bloodthirstiness. There are a few representatives of this latter class undergoing life imprisonment, but nineteen-twentieths are men who lived honorable, honest lives up to the commission of their one great offense against society. In prison these men are obedient, tractable and trustworthy, and there is no record of one of their number attempting to escape, however trusted. They live on in the hope of ultimate pardon, and their average sentence is a little over eight years actual imprisonment. It is unnecessary to state that many of them spend a lifetime, and sometimes ten, fifteen and twenty years or more in prison, but twenty years of eight or nine years embraces the whole number of actual servitude by life prisoners.

(To be continued.)

HIS SUCCESSOR.

Candidates for Hon. H. Clay Evans' Shoes.

NOT AS BAD AS PAINTED

The Tool of the Administration and the Gold Reserve—The Reforms the New Commissioner Will Have to Make—Kelly, Brooks, Cuddy, and "Johnnie" Woods Could be Replaced without Injury to the Service.

The rumor is current, and generally believed, that the resignation of Petera, of Kansas, will be appointed Commissioner of Penisons on the 1st of July. The Globe is informed from a worthy source that this may be so, if the President is able to place Mr. H. Clay Evans, the present Commissioner, in another office to the satisfaction of Mr. Evans. It is a well-known fact to those in authority that the "pinching" of the old soldiers received at times during the administration of the office was not altogether due to a desire upon the part of Mr. Evans to have such a policy, but that the orders came from higher officials; in fact, from those who molded the policy of the Administration because of the advisability of looking after the Treasury reserve. This was deemed necessary and good policy as long as the reserve in the Treasury was large. However, the increase of revenue due to the war tax has changed the necessity that the Administration had to handle, and consequently the purse-strings were loosened, and now the policy of the Pension Office is not at all the same as it was when the pensions were delayed and thousands of them rejected under stringent and harsh requirements. Mr. Evans stood the burden of all the condemnation without a word, and the President appreciated his silence and is unwilling to let his good name go without something "equally as good."

The new Commissioner will have many reforms, no doubt, but none he could inaugurate would be received with greater satisfaction than giving an overhauling to the personnel of the office. For instance, he could commence near the top by taking a look into the Second Assistant Commissioner Kelly. This official would not be missed very greatly if succeeded by another man; nearly any selection would be an improvement on Kelly. It is something of an enigma to many what Kelly is for, unless to look consequential and impress some of the "ladies" of the office. Space will not afford a more extended notice to Kelly to-day, but later on something interesting may be said of the Second Assistant Commissioner.

Another one that could be placed among "the missing" without any great loss to the efficiency of the office would be Appointment Clerk Brooks. This individual is small in stature, intellect, and in his own estimation reach a height of six feet or more. Enough of Brooks at this time.

Chief Law Clerk Cuddy is another official incompetent to fill the position that good luck, or a pull, has bestowed upon him. He, too, could be relegated to a copyist's desk without injuring the service further than to perhaps add another incompetent to the roll of copy followers. The new Commissioner would do well to interrogate Cuddy in his legal knowledge. Last, but not the least insignificant of the officials that could be wadded to the outside or reduced in salary is the Assistant Chief of Files, "Johnnie" Woods, who hails from the shores of the Wabash, though not a singer of sweet voice, but a political sycophant, who cloyed rather rapidly. It is told of "Johnnie" that when in the Hoosier State he was pretty good sort of a Democrat, and, even after sojourning at the Government trough was known as something of a Democrat under the administration of that party. Many clerks think "Johnnie" by his physique, would make a better porter than assistant chief, but that may be because "Johnnie" is great of weight and lacking in the other qualifications which are necessary even in the Assistant Chief of Files.

The foregoing are a few of the male employees the new Commissioner might consider with a view of decimating their wages or lifting them to the free air of the ordinary citizen of the District of Columbia.

As to the female employees, the Globe will tell something of them at another time but it will come near working practical reform to get rid of the worthless males first. The undesirable of the other sex generally follow in the trail of the vicious of the masculine gender, and the Globe believes to remove the latter will eradicate the former.

"Chimmie" McFadden.

Washington, June 25.

EDITOR GLOBE: That word "nepotism" seems to have taken very few around town—in fact lots of people have been writing and talking of it who never knew its meaning before The Globe sprung it. Trips to the "dictionary stand" to find out the exact meaning of the word were so frequent in one division of the Government Printing Office that the foreman had to call halt and ask what all the excitement was about. But I did not start out to write about the word "nepotism" but to bring to the attention of The Globe another family which is practicing it, viz: Jimmie McFadden, who lives in a corner of North Capitol street and Jackson alley, is a letter carrier, and his wife Minnie works in the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. The old man, (that is, Minnie's father) runs the bicycle store on the aforesaid corner, and there is an unmarried daughter in the family who also holds a government job.

This is only one instance of the many which exist around Swampoodle (and mind you, this is outside of the G. P. O.), but if The Globe is willing to give space to further news from this fertile field I will present some startling disclosures later on. W. C. B.

The Louise Home.

Complaints have reached The Globe from time to time touching this Corporation and the men and women who manage it. The matron is accused of running things in a high handed manner, and the food is reported to be of poor quality and insufficient in quantity. The "freezing out" process is

being worked full time and the old ladies are afraid to complain for fear of being peremptorily forced to leave. The Globe hopes that these complaints are exaggerated and that the management will see to it that the wishes of the founder of the institution are fully complied with and lived up to. The matron can do a great deal by a little kindness. It is uncharitable to be unsympathetically dictatorial.

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