

PRISON REFORM

How Warden Coffin Began His Good Work of Reform.

BRA STRIPES ABOLISHED

And the Prisoners Hold Up Their Heads For the First Time—The Infamous Lockstep, Which Would Make Devils Out of Saints, Also Discontinued—Other Common Sense Reforms, Including an Enlargement of the Prison School and More Correct Behavior on the Part of Guards and Others Insisted Upon—Interesting Details of Life in a Great Prison.

PART III. THIRTY-NINTH PAPER.

There is an incubator which hatches most of the devil's chickens, or chickens that used to belong to the devil before that sulphurous personage was abolished by polite theology—and its name is Ignorance. Crimes are the devil's chicks, and a vast number of the offenses for which men suffer in prison are brought into being in that incubator. The man whose education has been omitted or neglected is fatally handicapped in the struggle for the prizes of life. The educated find it hard enough to make both ends honestly meet, sometimes, and when hard times comes the ignorant man is the first to go under. Of course there are educated criminals, but they are exceptional. The Ohio penitentiary has a school worthy of its renown, and here the minions of misfortune and wrong doing can win the great prize of practical culture, which brings dollars and sense. LEARN AND EARN is an honest motto, as true as if it had been written a thousand years. Except possibly, in times of wide-spread distress, he who learns can earn and easily, too, because education, in part, is the art of getting along in the world.

The number of pupils varies but little, the average attendance being about seven hundred, of whom fifty are Indians. The period of instruction in the school room is from 6 to 7:30 p. m. Lessons are studied in the cells until 8:30 p. m. Most of the teachers have held responsible positions in the enfranchised world. A specialty is made of arithmetic, because of its value as an active stimulant to the powers of observation. Nothing is so valuable to the learner or to a man engaged in the active pursuits of life, as a clear understanding of his theme, subject or problem, with an intelligent power to weigh its elements, estimate their force and relationship, and so interpret results. Mathematics is of the most avail to him in these things, but as the advanced mathematics cannot be studied to advantage in a pent-up office of a prison school room, the humbler branch, arithmetic, will supply that which is useful and immediately useful in all the ordinary affairs of life. Several studies have been added to a curriculum that is necessarily limited owing to the fact that as most of the pupils are employed during the day, the school can be opened only in the evening.

One of the greatest and most beneficial reforms of Warden Coffin's administration has been the relegation of the time honored regulation convict striped suit to the limbo of things that were. The man who can wear a garb of that kind for several years, or even one, and put on reformation with his civilian suit when he is discharged from prison, is of the stuff that heroes are made. Every time that the wearer's eye lights upon it he is painfully taught that his clothes are the habiliments of degradation, and it cannot be fairly said of him that with his stripes he is healed. They keep the wounds of crime open instead of cicatrizing them, because they are a constant reproach to him—the visible curse of society. There is an accusation, punishment and malediction in each stripe, because he sees that he is a marked being, made as different in appearance from his fellow-men as outward and visible signs can manifest and emphasize a difference.

To preach amendment to him while he is thus constantly punished on every inch of his body, and made a moving monument of shame is bootless, unless the inducement of a speedy change of garb can be held out to him as a reward for good conduct. We need not wonder that wardens, chaplains, teachers and guards have accomplished so little, by precept, sermon, or example, toward the reformation of the imprisoned law-breaker. This ever-present, ever-cursing garb has neutralized their efforts. Warden Coffin's dislike for the striped vestments of his wards was like the antipathy held by Eve's descendants toward the serpent that beguiled her. A prisoner once said: "Every time the old man looks at the clothes of one of us living barber poles his eye glitters like a snake's." Another remarked: "He doesn't want his boys looking like tigers walking on their hind legs." When he announced in chapel to the assembled twenty-two hundred that he intended to do away with the stripes, a shout arose that almost loosened the slates off the roof. It was like the cheer of a charging army, and if it were not too out-of-date to believe in angels, one might well suppose that heaven struck a louder chord of praise at that moment. There are some moments that are big with fate, for good or evil, and that was one of them. A thousand crimes died in that acclamation, a thousand men were born again to a nobler purpose and a better life. That shout was a halcyon, the joy cry of redemption.

When the warden announced that all who had not been reported at the end of six weeks should be clad in a grey suit, like a civilian's, it was supposed that only a minority would win the coveted honor by remaining impeccable for forty days and forty nights. But when the day arrived nearly seven-eighths of them were found eligible to first grade clothing. And yet people exist who assert, with loud emphasis, that the penal wards of society can only be controlled by harsh measures. In less than two weeks after the adoption of the new clothing the number of infractions of rules had fallen to one and one-fourth per cent. As the warden has often said, twenty-three hundred preachers could not make a better showing. That number of theologians might get to arguing too emphatically about free will and predestination and lose a few marks.

No saints that have ever walked on earth have been required to walk more uprightly than the prisoners in this institution. The standard of conduct is lofty, immaculate, multiplying rules and regulations. While it adds incentives to hope and ambitious effort it affords the subject, keyed up to a high grade of demeanor, above that of the ordinary law abiding citizen, the hope that, when he is freed, no reaction will bring his conduct down to a lower level than the best class of citizenship requires. His grading depends upon rigid rectitude. Think of only five men out of every four hundred being reported for such niceties of misdemeanor as "Bed not properly made," "Clothing not in proper order," "Coat not buttoned in line," "Inattentive in school," "Out of place," "Not at the door for count," "Not promptly out of cell when company is called." Each man has a book in which he keeps an account with the state of Ohio. If he has been as truthful as George Washington, as punctual as Benjamin Franklin and as painstaking as Alexander Hamilton, the state owes him five marks at nine o'clock in the evening. This is his day's wage, and he credits himself with it in his pocket day-book. It will be seen that, for a month of thirty-one days, he may have one hundred and fifty marks to his credit. If he loses no marks at all for four consecutive months, he receives a reward of one hundred and fifty additional marks, which gives him surplus capital. But to remain in the first grade he is not obliged to realize five marks for every day in the month; he is allowed a margin for loss. Of course a first grade man may slump to the third if his offense is serious. This plan of classification has been vindicated by results, as already shown in the surprising decline in the number of reports for breaches of rule. Hope and ambition, those twins of the human soul, are rarely separated; where one is the other will generally be found. They either run a dead heat in the race of life or leap the rails together into suicide. So the prisoner who is the accountant of his own conduct finds these friendly spirits at his elbow at every sunset, encouraging him, pointing out what he has already gained, and picturing what is to come in bright colors. They show him that evening comes with a reward, and he looks forward to the next for the prize it will bring. He knows also that poor work may affect his account; his energy, pride and perseverance are awakened, the quality of his work improves, his skill increases and his intrinsic power becomes more valuable. His self-respect is thus built up from day to day, and when he is discharged he has a wise contempt for the temptations of the past, and being self-reliant, he will be self-denying and self-supporting. Thereafter his chief trial will be the prejudice of those who know his past—no small trial, truly—but his self-respect gives him endurance and persistence. He is reformed.

He can bear himself, if not proudly, at least not abjectly, and certainly without shame, or flushing with mortification as he passes the lady visitors who, from under the ancient aycamore, watch him march past in the small park within the enclosure; especially as he wears a neat fitting suit of a quiet color. Shakespeare never penned a truer line than "the apparel oft proclaims the man." If he wears a suit of motly, he will feel like a fool; clad in stripes, will feel debased; respectfully clad, will feel respectable. Before the abolition of stripes and lockstep, the prisoner walked with downcast eye and dejected or defiant mien; now he bears himself like a man. Once he cared nothing for his personal appearance, and, indeed, if he wore a necktie it might be confiscated and the wearer coarsely ridiculed as a flaming dandy, by whom does the reader suppose?—a former high official, who seemed to have got the idea into his knotty head that a prisoner must be made to resemble a man outwardly as little as possible. But, as Governor Bushnell has said, in speaking of our present officials, we ought to be thankful they are humane and intelligent, in a word—gentlemen.

It is well to bear in mind that these reforms have had the sanction of the entire board of managers, two of whom are Democrats, the remaining three are Republicans. But humanity and philanthropy are not monopolized by any one political party. These gentlemen are actuated solely by consideration for the well-being of society through the reformation of crime and the betterment of the condition of the prisoner. They work together for the common good, bringing their trained minds and experience to the examination of problems than which there are none greater nor any that are more fruitful or far-reaching in their effect on the social fabric, of which human life and character are the warp and woof. They and the warden have a responsibility cast upon them by the people of Ohio that is, probably, not borne by the managers of any other state prison in this country; a responsibility, however, that gives them, happily, a greater latitude of innovation than is enjoyed by others. In most of the states the managers, wardens or directors have a system laid down by law that they must follow without deviation; its metes and bounds being rigidly specified and enacted, such as the reformatory systems of New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Illinois. Those states have adopted certain "rules and specifications," presented by some writer on the subject, in all their rigidities, as if wisdom had spoken its last and highest word in their terms. Other things may change, but these systems are superior to the mutations of time and circumstance. They are like the laws of the Medes and Persians; managers cannot alter them at their discretion.

The legislature of Ohio, while making full provision for the adoption of reformatory methods, has wisely considered that criminology, as a science, is as yet in its infancy, and that the present is the period of experiment. It looked abroad, and being satisfied that something better than man had known was yet to come in this regard, judiciously gave the managers carte blanche to adopt any system that might commend itself to their judgment, subject to the approval of the governor of the state. This provision in its depth of thought, in its comprehensive appreciation of the status of the great sociological problems involved in the subject, has placed Ohio distinctly in advance of every other state in the Union and, doubtless, of every other country in the world, in her attitude toward this great question. Warden Coffin was known to have a plan thought out and worked out, the fruit of many years' experience and reflection that had been tried and proved successful, in some of its features, during a former period of four years, and the managers gave it their support and the assistance of their own thought and experience. The law referred to is that of May 4, 1891. Section 7 says:

"The Board of Managers shall, subject to the approval of the governor, make such rules and regulations as they may deem proper for the prisoners as shall best promote their reformation and, generally, as may from time to time appear to be necessary or promotive of the purpose of this act. They shall make provision for the separation of classes of prisoners, their division into different grades, with promotion or degradation according to merit, their employment and instruction in industry, their education, etc."

The Board of Managers and warden having tried to effectuate the will of the people, as expressed in the foregoing law, it is right that the people and the General Assembly should know what success has attended the effort, and what is the promise of its future.

An early visitor one morning in the chapel of the institution heard shrieks of apparent agony coming up through the floor, accompanying the sound of blows. "What is that?" he asked, as his face blanched. "Oh, that's punishment going on down in the cell," was the indifferent reply. The visitor looked at the pulpit stand, at the portly and gilded Bible that rested serenely upon it, glanced at the face of the pitiful Saviour pictured upon the wall, stopped his ears and stepped outside. He had heard enough to satisfy him for the remainder of his life. It may be presumed that as soon as he got an opportunity he looked at a calendar to assure himself that he was really living in the last decade of the nineteenth century. If so his *fin de siècle* reflections may have been edifying as well as saddening.

It was formerly the custom to take the prisoners who had been reported down to the cell, make them strip, shackle their hands behind them, blindfold them, read the charge, bend them over a wooden horse, dip a wooden paddle in hot water, and beat the tense skin of the victim severely, until frequently the blood ran down to his heels. This punishment was not administered in extreme, but in ordinary cases. Probably the reason why no lightning ever struck the place was that neither the batterer nor the beaten was responsible for the cruelty. The fault was in the system of penalties that prevailed in the prison. In those days there was only an inch between the gospel and the paddle, an inch of plank flooring. On Sunday morning the chapel resounded with hymns; on all other mornings with screams. Apparently the devil was having six chances to the Lord's one, but the Lord was only biding His time. When the appointed day arrived, He sent His apostle, E. G. Coffin, who announced that the reign of terror was over—from that hour.

The worst man, when accused of an offense, is not to be condemned without a hearing; at least we have been told so all our lives, but it used to be different in the cell. The accused heard the charge, nude, blindfolded and shackled, and almost the next thing he heard was the paddle clapping its wet, smooth, hard hand with gory delight on his bursting skin. But at the present time the accused is given a fair hearing, "clothed and in his right mind," and the deputy warden permits him to call witnesses in his own behalf, if necessary.

The basement of the hospital, large and roomy, has been fitted up with court room and cells for the solitary confinement of flagrant offenders against the rules. Solitary confinement, as conducted here, is the most humane, yet effective, punishment that has been tried. It may be said to be self-inflicted, because if the offender expresses contrition he will be released from its dark restraint without needless delay. All that is required of him is repentance and the promise of amendment. There is no assault and battery, arousing a fierce desire for vengeance, or lighting a smouldering fire that will burst into flame some day (or night) and consume somebody's earnings. We can manage children better through kindness than harshness, by a firm but undegrading discipline, than by brutality, administering penalties that impress the mind rather than the body. Everybody knows this nowadays and the training of the young is generally supposed to proceed on that basis. "Men are but children of a larger growth," the poet said, and, this being true, the same intellectual forces should operate upon them in disciplinary matters.

Solitary confinement, loss of marks and grade should prove inadequate, there remains the severest punishment of all—the loss of a portion of the good time allowed by law to be deducted from a prisoner's sentence as a reward for good behavior. The only prisoner sentenced to serve one year in the Ohio penitentiary will be discharged when he has served ten months under the law of 1891, already cited; one whose sentence is for two years need serve only nineteen months and six days, and so on, reducing the time to be served in a greater ratio as the sentence becomes longer, so that a prisoner under sentence of six years will gain eleven days per month, serving only three years, nine months and eighteen days. All men love their freedom.

"'Tis liberty alone That gives the flower of fleeting life Its luster and perfume, And we are weeds without it."

The reflection by the prisoner that his conduct may lengthen his term of imprisonment is corrective and preventive of misconduct to a high degree. There is too much reason to fear that, at one time, under the regime that held all prisoners the world over, in *terrorem*, the courtesies of language were not always observed toward prisoners. They were insulted, reviled, often cursed by some officer or foreman who was a slangster, profanist and obscenist of the lowest order, being too often selected for his eminent brutality; even among the brutal. He would take advantage of his power to vent his wrath upon the unoffending head of some poor wretch upon whom society had placed her ban, by pouring upon him the choicest expressions in his repertory of choice. What protection could his victim have? Too often imputed within walls so long that former friends had ceased to care for, or, possibly, even to remember him. "The world forgetting, by the world forgot," he could do nothing but meekly.

Stoop his head to take the curse, Grateful it were nothing worse. Coming down to our own time and place the same abuse has been known, but there is little opportunity for its exercise now. The orders are stringent that every official and guard shall be chaste in his language, especially in his dealing with prisoners, and that harshness toward them shall be unknown, hectoring and bullying tones unheard. In addition to this rule the warden addresses the prisoners almost every Sunday in the chapel with encouraging words that show the interest he takes in their welfare. If "kind words are more than coronets," they are certainly affluents in the wealth of good counsel and inspiring addresses. They show their appreciation of him, his words and his works, by the heartiest applause whenever he rises to his feet. This may not seem a great matter to outsiders, but to the boy who has made a mistake and been torn from his mother's bedside to do penance in a cell; to the father who has been tripped by criminal misfortune and taken from wife and children, who are perhaps cast upon the fatherhood of Providence and the charities of the world, "a word spoken in season, how good is it!" There is double force in a sympathetic remark at such a time that makes the sufferer feel that he has at least one friend and well-wisher.

The department of food supplies is, in a sense, the most important in an institution that houses and supports so many men, and the question of nutrition enters more largely into the subject of criminology than many people think. Imperfect alimentation is an unmitigated evil, fraught with the gravest consequences to the physical man, and also exercising a distinctly immoral influence. Hunger makes the tiger fierce and blood-thirsty, it renders a man spiteful and resentful, and draws him nearer to animal relationship with the tiger and farther away from the intellectual and moral relationships that make up his manliness. "When the people hunger they begin to plot," was said of the rebellious masses when famine was imminent, and imperfect nutrition at all times turns the thoughts in the direction of insubordination. But it does more than this. The ill-fed nerves demand aliment, and when disappointed, will crave stimulants. "An empty plate makes a full bottle," says the adage; meaning that lack of nourishment creates a thirst for intoxicants. It has been asserted that the frying pan is responsible for much drinking, but it is more probable that if there were more active and energetic frying pans in our kitchens, there would be fewer flasks in hip pockets.

In the Ohio penitentiary three meals each day are served the prisoners, of which one is a substantial meat dinner. Food in sufficient quantity and of wholesome quality is supplied, and on this score there can be no reasonable complaint by men who remember they are prisoners and paying the penalty of their crimes.

[To be continued.]

The Sunday Globe can be found on the news stands of the following well known news dealers of Washington. Patrons are notified that The Sunday Globe can be purchased at these stands any week day as well as the Sunday of its publication:

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J. W. Elms, 2363 H street NW, cigars, confectionary and news dealer.
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W. Bontman, 200 7th street SW, cigars, news dealer.
Borden Bros., 709 8th street SE, cigars, pool room and news stand.
R. E. Miller, 527 8th street SE, cigar and news dealer.
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J. Abbott, 322 1/2 4 1/2 street SW, cigars, tobacco, news dealer.
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G. C. Fancher, 606 5th street NW, cigar and news dealer.
J. Linder, 631 G street NW, cigar and news dealer.
Morro Castle, 1123 7th street NW, cigars and news dealer.
J. W. Reed & Son, 400 9th street NW, cigars, tobacco and news dealer.
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Metropolitan Hotel news stand.
Wm. H. Livermore, 101 H street NW, cigars, tobacco and news dealer.
B. J. Burt, 313 7th street NW, cigars news dealer.
J. L. Stewart, 445 7th street SW, cigars, tobacco, news dealer.
J. Petigan, 609 7th street SW, cigars, tobacco, news dealer.
R. E. Knight, Alexandria, Va.
E. G. Moore, 719 H street NE, cigars and news dealer.
Owen Bros., 5th & D streets NE, groceries and news stand.
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THE NEWS DEALERS.

Kretol

Now that the extreme heat of the Summer is over, and it becomes necessary to guard against the prevailing disease of catarrh, THE KRETOL CHEMICAL CO., at 1224 F Street N. W., has made arrangements to keep a physician at the Institute from 9 a. m. to 4:30 p. m., where people who are suffering from throat trouble, colds, and catarrh may be treated for these affections by the use of

Kretol Also the Company has Static Electricity. There is no preparation better than.

Kretol CATARRH CURE for sore throat and irritated conditions of the lining membrane of the nose and throat. Use

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NORFOLK AND WESTERN RY. SCHEDULE IN EFFECT MAY 26, 1901. Leave Washington, P. R. R. Station, 6th and B streets. 8:01 a. m.—Daily—All points on Norfolk and Western, also Knoxville, Chattanooga and Memphis. 9:50 a. m.—Daily—Roanoke, Bristol, Winston-Salem, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville, Memphis, New Orleans. Through Sleepers. Cafe Cars. For Norfolk—Leave Washington 4:30 a. m. daily, 11:01 a. m. daily, 3:12 p. m. daily. Arrive Norfolk 11:20 a. m., 5:35 p. m., 10:49 p. m. From B. & O. Station—2:45 p. m. daily. Luray, Shenandoah. Trains from the South-west arrive Pennsylvania passenger station 6:52 a. m. and 9:00 p. m.

C & O CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO RAILROAD Route Through the Grandest Scenery in America. A Trains Vested, Electric Lighted, Steam Heated. Dining Cars on Through Trains. Station Sixth and B Streets. TRAINS LEAVE PENNSYLVANIA STATION. 3:30 p. m.—Daily—Cincinnati and St. Louis Special—Solid train for Cincinnati. Pullman Sleepers to Cincinnati, Lexington, Louisville, Indianapolis and St. Louis without change. Connection for Virginia Hot Springs. Dining Car. Parlor Cars, Cincinnati to Chicago. 11:10 p. m.—Daily—F. P. V. Limited—Solid train for Cincinnati. Pullman Sleepers to Cincinnati, Lexington and Louisville without change. Compartment Sleeper to Virginia Hot Springs. Tuesdays and Saturdays. Dining Car. Sleepers Cincinnati to Chicago and St. Louis. Reservation and tickets at Chesapeake and Ohio office, 513 Pennsylvania Avenue, 609 Fourteenth Street, near B. and at the Station. Telephone call Main 147. For Pennsylvania Railroad Cab Service.

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