

The Prison Mirror.

Edited and Published by the Inmates.

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TO THE PUBLIC.

THE PRISON MIRROR is a weekly paper published in the Minnesota state prison. All matter published in its columns is contributed by the inmates, except that properly credited. Its support must come from the outside as every inmate is given a paper without cost. It is published in the interest of the prison library and after paying for the printing outfit, contributed \$150 to the library fund the first year. Its objects are to encourage individual intellectual effort, provide a healthy journal for the inmates of this and other prisons, and, above all, to acquaint the outside world with the needs of the prison by reflecting its inner life and thus aid the cause of moral advancement and prison reform.

All efforts to rescue the thirty-one imprisoned miners at Dunbar, Pa., have been abandoned and their bodies will never be recovered.

The St. Paul and Minneapolis Pioneer Press is no more. The census cyclone knocked it out; but it revived again and is now known simply as the St. Paul Pioneer Press.

The Board of State Prison Managers held their monthly meeting yesterday. Besides transacting routine business they authorized Warden Randall to advertise for bids on machinery for making binding twine, and for flax fiber. It is proposed to put in an experimental plant of about four or five hundred pounds capacity per day.

The PRISON MIRROR, published at Stillwater, has an excellent article on the grading and classification of prisoners, in its issue of June 26th. This little paper comes to us as a herald from behind the cruel bars. It is a weekly plea for more rational, more human treatment of the poor weak people of the hopeless castles of confinement throughout our land.—The Progressive Age.

When momentous questions are before the public and we are confused by many voices speaking from personal interests or prejudice, we naturally seek the opinion of some wise person in whom we have confidence. If we have no such friend we seek the editorial column of some newspaper in which by experience we have learned to trust. But let that trusted person or editor once be discovered willfully misleading us and our confidence is gone forever. The man who sacrifices the confidence of his friends is a fool no matter how great the immediate reward may be.

A few days ago a young tough was arrested at Cloquet for chasing his mother with a razor and knocking her down. The Cloquet Pine Knot-Vidette says he should be given a term in the state prison. We don't want him here and we would thank Editor Quinn if he would refrain from making such suggestions. But then there is no danger of his being sent here—the old mother will plead him out of all punishment. It would not be right to send him here because it would be a greater punishment for the mother than for him. She would be coming to the prison every few weeks to bring delicacies or to comfort him with her mother-love.

Ed. L. Peet, a newspaper man of Minneapolis has invented a new card game called "scoop," or "Game of Publication." The game is played with fifty-three cards, of original design introducing familiar newspaper and printer's terms. The Saturday Evening Spectator says, "It uses as a basis the fact that a complete paper is made up by combining letters, words, lines, columns and pages and that the editor plays an important part in all stages of its publication. The cards used in the game are divided into picture cards and cards without pictures and are classified as follows: 8 vowel cards, 8 consonant cards, 8 scoop cards, 8

word cards, 5 line cards, 5 column cards, 5 page cards, 5 paper cards, and one or more editor cards. The numbers on the picture cards count for game. All other numbers count only in 'buying plate.' The good plays to be made are 'getting a scoop,' 'drawing sorts,' and 'buying plate.' 'Making "pi,"' 'playing the editor for all he is worth,' and 'getting the paper out on time,' are other important plays." It is said the game is intensely interesting and is becoming very popular in the Census City.

Fifty unpromising inmates of the Elmira, N. Y., reformatory were recently transferred to the Auburn penitentiary. This move deprives them of the chance of being released on parole, consequently they will have to serve out their maximum sentence. The discipline of the reformatory may be severe, the requirements of the system may be very taxing, yet the mental, moral and physical training that the system entails should be considered a rich recompense for patient endurance; besides there is a sure reward promised to those who faithfully fulfill the requirements of the institution—and that reward is liberty, a thing for which thousands, less bound than the prisoner, have died for. It is a blind failing of most of us that we will not endure a present slight hardship in order that we may avoid a greater one in the future. Had it not been for this disposition many of us would not be, as we are, undergoing punishment at the hands of the government. If we study the lives of our great men we will learn that they labored hard, endured hardships, and denied themselves pleasures while they were preparing themselves for fame or fortune, or both. We envy these men because they hold their stations with such seeming ease, but probably they in their younger days endured much with patience at which we would have rebelled. No man ever gains a great good except by foregoing a great many desires.

FOURTH OF JULY.

To-morrow will be the Fourth of July. How prosaic yet how full of meaning that name is to every American citizen. This will be the one hundred and fourteenth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. The men who attached their signatures to that declaration little dreamed of what great worth that document would be at this day. They would be dumbfounded, wise men that they were, could they come back and behold what has grown out of their act. They would be startled at the wonders they would see. They would say one to the other: "Behold, our descendants are become magicians!" What would they think if told that a message could be sent from New York City to the Court of St. James in a minute? or, that they might journey thence and return in less than a fortnight? What wonders would they not see! But nothing would astonish them more than the rapid growth of their country's domain, its great commercial enterprise, its enlightenment, and its pre-eminence among the nations of the earth. They would find the thirteen states grown into forty-eight states; the tram car, developed into the locomotive and its train of cars; the flatboat, into the steamboat; the reaping hook, into the harvester; the flail, into the threshing machine; the needle, into the sewing machine; the wash-board, into the steam laundry; and other developments too many to enumerate. The Declaration of Independence is a document that will still live when the nation that produced it is numbered with the nations of the past, and the principles therein set forth will be the war cries of other oppressed peoples, for "Truth crushed to earth shall rise again."

The United States form the greatest, the strongest and the most humane nation recorded in history, and no matter what changes in the form of government may come, another century will find it as far in advance of what it is to-day as it is greater to-day than it was when first declared an independent nation.

CHEER!

The following from the June number of the Chatauqua Magazine shows with what interest they regard the introduction of the Chatauqua system in this institution:

'93's like the Athenians of old are ever

ready for some new thing and it seems they are not to be disappointed. The Chatauquan for March gave a full account of the Chatauqua Circle in the penitentiary at Lincoln, Nebraska. The April number alluded to correspondence with a '93 from Sing-Sing prison applying for membership—and this month we can report a similar interest in the northwest. At Stillwater, Minnesota, is situated one of the best managed state prisons in the country, and here, through the efforts, first of a Chatauqua student in Minneapolis, and second through the influence of a bright, active young man within the walls of the prison, the work has been introduced. The names of 78 persons willing to enter the Chatauqua work have been taken, and a first class of 24 has been formed. As soon at this class is fully in hand a second will be formed. A sanguine member declares that four classes of twenty-four each are almost certain to result. The officials of the institution have shown the greatest kindness and helpfulness in the efforts to introduce the work. THE PRISON MIRROR, an admirable little sheet edited and published by the inmates, gives the movement a hearty greeting, declaring that it is greatly to be desired that the C. L. S. C. gain a firm footing in the prison for the incentive it would be to many to form habits of self-improvement; and it gives the sensible advice to go slow in forming the classes. The undertaking seems to have opened finely, to have zealous and wise leaders and an earnest membership. Here is work for Minnesota Chatauquans, an opportunity such as is offered to but few. The care of this important movement will, we know, not be confined to '93's, but as the members of this circle are our classmates, let us see to it that they do not lack class sympathy and co-operation.—The Chatauquan.

FOURTH OF JULY.

A little lad listened and laughed with delight
At the noise of the crackers, the rockets' swift flight,

As he wondering gazed at the brilliant display
Which honored America's great holiday.

Soon after, when gathered a storm, grand to see,
With lightning and thunder, he shouted with glee.

"O look at those fire-crackers right in the sky!
I guess up in heaven its Fourth o' July."

—Selected.

Declined With Thanks.

In a late issue our friend Patricio advises that in the event of not being able to find anything to do upon my release that I can saw wood. No, thank you, my old Roman from Ballamacleugh, not if I have ever been introduced to myself will you ever catch me trifling with the wood pile again. Listen to my tale of woe. It is just two short years ago that I was residing with a private family in the city of —, and as luck would have it, on the morning of the Fourth of July the young lady of the house informed me that the man who did the chores had not put in an appearance, and would I mind sawing a few sticks of wood.

Now, I make no secret that I was deeply attached to the aforesaid young lady. She was so kind and so loving that I was and still am willing to undergo any kind of hardship to win a few sweet smiles from the ruby lips of lovely Angelica Korfdrop; so I simply told her to introduce me to the pile and I would instantly reduce the same to toothpicks. But alas! "The best laid plans of men and mice oft gang aglee." The measly saw, instead of going straight, seemed to think an angle of 45 was about the correct thing, and what with the terrible heat and the awful exertion I was beginning to get played out, but made up my mind that by the blood of my border ancestors, who were mostly hanged for cattle lifting, that the feat should be accomplished; so I made another desperate exertion and—broke the saw. My blood was now thoroughly up, so to finish the job in a neat and artistic style I chopped the frame work of the saw into a thousand pieces and sneaked off.

Well, going up the road I met a son of the ancient Vikings, who offered to saw the blamed wood for two dollars—I would gladly have given five. Then I roused up a hardware man and bought another saw, which cost me another two dollars; thence I went to the drug store to buy some salve for my lacerated hands and some lotion for inward application, and returned home in a better frame of mind. But when I arrived I found the whole party convulsed with laughter, and the reason, I discovered, was over the Britisher's attempt to manipulate a Yankee buck-saw. But I appeal to you, comrades, was this a christian way to treat a poor pilgrim wandering in a foreign land? No, I think not, and as the result of it I was again compelled to visit the drug store for more lotion for inward application.

But this sad tale of a certain Fourth of July is by no means ended yet.

On my again returning home m'moiselle, in accents sweet and low, told me how some of her friends had chartered a steamer and were going down the river by moonlight.

Would I join them? My drooping spirits immediately arose and I gladly acquiesced.

We had proceeded down the river some ten miles, and I was sitting on the hurricane deck—by the way, you all know where the hurricane deck of a Mississippi flatboat is; if you do not it does not matter—with the fair Angelica Korfdrop listening to the sweet strains of the "My-sotis" waltz, when my nautical eye caught a glimpse of a big sand bank ahead and into which we were fast steering. It was in vain that I shouted, "stop 'er, back 'er, ease 'er, fetch a cab, call a policeman,"—there was a police officer on board and a mighty good fellow he was too, but as usual in a case of emergency he was not to be found. The consequence was, that wretched captain steamed right plump into the sand bank, and I went overboard. But I knew I was not to be drowned in the shallow and somewhat muddy waters of the Mississippi, for on three previous occasions had I been immersed in the depths, once in the Gut of Gibraltar, once on the west coast of Scotland, and once in the Pacific ocean. So I do not think drowning is to be my fate; but I do most sincerely trust that there may be no hempen tendency attached to my destination.

Well, I landed safely on the bank. I grew sarcastic and told them not to be in a hurry getting the boat out, but if they would kindly call upon me on the return journey it would answer the purpose equally well, but they hoisted me in, looking very much like a drowned rat. And for a teetotal picnic I will say that I never saw so many "original packages," produced in so short a time, and with their aid and various other comforts I soon regained my equilibrium.

But from that fatal Fourth of July everything went wrong and I put it all down to my wretched and futile attempt to saw wood. Thus if I had not tried to saw wood I would not have lost my temper, which compelled me to visit the drug store too often, which was the result of my getting wet, and which was the cause of my getting here.

And now, my old friend, there is a moral to the above harrowing and distressing yarn, and that is, "Do not monkey with the buzz saw." In other words, do not meddle with things you know nothing about. I maintain that if a man knows how to do only one thing, stick to that well, he had far better stick to that than try to be a "Jack of all trades," which in reality does not amount to very much. And, my friend, the next time you tackle the wood pile, think of sweet Angelica Korfdrop and the sad fate of yours truly.

UNDER TWO FLAGS.

How The Reform Idea Is Growing.

Although in its infancy, the reformatory idea of prison management is constantly growing in favor.

Its application is no longer confined to institutions especially planned for the furtherance of the idea, in which the possibility of reclaiming offenders to society once more is tested from all standpoints. That has been proved conclusively. And now accordingly, other penal institutions originally built and conducted with the sole object of punishment to those confined within them, are adopting the additional and higher function of reformation as well.

Of course, various expedients are resorted to in order to modify existing systems to the desired point where the indeterminate sentence, an essential part of the new idea, can be introduced.

We made note in these columns of how it was proposed to adopt the ticket of leave system in this state not long since; and now we find that in Wisconsin such system is working with encouraging success, while Kentucky, under the Dickerson law, has as well signified its approval of the reform.

The general system is essentially the same as that in vogue in this reformatory, so far as Wisconsin is concerned. The Dickerson law in Kentucky, however, has placed a yearly limit to the number that the commissioners can parole. The indications are though that this limit will be abolished, and that all those who, in time and merit, are eligible to parole will receive the favor of the law. Recently eleven convicts were paroled in Kentucky, the sentence of ten of whom aggregated eighty-nine and one-half years, and one was a life sentence.

Years are too precious to be weighed by human estimation. They cannot be wasted. Mankind realizes more and more the value of a human life, the possibilities lying within the grasp of one man, the meaning of a few years to a human being. And it is an encouraging sign of civilization's progress when the effort is made, as noted in the above instance, to reclaim nearly a century of years to furthering the well-being of society.

The thought is teeming with suggestions. Imagine if possible what the result will be when not from a few scattered states, but from every penal institution in every state news comes of efforts being made to open up a new life to those who have been found guilty of wrong-doing!—The Summary.

Other men's sins are before our eyes, our own behind our backs.—Seneca.