

Reclaiming Men at State Prison

(Continued from Page 6.)

operation among the prisoners: "Every day in every way we are getting better and better," which, suited to action, or resulting in same, develops courage, fortitude and ambition for improvement.

It is the observer's opinion, after looking these men over, that in time of sudden war and national emergency—say, for instance, if the Japs invaded and were ravaging our coast, a military leader could organize them into a fighting phalanx and every man-jack would die for the flag and the glory of our country.

Many of the cells, especially those of long termers, are fitted up with an elegance and comfort that denote the finest culture, and upon the walls and tables of these little cabinets may be seen the tell-tale photographs of loved ones and in some a Cross or other devotional insignia.

The wildest of men soon becomes tame in the prison. Few men can stand the "terrible punishment" inflicted for infraction of rules, this being the withholding of little privileges, the long march around the Maypole, and the hog-table with face to the wall—kid punishments.

They Are Kids, Really.

Bad men are treated like strict fathers treat naughty boys, and the big fellows cannot stand it. They beg like kids when caught in mischief, but it should be remembered that most of these unfortunates are in reality kids, in their early twenties—

youngsters who often cry themselves to sleep at night, who slyly kneel beside the cot in the miserable cell, when no one is supposed to be looking, and say their "Now I Lay Me" with sob of bitter remorse and agony. Very few of them are hard-boiled, and those who try to be are only pretending.

Conscious guilt or weakness assumes strong attitudes, Warden Smith and Mullen, his able confidant, say the main need is to understand the individual prisoner; to constrain him to adopt the right mental attitude; to arouse his ambition and sustain his hope. Once this is done, reform and transformation follow.

"How'd you ever tame that terrible fellow?" a visitor asked, indicating a prisoner who has a red record of brutality and outlawry. "Oh, most of them yield readily to good treatments," was Mr. Mullen's cheery reply.

The Deformed Transformed.

Many men enter the prison emaciated, run down physically, morally ruined, mentally half deranged, spiritually dead, and within the last four or five months have been transformed into presentable human beings. Good food, clean clothing, regular baths and habits, plenty of sleep, good books, spiritual encouragement, honest work, kindly treatment—these remedies performed the "miracle".

There's a world of work outside the prison, on the farm and in the wood and logging camps. The Warden's purpose is to develop the industries inside the walls so that he won't have to send them out. There won't be any escapes from inside the walls, for the vigilance is constant and there is no temptation. The guards who walk the walls are master marksmen and certainly will shoot to kill. They command a view of the entire exterior prison.

In considering these facts about the prison's reform, don't forget this sinister and significant fact, in connection with the extravagance and graft under the Olcott regime: When Smith came in, there was less than 30 days' usable fuel supply and they were burning expensive oil. The fuel is now supplied by the prison. "Uncle John" Rockefeller had been getting his velvet, too.

Beware of Criminal Trickery.

Don't be astounded if a "trusty" runs away, once in awhile. The chances are he will come back, or be retaken, and the chances are all against escapes. There's a big farm crew and two or three wood camps outside the prison, and the villainous crooks who have been scheming to cause escapes, to discredit Warden

Smith, are expected to continue their criminal trickery.

The Warden personally was not responsible for those who have escaped; he did not personally pass judgment on their fitness as "trusties," but he quickly assumed full responsibility for them. "Blame me, if there is any blame," he said to the Governor—and Governor Pierce understands the situation.

One merciful innovation the writer would like to suggest: that all the well disposed prisoners who desire it should be permitted to have a singing bird (Hartz Mountain canary) in their cells. In other countries, especially in the Orient, lonely and disheartened prisoners have been observed by the writer in the enjoyment of this privilege. It is a heartening and civilizing influence. A singing canary soon learns to love its owner and is capable of cunning and wonderful tricks. This would be a real help in "mental" cases. It would divert the mind from distressing memories, and relieve the anguish of a despairing soul.

Card playing is not allowed within the prison. Dominoes and other good games are popular. Baseball is the prison hope. They have a bully good team, and it beat the Covey Motor Car Company's crack nine the previous Sunday. The public is allowed to view these games without charge and the walls are thick with people on every such occasion.

Upon the Scaffold.

Have you ever stood upon the trap of a gallows with a rope about your neck and your body strapped until you were rigid and couldn't move hand nor foot, and, thus trussed up, contemplate the verities of life, the sins of the past and the mysteries of eternity? It is a thrilling experience.

This gallows in the Oregon prison has a terrible record. It is far superior in one of the secluded upper chambers, where no one outside can see or hear. Within the large room are the gallows, with its thirteen steps (all gallows have thirteen steps to the scaffold); a few chairs, a long table, and the Bertillon and fingerprint paraphernalia. Into this chamber came, one after the other, the slayers of the beloved Sheriff "Tim" Taylor, and others prior to these hangings; and a few weeks ago Husted Walters, the half-witted youth who was convicted of killing Patrolman Palmer, mounted the scaffold unassisted and with firm tread.

The death-warrant is read in the prisoner's cell. He is then delivered to the executioner, Warden Smith, who does not believe in capital punishment, and few humanitarians do, had the fortitude to accompany the doomed youth to the scaffold; and finally asked him if he had anything to say. "You can kill the body, but you cannot kill the soul," the youth's voice rang out. "I am not guilty of this crime as charged."

Scene on the Scaffold.

He recited a few words which the Christian minister had taught him, and a few seconds later the trap was sprung, the body shot downward about six feet, until the head was at a level with the floor of the scaffold, and the soul, freed from its prison of earthly clay, was winging its way to the great White Throne of Mercy and Justice.

One of Walters' Secrets.

Walters died like a man, despite his mental deficiency. He was a morose—a powerful man, physically, with the untrained mind of a ten-year-old boy. Here's a fact until now kept secret, as he desired it: After interviews with a Protestant minister in his cell, the unfortunate youth, alone with his conscience, knelt beside his cot and prayed to God for forgiveness and mercy. Scores for that preacher! This may be a jewel in his crown.

Walters never should have been hanged, in the writer's opinion. The element of premeditation was lacking, and there was grave doubt, according to one eye-witness, that he fired the shot that killed Patrolman Palmer. Following the murder of the popular Portland officer, Walters was charged with the shooting and the hue and cry went around that he was a Roman Catholic and that the Knights of Columbus had supplied a large fund for his defense; that he was attended by a Catholic priest. All these rumors were false.

Some Startling Facts.

Walters was raised as a member of the Christian church by a Protestant Christian mother. He had no use for Catholic priests, as he frequently made plain in his cell in the prison. He was fond of "roasting" them. Walters' companion in the crime, however, one Tighlman, a boy of 17 or 18, was a Roman Catholic and somehow was allowed to escape. He was sent to the Boys' Training School for a short time and then was released. He ought to be brought back, if possible, and be made to explain his part in the murder. The alleged eye-witness, whose name The Western American can supply, is alleged to have declared that it was the young lad, Tighlman, and not Walters—the wounded youth—who fired the fatal shot. If Walters deserved hanging, the other youth should have died with him. No money whatever was raised for Walters' defense, which was conducted with great skill and loyalty by Attorney B. F. Mulkey of Portland—a warm-hearted lawyer who knew that the friendless youth was not guilty, in intent, of first degree murder.

Governor's Thumbs Down.

Just prior to the noon hour on execution day, when Governor Pierce was to rule on the appeals for clemency, the editor of The Western American appealed to him for the commutation of Walters' sentence to life imprisonment, or for a reprieve until the above mentioned facts could be determined, pleading that the crime lacked the element of premeditation, and that there was doubt of Walters being the one who fired the fatal shot. The Governor's thumbs were down, however, and here is what the editor said when that trap was sprung: "Imperial Caesar at the Circus!" It was a grave but a pardonable mistake in judgment on the part of the State's Chief Executive. He had been influenced and perhaps deceived by persons who were interested in vengeance. "Vengeance is Mine, saith the Lord God. I will repay!"

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The State gained nothing, but lost greatly, by the execution of Husted Walters, the friendless moron. Scientific treatment could have developed him into a reasoning, useful man; his soul could have been developed, to save other souls, perhaps, and for service to humanity. Sightseers Rebuked. Certain policemen of Portland went to the prison to witness the execution. "No!" said the Warden, putting his foot down hard. They failed to gratify their morbid interest. The witnessing jury of 12 was composed, in strict accordance with law, of two physicians, the undertaker and his assistant, the Sheriff, necessary deputies and other officials. There were no sight-seers, no gloaters. And that unfortunate youth with the ten-year-old mind mounted the scaffold without a tremor, stood with shoulders erect upon the trap, looked the jurors in the eyes and declared: "You can kill the body, but you cannot kill the soul."

In this execution, as in all others which are properly managed, there was no physical suffering on the part of the victim. His muscles quivered and jerked for a few moments and then the body slowly swung to and fro. The soul had fled.

A Horrifying Fact.

Now here's a horrifying and scandalous fact: A number of women—think of it, ye gods!—women—sent pleading requests for souvenir pieces of the rope. Had these women heard, as the writer did, what the prison officials said of them, they would hang their heads in shame and forever afterward feel the lash of conscience on hearing the word "rope." One of the Warden's assistants took the rope immediately after the execution and burned it. There were no souvenirs. Perhaps one of these heartless and cruel women would have been just as well satisfied with one of the ears of the doomed boy, or a finger, or a toe, or a tooth, or perhaps his scalp, intact to wear as an ornament at her belt. Bah! a great portion of humanity isn't half civilized. We emerged but yesterday from the Dark Ages.

Under the law a jury composed partly of women can be organized to witness and assist at executions. But may angels and ministers of grace defend us from any woman who could view with composure such a scene.

The Walters hanging was the only one under Warden Smith so far, and he hopes and prays it may have been the last; but several others are in prospect. No one will ever know, except the Warden and his closest confidants, who pulled the levers which sprung the death-trap on the scaffold. Of these levers there are three, one of which is the key to the trap. Three deputies pull the levers, set side by side, at the same moment, and they cannot discover the fatal one. This is a scaffold trick, used for obvious reasons.

Thrilling Demonstration.

Walter Gobin Smith, the famous former auto race driver and ex-soldier, was with the Warden's party, with the writer, inspecting the prison gallows.

To make the experience vivid, Captain Smith submitted himself as an experimental victim. He was put through the usual paces. The broad and heavy leather band was buckled around each leg, at the thigh, and to each of these the arm was buckled tightly, so that it was impossible to do more than wiggle the fingers. The legs then were strapped, immovable, the hangman's knot fixed securely behind the left ear, the black cap drawn over the face. It was a thrilling demonstration. The observers were silent, as they are at real executions. Captain Smith said afterward that he thought of things while standing in that position that had not occurred to his mind since he was a medal winner as a small boy in the old home Sunday school—and this Smith, a noted war veteran and hard-boiled top sergeant, is a man of iron nerve and unflinching composure.

Our Purpose Constructive. The purpose of this article is to inform the people of Oregon of the essential facts concerning their State Prison and the management of Warden Johnson S. Smith, thus to shield him from the attacks of criminal enemies and to back up Governor Pierce in his efforts to make the institution not only self-sustaining but in every way efficient in the reclamation of erring men to manhood and usefulness.

Keep in mind the startling fact that nearly all of the prisoners are young men, but lately out of their teens, and that scores of them are ex-service men who went to the war with enthusiasm, ready for the supreme sacrifice. Every effort should be made in behalf of the betterment and the future of these ex-service men, remembering that they have been more sinned against than sinning; that in almost every case there were extenuating circumstances; and that they are, no worse, morally and otherwise, than hosts of free men who pose as church members and pillars of society, who are in fact hypocrites and "whited sepulchres, full of dead men's bones."

Exhibits of Misfortune.

The men in prison, for the most part, are mere exhibits of misfortune, unlucky ones caught in the meshes of the law and ground in the mill of the gods. Each of them is an ever-present reminder to free men that liberty is priceless, the sweetest thing in the world, and that the laws of America must be and shall be obeyed; that it is folly to defy them, and that crime does not pay, however great may seem the immediate reward. The worst cases in the prison are, of course, those included in the category of sex crimes and those resulting from the passions of jealousy and hatred. Scientific examination of almost every case develops realization of the fact that love, finding expression in its manifold forms, is the greatest thing in the world, and that kindness is the greatest good.

Are You a Freemason?

If so, you should know the difference between Operative and Speculative Freemasonry. You should know when Speculative or Symbolic Masonry began; how it began and where it began; when and how it came to America and its development; and how and when it came to your State. You should know when, where and how the Scottish Rite Masonry began, and its history. You should know the difference between the York Rite and the Scottish Rite. You should know about the Royal Arch degree, and Council degree, the High Priesthood and the Knights Templar.

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