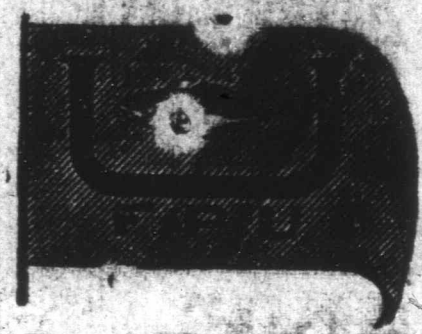


Our Motto: "Suum Cuique."



("To Every Man His Own.")

## The Mail and Advocate

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Editor and Business Manager: JOHN J. ST. JOHN.

ST. JOHN'S, N.F.L.D., MAY 5th, 1916

## THE CONVICT'S APPEAL

ELSEWHERE will be found a letter written by a convict in the Penitentiary. The letter reached Mr. Coaker on Wednesday, having been handed in by a stranger at the office wicket; the writer's name was, of course, enclosed.

There is no doubt about the authenticity of the letter; the question is, how true are the statements. The public will not be content until it learns whether those statements, if true, are a sad reflection on the management of the Institution.

In view of the conditions revealed by Mr. Coaker last year, in a letter he read in the House sent him by a released prisoner, and the recommendations of the Commission which was appointed by the House, in consequence of the LeDrew letter, the public will promptly decide that there is something wrong in the state of Denmark, and they will not be convinced otherwise, except by an investigation of some trusted and well informed citizen of St. John's.

The Convict speaks kindly of Dr. Keegan, who knows more about those matters than any other man outside of the Institution. Would it not be well for the Government to ask Dr. Keegan to investigate the food and lodgings question raised by "Convict," as well as by Mr. LeDrew last year.

The letter is apparently written by a Convict fairly well read, and intelligent. His appeal is to the Christian people, of Newfoundland; his statements are clear and incisive. To refuse to take any action on such a matter, would be an outrage against humanity, for if "Convict" is right in his statements, the management of the Institution is a disgrace to civilization.

The Board of Works must move in this matter, and move without delay. We, in the name of the people we represent, demand a vigorous investigation into the statements made by "Convict."

Mr. Coaker read this letter in the House yesterday, and as the House met, just a few minutes before the Governor arrived to close the session, the Usher of the Black Rod, who appeared when Mr. Coaker was reading the letter, was refused admission and had to wait until Mr. Coaker had finished. The letter was received on Wednesday, too late to submit to the House, and the only opportunity available, was that offering yesterday when the House met, just before prorogation.

## THE U. T. CO.

Several schooners are discharging wharf piles at Catalina for the new premises.

Schr. Bella Franklin, Captain Hynes, sailed this morning with a full cargo of supplies for the Union stores at Catalina and Winterton.

Schr. Reginald A. Capt. Anstey of Little Bay Islands, is taking a full cargo of supplies for the Union stores at Herring Neck and Nipper's Harbor.

The Trading Co. is shipping a large quantity of oil to Canada by the Stephano; the balance of the Company's stock of cod oil has been sold to Job Bros.

A large number of schooners from the Southern Shore, St. Mary's and Placentia Bays, have arrived here since Wednesday for supplies. All have been delayed in the home ports for several days by head winds. They will get their supplies hurried and get back quickly to begin fishing.

READ THE MAIL &amp; ADVOCATE

# "Man's Inhumanity to Man Makes Countless Thousands Mourn."

## AN AWFUL INDICTMENT AGAINST THE MANAGEMENT OF THE PENITENTIARY.

### A Convict Appeals to Mr. Coaker and the Citizens of Newfoundland to Help Those Who Are Unable to Help Themselves.

During the Past Two Years Four Convicts Have Gone Insane Through Poor Treatment, Hunger and Cold and Are Now in the Lunatic Asylum—Others Now on the Verge of Insanity—Convicts Are Hungry but Cannot Eat the Bad Food Supplied—Useless to Complain to Superintendent as He Ignores all Appeals—Soft Words and Smooth Excuses are all Satisfaction a Convict Gets From Superintendent Parsons—Existing Conditions Are a Disgrace to the British Empire—The Torture Chambers of Siberia Have "Nothing on" Our Penitentiary

H. M. PENITENTIARY,  
St. John's, Nfld.  
April, 1916.

W. F. COAKER, ESQ.

St. John's, Newfoundland.

DEAR SIR:—This letter will reach you by the hand of a fellow convict, who is discharged from the Penitentiary this month. Will you, in your love for your fellow man, fair play, and the advancement of civilization, accept this letter and read its contents from the platform of the House, to the Members thereof, and, afterwards publish the same in your paper.

The contents of this letter form a plea to the Christian public, from a broken down convict, at the Penitentiary, asking that they will, in the name of Christianity and Modern Civilization, try for to obtain mercy in the form of fair and just treatment, and rescue from starvation for himself and the other long sentence convicts confined at the Newfoundland Penitentiary. The following are some of the reasons that go to make the urgent need and necessity of such steps being taken by other than those who are now trying to manage the affairs of that Institution.

I have been in the Penitentiary since the middle of 1914, and have a long sentence yet to serve. It is my earnest desire to serve the remainder of my sentence without causing myself added trouble or punishment, but this looks impossible to me now when I look at the unjust treatment, and bad food, that we convicts are asked to put up with day by day without a change; and it has ever been the same during my two years here; and when I look ahead of the many more months that I have yet to face, I feel that it can not be done by me without going insane, or starving to death. There are many other long sentence convicts here that suffer more and find it harder to bear their treatment than I; some of whom were here when I came, and who will remain still when I go.

During the two years I have served here there have been four convicts who went insane, and who are gone to the Asylum; and I fully believe, that three of those convicts went insane from worry and resentment caused by brooding over their unjust treatment, hunger and cold; and there are others here now who are so near the verge of insanity that the officers here are saying amongst themselves that they should be sent to the Asylum. What causes all of this you ask? Well here is your answer in a nut shell: It is caused by the bad food, cold prison, lack of a little outdoor exercise, and the impossibility to obtain the Superintendent's amendment for these complaints. The Superintendent of this Penitentiary, A. A. Parsons, either lacks the ability or the power that is needed to manage this Penitentiary, as it should be managed.

The difficulties that crop up at times, owing to the spite and ignorance shown by some of the under officers in their treatment of convicts, are generally mishandled when placed before the Superintendent, and convicts are tried, condemned, and punished without a hearing sometimes. What is far worse, from a convict's point of view, and what makes his heart sometimes rancorous, is the fact that Superintendent Parsons does not at any time try to see that the convicts obtain good food. He does not even see to it that such food as comes to the Penitentiary is properly cooked before it is given to the convicts. No, and if it was properly cooked, the food still would be unfit to feed men and women with day in and day out for a period of years, even though the men and women are convicts. There is nothing that will make a creature, or make it unruy quicker, be it a human Christian or beast, than will the lack of change in its food, and when that food happens to be mostly bad as well, the user very quickly gets in a bad state of health, and mind; and such is the case here at the Penitentiary.

The convicts are hungry, but cannot eat, because our stomachs revolt at the bad food; and we convicts have not the ghost of a chance to get these faults altered, or bettered, by complaining to Superintendent Parsons. He is either indifferent as to what quality of food stuff is being sent down for use at the Penitentiary, or else he has not the authority to prevent bad food from being sent. In either case the Superintendent, or the Board of Works, are at fault, and we convicts have ample grounds for complaint; yet when any of us convicts go to the Superintendent with a complaint about the food, he turns up his nose at us and tells us he cannot see why the food isn't good, because it is the very same as what he uses at home, and this, with a lot of soft words and smooth excuses, is all the satisfaction a convict gets when he complains to the Penitentiary Superintendent, A. A. Parsons, about the food, or anything else; and we convicts find it mighty hard to live on that; besides the fair British Laws have made provision in its Statute that allows the convict to expect something different in reply to a fair and just complaint.

What is the matter with the Board of Works that they let such things go on? Are they in the fault, as well as the Superintendent of the Penitentiary? Is somebody making a boodle of money on the side, by allowing bad and cheap food stuff to be sent down to the Penitentiary? All contracts call for No. 1 foodstuffs for use in the Penitentiary. Why don't the Board of Works and Superintendent Parsons see to it that those contracts are carried out? If those contracts were carried out, and the food after it arrived here was properly cooked, why the convicts might be able to eat some of their meals; but they would still be living poor in comparison to the Penitentiary convicts of other colonies and the rest of the world. England and all her other colonies give their Penitentiary convicts a much larger variety of food than what Newfoundland does, and America is more modern still; while Canada, this Colony's handiest relation, takes pattern from both England and America; consequently Canada's convicts are just as well fed and looked after as what the best in England are.

The scale of diet in use to-day in the Penitentiaries of all parts of the world is very far ahead of that which is in use at the Newfoundland Penitentiary. England, Australia, America and Canada in their scale of diet for their convicts, include such food as baked beans, cabbage, roast beef, milk, coffee, boiled rice, stewed rhubarb, vegetables of all kinds in their season, barley soup and several kinds of vegetables in the rice soup, as well as different kinds of salt fish once a week and boiled beef, boiled mutton and mutton stew. Such food is really on the regular weekly scale of diet in the Penitentiaries outside of Newfoundland; not an incorrect version drawn by the imagination of us half starved convicts.

This, you readers, can easily prove the truth of by a little correct enquiry, and we suffering convicts appeal now, through the House and the Press, to you Christian people of Newfoundland; hoping that it will be the means of getting us convicts a little of something that is fit to eat.

Many of the articles of food named above could be added to our scale of diet, without additional cost to the Government, providing salt codfish was not fed to us three times a week, like it is now, and I cannot see any reason why we could not have a change from salt codfish to salt herring some times. At present the way that Newfoundland feeds its Penitentiary convicts is nothing short of being a disgrace to the British Empire; yes, and the rest of the world. There is not another Penitentiary in the world that provides such a poor scale of diet for its convicts as what the Newfoundland Penitentiary does. Still for all of that, if the food, such as it is provided was properly cooked, it might be fit for the convicts to exist on; but it is doubtful whether long sentence convicts could even exist on food of this kind and live without ruining their health.

Christian people decide for yourself the truth of what you have just previously read. Listen, fish that is more or less rotten and potatoes that are not always good three days a week in the year, this in itself would turn the hardest stomach; but add to that on every Saturday a mug of pea soup made from a handful of beef suet or dirty teasing belly fat; peas, salt and water, sometimes the salt is forgot to be put in, quite often in fact the salt is forgotten. So you can wonder at the convicts being sick or at them kicking; and to put a climax on the situation just think of the convicts looking forward with hungry hopes for a good feed on the other four days of each week in the year, only to be disappointed nearly every time by getting, instead of a good feed, a few ounces of stale fat, tough, grizzled meat, and that cold, with a mug of soup that would have been good if the rice in it was cooked, or if the rice that was not in it, but which was supposed to be, had not been kept out by the officer in charge of the kitchen to make for himself rice puddings. This officer has a big rice pudding every day but he, himself, personally is not supplied with rice. He also has a big beefsteak two and three times a day, which he gets by picking out and keeping for himself all, of the really good meat, leaving nothing but the worst meat for the convicts. This officer, who has charge of the kitchen, does not know the least thing about cooking, and he spends the most of his time admiring himself before a looking glass instead of attending to the cooking of the food. The Superintendent never puts a convict that knows how to cook in the kitchen, as assistant cook, but always some convict who has never seen a meal cooked. Why is this? When there are several first class cooks among the convicts.

For breakfast we convicts get cold water and something that is made from oatmeal, called punky, and it can not be very well described by words in the English language; but any convict here would tell you that a pig would not eat this oatmeal, as it is prepared at this Penitentiary. The oatmeal, our only morning meal, is neither cooked or raw soft or hard; but it is somewhere between those four extremes, which makes it a bitter, gluey mess, otherwise tasteless and unpalatable. Washing soda has been found in the oatmeal of a morning by more than one convict. When a convict speaks to the officer who has charge of the kitchen about this oatmeal, "why," he replies, "I don't care what it is like, I don't eat any of it." This same officer has said more than once that washing soda was put into the punky to make it soft and easy to dish up. What do you Christian people think of washing soda as a food for convicts, and do you believe that an officer who would allow washing soda to be put into the convicts' food is the proper kind of a man to have charge of the Penitentiary kitchen, where men and women's food is cooked.

At night wet get for supper a whole mug of tea, at least that is what it's called, but it's not tea after all, it is prepared in the Penitentiary kitchen. It is very little short of being rank poison, but tastes like burnt molasses and hot water. And, dear readers, such is the scale of diet given to the convicts of good old Newfoundland. The short sentence convicts receive still worse food and they have to serve the first fifteen days on hard bread and cold water. This way of treating convicts was done away with years ago by the rest of the world, and England done away with it about the same time that she done away with the prison ships.

What is the matter with Newfoundland? Does she still exist as in the ages of the Prison Ship?

The meat that we convicts are asked to eat is the very worse part of the flank, always, and it is so stale that it is sometimes green and slimy; yet it is never washed or cleaned in anyway before it is put in the pot to cook. The pots that the tea is made in are tin, and they have never been scoured clean inside for the last fifteen months; and the tea, as it is made in these pots, would ruin kidneys of cast iron. Now is it any wonder that the poor convicts cannot eat what is necessary for the keeping of healthy minds and body? Is it any wonder that they go insane or that they sometimes rebel and conduct themselves contrary to the Rules?

There are convicts here doing from two to five years that don't find themselves able to eat four full meals a week. They are hungry, but the food is not fit to eat; consequently the convicts cannot eat and consequently these convicts are more or less sick. There are some convicts in this Penitentiary that are now practically living and working on one half pint of milk and one half a loaf of soft bread a day, nothing else. This milk and bread was ordered by the worthy Doctor, who is the only man that cares to try for to keep us from dying of starvation. One poor old convict here has not been able to get out of his bed a dozen time during the last nine months. The cold prison has been the means of making him an incurable cripple. The heating system of this Penitentiary is not large enough to keep an ordinary dwelling house warm, four small radiators in the male prison, which is supposed to heat forty odd rooms and three flats. The cats of the prison sleep actually on those radiators, so you can imagine how much heat is coming through those radiators to warm the convicts. Still the worthy Superintendent of this Penitentiary, A. A. Parsons, said in the press last year that his convicts were warm and comfortable, and always received the best of wholesome food. Perhaps it is to make the food wholesome that washing soda is put into the oatmeal.

A Special Committee last year and a Grand Jury condemned the nuisance pit and gave orders for some improvements to be made. A few improvements were made that done a lot of good; others were made that done no good. Such as the new sewer, it cost Four or Five Hundred Dollars, and was useless all winter, and the convicts had to use the pit nearly all the winter, and carried their cell buckets back to the cell unwashed, because no water was provided for washing them. Some more of the ordered improvements were not done at all until this April, after the members in the House had asked that another Special Committee visit the Penitentiary.

Superintendent A. A. Parsons likes to pose as a shining example of Mr. Matt Osborne, the man who made Sing Sing Prison of New York famous for its fair and just treatment of convicts. But the facts, dear reader, hardly admits the truth of that pose. There are some fair and just officers on duty in this Penitentiary, and the Deputy Superintendent and Head Warden are two of the best, and they try in every way possible to improve conditions for the convicts; but even when they know that the Penitentiary is going behind in its methods, instead of advancing, they are powerless to act or make changes without the Superintendent's orders, and the Superintendent don't give these orders. Why? Is it because the Superintendent has to await orders from the Board of Works? If that is so, then why don't the Board of Works attend to the matter, and as the Board of Works don't attend to these things, why don't the Government take a hand and make whoever is supposed to control these things attend to their duty, and see to it that the Newfoundland convicts receive their just dues and not let the unfortunate fellow creatures starve, suffer, and go insane, that is beyond all conception and meaning of lawful punishment.

If these facts, and many more that I know of, were to be published abroad, they would make the Home Government sit up in wrath and indignation at this Colony, and the rest of the civilized world would point to Newfoundland with a finger of scorn. Why? Because Newfoundland is 50 years behind the times in her treatment of her convicts. Is it not time that the Government made a move in the matter?

Thanking you, one and all, I remain,  
Respectfully,

CONVICT.

### Cancel Rhodes Scholarships To Germany

London, April 28.—If twenty German scholarships, at present granted under the Rhodes Trust, are cancelled, it is probable that Canada will benefit but the Montreal Gazette representative understands that legislative proposals in this matter have not yet been drafted. Some difference of opinion exists among the committee regarding the advisability of early action, some favoring postponement until the end of the war and a mere suspension of German privileges in the meantime. The mere report that cancellation was under consideration has resulted in numerous applications from universities all over the world especially from the present Allies of Great Britain. Germany is the only foreign country benefitting by Rhodes scholarships. This was the result of the magnate meeting the Kaiser. In the event of legislation going through there is reason to believe that the Allies would be given the preference, and as regards Canada, it would be the west which would gain.

ADVERTISE IN  
THE MAIL AND ADVOCATE

### GLEANINGS OF GONE BY DAYS

WILLIAM E. CORMACK, the first man who crossed Newfoundland, born in St. John's, 1796.  
Napoleon the first died at St. Helena, 1821.  
New engine-house of Cathedral fire brigade first opened, 1862.  
First United Assistants' Association had a wind-up supper at Jocelyn's this evening; they disbanded principally owing to the smashing of store windows being attributed to them, 1868.  
Bishop Dalton, Hr. Grace, died, 1869.  
Hanlon-Hayden scull race on Tyne; five miles for \$2,000; Hanlon beat by 4 lengths in 22.5 seconds, 1879.  
Dr. Moran, Burin, died, 1880.  
Jett's Cove mine foundered; no men injured, 1880.  
Jampel McNeilly (formerly clerk at Monroe's) supposed to have jumped overboard from steamer Cortes, between Halifax and New York, 1880.  
Daniel Clatney died, aged 101, 1881.  
George Simms, stipendiary magistrate, Grand Bank, died, 1893.  
Nathan Phelan, Treasurer Star of the Sea Society, left for the United States, 1897.  
James P. Fox and Thomas J. Murphy unseated and disqualified, 1894.

## Reid-Newfoundland Co.

### Humbermouth-Battle Hr. Service.

#### S. S. SAGONA

will sail from Humbermouth on Wednesday, May 10th, weather and ice permitting, for the usual ports of call as far North as ice conditions will permit.

## Reid Newfoundland Co.

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25 Boxes WINE SAP APPLES,  
15 Brls. WINE SAP APPLES,  
5 Boxes Best GRAPE FRUIT,  
10 Boxes California ORANGES,  
All Choice Quality.

J. J. ROSSITER.