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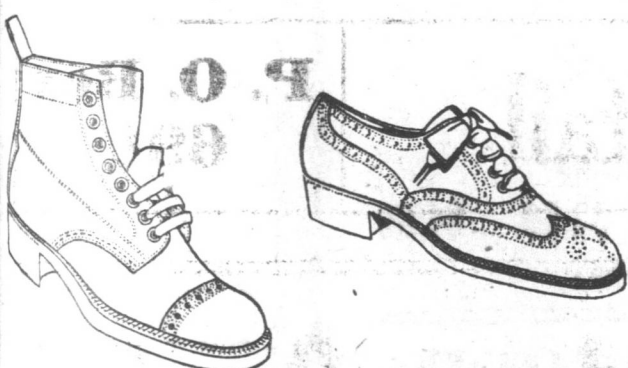
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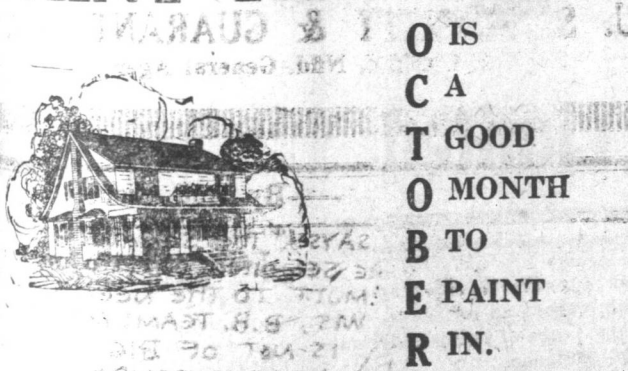
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The Penitentiary

MR. G. W. B. AYRE'S LETTER TO GRAND JURY.

Editor Evening Telegram.

Dear Sir:—On October the 8th, I took to Mr. W. Knowling, Foreman of the Grand Jury the original of the enclosed letter. He read it in my presence. Last night I read in the Telegram the Grand Jury's report re the Penitentiary and I see no reference whatever to the conditions outlined in my letter to Mr. Knowling, nor any recommendation as to bettering the conditions therein. Under the circumstances I think the interests of the public would best be served if you would publish my letter to Mr. Knowling so that the people of the country could know from one who can speak from experience, just how matters are, and then it is up to them to see that the frightful state of affairs is changed for the better.

I shall be obliged if you will also publish this note of mine.
Yours sincerely,
GEO. W. B. AYRE.

W. Knowling, Esq.,
Foreman of the Grand Jury, October, 1923.

Dear Sir:—I am anxious that certain reforms which I consider vitally necessary should be made in the running of the Penitentiary. I am therefore writing you as Foreman of the Grand Jury for this October term and, with your permission, will give you some ideas which, if placed before the other members of the Jury, must give them information which it is impossible for Grand Juries to glean from the usual inspection which they make, accompanied as they are, by the Superintendent, and other officials with whom, as a rule, they are engaged in conversation which may have the effect of diverting their eyes and minds from the many defects of the institution. I have spent 22 months as an inmate of the Penitentiary and feel that I am qualified to talk on the subject for I have had exceptional opportunities of knowing what I am going to write about.

In my opinion the object of a Penitentiary should be to fit erring men and women for citizenship so that when leaving the institution they are able to take their place in society, to be an asset to the country and not a liability. In other words they should come out virtuous and not vicious. Anything which conduces to the former should receive your commendation, anything conducing to the latter, your condemnation.

Acting upon that principle, I should like you to notice the clothing of the prisoners. When I was there some were clothed in rags that a self-respecting scarecrow would shudder to look upon. The black and white costume should be discarded altogether and the clothing of prisoners should be such that the sense of degradation should be as far as possible removed.

The food of the prisoners should be of greater variety than a dinner of fish and potatoes three times a week and soup four times a week, while tea with molasses but without milk for breakfast and tea hardly seems the proper thing to give a person who may be there for some criminal, political or similar offence. Porridge is also given for breakfast. The method of serving and eating is brutalizing. Prisoners have their meals in their cells. No knives or forks are supplied, consequently their table manners are not such as would be accepted in the most select circles, and unfortunately they have no means of learning better so they either remain stationary or retrograde from what they were when they entered the sacred precincts. Illiterate prisoners should be taught. Those not having a trade should be taught one. They should be made useful members of society.

When I was there the cells were unlighted, but I understand that recently electric light has been put in. If so, that is one of the reforms I advocated already effected. Can you imagine any worse way to keep a man than to have his cell in winter so dark that from 4.30 until 8 the next morning it was impossible to read? The prisoners should be allowed from 7 till 10 for reading, recreation, study and general improvement; not, as in my time, sending men, fathers of families, to bed at 7 o'clock.

The men should get systematic exercise and plenty of fresh air. We were not allowed outside the door from November till May. From then till the following November one hour a day, and then only when fine. You can understand men putting on useless flesh, becoming irritable and nervous wrecks when confined for months without exercise in cells 11 feet by 7. It is an outrage and should be remedied.

There is one bath for the 60 to 80 prisoners who are usually there. The bath is in a place where coal is kept. The fish-bowls and other kitchen utensils are washed in it. The men come in from the gardens, manure heaps, coal-bins, etc., and use it; consequently it is often filthy dirty and you can understand a prisoner telling me that he had not had a bath since he came into the institution. He had been there seven years, and was the cook. Very few of the prisoners after their first bath, when they arrive, ever get another. There is no compulsion to bath, and even those who

would like one, check the impulse when they take a look at its condition. There should be at least 8 or 10 baths for such a number of prisoners, and prisoners should be compelled to bath regularly.

The bath-room is also used as a place for shaving and cutting hair. The same mug, soap, brush, razor, is used by the prisoner operating, who may or may not be an expert, consequently there is at times much blasphemy when men are butchered. In spite of many prisoners having skin disease, a roller is used in which they all wipe their faces, some not troubling to wash off the soap previous to using it. Some cells have four prisoners, others three, the others are two men cells. If two vicious prisoners are together the consequences are terrible. During my stay there, there were instances of men criminally assaulting their cell mates. There should be but one prisoner in each cell. The men should be encouraged to exercise. There should be a recreation ground where they could play games.

In Sing Sing the prisoners have an athletic association, a musical association, a band. If illiterate, they are taught. If without a trade, they are taught one. If they have one, they are put to work at it. They are paid so much a week for their work. They buy their own food and clothing and consequently are careful of it. They do not have the same food twice a week. They are allowed anything they wish to pay for. They can get tobacco but not drink. Their clothing is not distinguishable from that of any free citizen. There is no sense of degradation. Prisoners are rewarded for good conduct, and the prison is practically run on the honour system. The prisoners themselves almost take charge. Prisoners are taught and encouraged to be trustworthy. They are fitted for citizenship.

The system pertaining to the Penitentiary when I was there seemed hard to beat for brutalizing a prisoner; nothing to put hope in his heart or give him ambition to be better. The consequence was that men were continually in trouble. They were continually being punished by being put on bread and water. I have seen them handcuffed, leg-ironed, chained to the floor, beaten, put in the dark cell. To experiment, I got permission from the Superintendent to have them out of their cells from 11 to 12.30 each day and I did my best to entertain and instruct them. The result was instantaneous. For the first nine weeks there was not one infraction of the rules, so that at my request the Superintendent restored the four ounces of hard-bread which, for punishment, had been deducted from their allowance. For the twenty-nine weeks I conducted my classes, the conduct of the men was exemplary. This clearly shows that all the men required is to be usefully occupied, doing something to divert their minds and attention from thinking of the terrible position in which they are placed. There may be many more things calling for reform, but what I have outlined will give you some idea of the conditions in the Penitentiary clamouring for improvement.

The institution is behind the age. Reform, and not punishment, should be the guiding principle. Your recommendation would be a great factor to bring this about. If so, you would have more than justified your existence, and done something for your country the effect of which would be almost incalculable. When you consider that on an average twenty prisoners headed for Hell of Heaven each month leave that institution, when you consider the effect of twenty virtuous or vicious men or women disseminated throughout the island and what they can do to make or mar the country, then you can understand how great is the privilege and the opportunity you have to do to help in what must undoubtedly be one of the greatest reforms ever effected in this country, one with the most far-reaching results.

Trusting that you will bring this letter before your fellow-Grand Jury-men.

I remain,
Yours sincerely,
GEO. W. B. AYRE.

Death of Dr. Chase

BISHOP WHO WAIVED HIS RIGHT TO \$2,000 PENSION.

After a long illness, Dr. Frederick H. Chase, Bishop of Ely from 1905 to 1924, died suddenly at Bexhill in his 73rd year. Educated at King's College School, London, and Christ's College, Cambridge, Dr. Chase was ordained in 1876, and subsequently became curate of Sherborne, and then of St. Michael's, Cambridge. In 1884, when he was a

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lecturer in theology at Pembroke College, he was appointed the first tutor of the Cambridge Clergy Training School, of which he became principal in 1887, retaining that post until his appointment to the presidency of Queens' College in 1901. He was elected Vice-Chancellor in 1902, and three years later was appointed Bishop of Ely, holding the see until he retired owing to impaired health. He was entitled to a pension of £2,000 a year, but he waived his claim to that sum, asking only that £350 should be paid to him annually from the income of the see.

Farm or Jail Item?—TURKEY SETS NEW EGG RECORD. Hartford, Sept. 11. (A.P.)—A brown turkey on exhibition at the Connecticut State Fair here is credited with a world's record for rapid-fire egg laying for turkeys, having laid two eggs on the same day. —New York Herald Tribune.

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