that this memorial may have had some effect in hastening the opening of the Arch Street prison for debtors in the following year, the society became convinced that the system of sending all the more serious types of prisoners from the entire state to the county prison of Philadelphia was no longer wise or tolerable, owing to the increasing population of the state and the failure to expand the prison plant in proportion. Consequently, in 1818, they sent their first memorial to the legislature urging the erection of State penitentiaries. This was the beginning of the agitation that led to the erection of the Eastern and Western State Penitentiaries.

To the Senate and House of Representatives, etc.

The Memorial, Etc.

Respectfully Sheweth:

That in the year 1787, an association was formed by a number of the inhabitants of Philadelphia, for the purpose of lessening the evils and miseries of prisons, and of promoting an amelioration of the penal laws of this state, under the title of "The Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons," which society have continued their attention to the subject until the present time, and have the satisfaction, in common, with their fellow citizens, of witnessing considerable improvement in the management of the prison in this city. But the progress of which, they apprehend, is obstructed, and many other evils experienced by the necessity of crowding into that establishment great numbers of convicts from all parts of this populous state. They therefore respectfully request the legislature to consider the propriety and expediency of erecting penitentiaries in suitable parts of the state, for the more effectual employment and separation of the prisoners, and of proving the efficacy of solitude on the morals of those unhappy objects.

Signed on behalf of the Society,

WILLIAM WHITE,
THOMAS WISTAR,
SAMUEL P. GRIFFITTS,
JOSEPH CRUKSHANK.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

ARE WE CODDLING OUR PRISONERS AT SING SING?

By LEWIS E. LAWES
Warden of Sing Sing Prison

The question has been raised whether Sing Sing Prison is giving maximum service to the State: whether it is an efficient business institution; also whether its discipline is stern enough to discourage its inmates from a life of crime.

* * * * *

Our normal population at Sing Sing is between 1,150 and 1,200.

The men who come to us range in age from 16 to 70. The mental age runs down to six years. About 35 per cent. of the inmates are foreign born; more than half of the others are of foreign parentage. At least 30 nationalities are represented at Sing Sing. Most of the inmates are unskilled, and many are unwilling to work. The sentences vary from one year to natural life, with 33 last year sentenced to pay the extreme penalty—death. The average sentence is about six years. These men are brought to us handcuffed and chained to be held for years against their will.

Of this population 23 per cent. are syphilitic; about 50 per cent. show a history of gonorrhea; about 12 per cent. are drug addicts. Many others are

tubercular; many possess some other marked mental or physical defect or abnormality. The prison authorities must deal with the failures of school and church and of the probation, juvenile and reformatory institutions. The vast majority of those with whom these institutions have dealt have satisfactorily established themselves in life; out of the minority of failures come those with whom we must deal in the state prisons. Just a little more than half of the men who come to us have some sort of record of previous delinquency.

To my mind there is no such a thing as a single prison problem to be settled by one general prescription for all who come to us. There is a separate problem in each one of these men. We have, if you please, about a thousand different kinds of prison problems at Sing Sing. It is easy for the outsider to make glib generalizations about prisons. Inside we are faced with the complexities of human nature in all its aspects. Our reports tell about the men in totals; day by day we must deal with them as individuals, with all their characteristics, defects and abnormalities. I only wish the job were as easy as some folks imagine. It is a tough job, an ungrateful job. We are doing our best at it, and I believe we are making a good showing with the human material with which we have to deal. That does not mean there is no room for improvement.

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One critic stated that we had let ourselves in for some losses by forgery in the office of the Comptroller's clerk at Sing Sing. He wrote to the Governor to tell him that it was all the fault of the Mutual Welfare League and that this inmate organization ought to be abolished. Those who know anything about the Mutual Welfare League understand that it has nothing whatever to do with the business or industrial affairs at Sing Sing. It deals only with recreation and with personal relief to the men, in a very limited way. It is a great aid to our system of discipline. Every business is subject to risks of dishonesty. In our case there is certainly fair warning to us. We had an experience showing us one way in which our checking system was not as perfect as we thought it was. We hope not to get caught off guard again. Inmates should not be permitted to handle cash or checks and the State should furnish sufficient civilian help in the office of the Comptroller. But anyone who blames the Mutual Welfare League for this slip does not know anything about the League and its functions.

* * * * *

Let me tell you just how much we coddle the prisoners at Sing Sing. We have a stern and thorough system of discipline at Sing Sing, in spite of all superficial observations to the contrary. We do not use ball and chain; we do not shave heads, unless the inmate prefers that style of head-dress; we do not dress the men in stripes; we have no implements of torture; we do not use whips or clubs. The days of that kind of prison discipline have gone, I hope to stay gone, and I speak after long years of prison experience, not from sentiment. Our system of discipline is not the unnatural system of brute compulsion; it is the natural system of special rewards for good behavior and special punishments for breach of the rules.

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We have a band at Sing Sing, as at many other prisons. When the weather permits the band plays while the men march into the Mess Hall. There are base-

ball games and movies; once in several months, if offered, a show from New York. There is also community singing and occasional lectures, an attempt at mass education. None of this costs the State a single penny. If there were no other reason for giving the men the maximum of hours outside the cells, there is the all-sufficient reason of our cell-block, a one-hundred year old structure, notoriously insanitary. To keep the men confined in the cells all except working hours would mean more tuberculosis, pneumonia, suicide, insanity, the breakdown of all hope of rehabilitation. We use the yards and auditorium, as best we can, to keep the men from despair and desperation. One result is that there are one-fifth as many assaults in the prison as there were ten years ago.

A few days ago the Police Commissioner of this city had something to say about too much ease and comfort at Sing Sing, too much good treatment, too much good food. I do not know how the Commissioner informed himself about these things. He has never been to Sing Sing, nor has any of his deputies, so far as I am able to ascertain. My accounts for October, November and December, 1921, show that we spent 18 cents per day per man for food. We paid 6 cents per meal. I have seen much space devoted in the newspapers to the preparation of meals as low as 25 cents or even 20 cents. At Sing Sing we do it at 6 cents.

For the current month—February, 1922—we bought 16,800 pounds of meat for a population close to 1,200. This meat is bought in bulk and the weight includes bones and waste. For each man, counting bones and waste, there is just one-half pound per day. What about the quality? The average price is 12 cents. Figure it out, one-half pound at 12 cents, or 6 cents worth of meat per man per day. You would hardly call that extravagant feeding.

This month we are buying 1,100 pounds of coffee at 14½ cents per pound, less than one pound per man per month. We are paying this month 16 cents per pound for 100 pounds of tea. Not very fancy tea, is it? Not a great quantity either, one-tenth of a pound per man for a month. Do you think our inmates are going to be eager to come back for more of these 6 cent meals? Not much coddling about this, is there?

We are said to provide living conditions better than in 90 per cent. of the homes of this city. If that is the case, life in New York is very much harder than I ever supposed it to be. I have given you an idea about our feeding. You know how admirable is our housing accommodation. The rent is cheaper than in New York, but anyone who has had just one look at grim old Sing Sing would certainly prefer the worst tenement or the park benches of New York.

There is recreation to keep up health and hope, but there is plenty of hard work at Sing Sing. Our prison is quite an industrial establishment. Last year we sold \$594,351 worth of manufactured products, an increase of \$100,000 over the previous year. There has been some misleading publicity about our industries in which the production is compared with that of earlier years without showing the difference in the number of men employed. The per capita production shows a steady increase in recent years and there is decided improvement in the quality of the output. Our industries are gaining ground, though there is plenty of room for expansion. We could turn out 50 per cent. more even on the basis of the present plant if our market were developed. It has

been proposed that all the State printing be done at Sing Sing, which is now prevented by law. That is certainly a good proposal. We can do the work and, in the bargain, we can teach a number of the inmates a very good trade. We welcome this prospect.

In addition to the factory work there is much useful and heavy labor done by the inmates: the upkeep of the institution and all of its services, new construction, road work, excavating, grading, conduits, sewers, concrete work, also some farming at Wingdale, 45 miles distant. A few inmates do clerical work, nursing, teaching. In a word, the inmates do whatever is to be done and they do what they are ordered to do, not what they choose to do. It is our problem to assign them on the most efficient basis for running the plant. All of the inmates, except the invalids, come under the rule of a seven-hour work day.

Bear this in mind, our \$50,000 monthly production, in addition to all the work of upkeep, represents the labor of men whose only positive return for their labor is the munificent sum of $1\frac{1}{2}$ cents per day. Six-cent meals, a $3\frac{1}{2}$ foot unventilated stone hole to sleep in and $1\frac{1}{2}$ cents a day to save up for the future—these are the fundamental facts about the coddling given to our prisoners at Sing Sing. The man going by in an aeroplane can see the ballfield and think he has discovered a country club, but the men inside have a different idea about it.

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A fundamentally constructive proposition is now up for approval by our State legislature, that the men in prison be given a chance to earn something by their work; to help support their dependents while in prison; to save up a little for the time of coming back into the world. Now they come out with the \$10 given by the State. The $1\frac{1}{2}$ cent wages have probably been used up in the purchase of luxuries during the years in prison. At Sing Sing the Mutual Welfare League gives to each man with no funds of his own an additional \$10. That makes the grand total of \$20 with which to face the world—this sum of cash and the deep stigma of the term or terms served in prison. In the face of all this, in spite of what I have said about the character of the inmate body, only 18 out of 100 ever enter Sing Sing a second time.

I have said that the prisoners come to us and leave us according to the court commitment. Under the parole system the prison authorities have a degree of power to control the term of a first offender. Over 75 per cent. of the men released on parole have satisfactorily carried out all the conditions of their parole; that is the record since the beginning of the system in the New York prisons. One out of 10 has been returned to prison as delinquent and 1 out of 10 is delinquent and at large. That is, 11 per cent. of the paroled men have escaped surveillance, though it cannot be said whether they have committed other crimes or not. The question of parole is a question of the 10,500 men who have made good their parole against the 1,550 of whom we have lost track, and I believe that the 10,500 justify the parole system.

A word about the recidivists. As our penal system is now developing there will be segregation of the feeble-minded and confirmed delinquents at Napanoch. Likely there are some men whose mental and moral constitution is so far undermined or underdeveloped and they ought never to be at large. That explains many of the 18 out of 100 who come to Sing Sing as repeaters. Brutalizing these

boys and men, giving them hell, will not solve the problem. Degrading and embittering men in prison was tried for many hundreds of years and it didn't stop crime. Most crimes are committed by men and women, boys and girls, who have never been in any penal institution, so that the reason must be sought outside these institutions. But there are some hopeless cases, some who must be dealt with outside the routine of the regular prisons. It is not the prisons which are to blame when such inmates go out, after a limited sentence, and commit other crimes. The most that we should be called upon to answer for is the safe-keeping of these men during the term of sentence.

THE PRIVILEGE OF PAROLE *

BY WILL COLVIN

It makes little difference whether you term the *paroling authority* a board, commission, department, division, or what not.

But it makes vast difference to the people and the public welfare of every state how you constitute that *authority*.

No man, or set of men, inexperienced in parole work, can be expected to do it intelligently or successfully.

An error once made with life or liberty can never be retrieved. With property and things it may be different.

No matter who the person and no matter what his qualifications may be, it must take from two to four years of intensive study and actual, daily experience before one knows or understands the real work of pardon and parole.

If entrusted with authority while gaining that experience, there can be but one result—the public welfare must suffer from the errors and mistakes that are bound to be made.

It is of extreme importance that those vested with paroling authority, whether in the larger or smaller States, give to the work their undivided attention. Part time service works irreparable injury to society and the parolee.

In the smaller States probably three persons are sufficient to do the parole work, but in the larger States no less than five, and possibly seven, persons should be entrusted with such important work.

One member of every paroling authority should bear an individual responsibility over the entire work.

Successful operation of parole laws and the indeterminate sentence can be obtained only in proper administration by the paroling authority.

Aftercare and supervision, which are matters of administration in all the States, furnish the real strength back of every parole.

Let me congratulate the States of Ohio, New Jersey and Pennsylvania in their recent creation of Boards or Departments of Public Welfare. Legislation of this character meets the latest thought of those who are devoting their lives to a study of these problems.

* From an address read at the thirteenth annual meeting of the American Institute, Cincinnati, Ohio, November 19, 1921.