

not be armed. The disastrous consequences of this, which were freely predicted, have not materialized, and I am glad to say that the Kentucky State Reformatory now takes rank in this respect with the leading institutions of the country.

12. *Compensation for prison labor.* In the year of 1916 there was enacted a law providing for prison labor at from five to fifteen cents per day. This law was re-enacted in 1920, but it was not until January 3, 1921, that the State Board of Charities and Corrections placed the law into effect. The results of this humane law are expected to be beneficial but to what extent is now impossible to say because the law has not been in force sufficient time to permit it.
13. *Abolition of task system.* The adoption of compensation for prison labor necessarily abolished the old task system which was never justified from any point of view. It may be, and, in fact, was believed, that it was justifiable under the task system to flog men for short task, but I have never believed that men can be made better morally, physically or intellectually by the use of the strap or bludgeon. For that reason this inhumane method of driving men in their work has never been a part of my program.
14. *Dietary.* Steps have been taken, although the plans have not yet been completed for a well-balanced ration for this Institution. Such a ration will not only be economical but will produce better results from a physical standpoint than are produced by the present system.
15. *Advisory Board.* I have organized an Advisory Board for the consideration of all matters and policies affecting the administration of this Reformatory. This Board comprises the head of all departments and meets every two weeks with the Superintendent. At each meeting the general matters and the matters pertaining to the various departments are discussed and a policy decided upon which is followed through the Institution.

I did my full duty as well as I knew how to do it and in this I have had the earnest and co-operative support of yourself and the State Board of Charities and Corrections. For this support I thank you and I hope you will as freely give it to my successor. I cannot close this report without expressing my appreciation of the loyal support I have had from most of the officers of this Institution and of the great assistance and co-operation I have had from the Mutual Welfare League and the inmates generally.

Very respectfully,

W. H. MOYER, Superintendent.

March 7, 1921.

## THE TEXAS PRISON CAMPS

BY GEORGE W. DIXON

### FOR THE PRISON JOURNAL:

Replying to your request for a report on Texas prison camps, permit me to say that Texas has one of the most brutal penal systems in the world. I do not believe there is a country under the sun where brutalities are greater than in the

Texas prisons. Men are whipped with heavy leather whips, quirts, wet ropes, and beaten over the head with shot guns, pistols, and clubs. They are hung up in chains for as long as fifty-six hours, with short intervals of rest; chained naked in dark cells, driven to work in the rain and made to suffer many forms of fiendish torture.

This brutal system has been in existence for more than half a century. Last December I wrote an article describing these tortures and had it published in various newspapers. The result was a prompt call for an investigation by the State Legislature. I was summoned to appear before the Senate Committee on Penitentiaries and invited to tell all I knew about these brutal practices. I told a story of horrors that set the people of Texas to thinking. However, I had a hard time to get my story before the committee in such a manner as to get public sentiment back of the effort to investigate brutalities. The Senate Committee tried to hold the hearing behind closed doors, but I refused to testify unless newspaper representatives should be allowed to hear my testimony. The chairman of the committee, Guinn Williams, of Decatur, Texas, then reversed his decision and allowed me to testify in open meeting. The facts I gave were merely a repetition of what I had already published. Some Texas newspapers carried this story of fiendish brutality. The Senate Committee drafted a resolution to investigate the prison farms in Texas, and the resolution was passed after a hot debate and repeated efforts to defeat it.

Governor Neff was then asked for advice about the investigation. He replied that he had no suggestions to offer. Later he sent a special message to the Legislature advising that an investigation be made by private citizens and that they render their report to him. This recommendation by the Governor was ignored by the House and Senate and the investigation was ordered.

On February 15th, the joint investigating committee went to Huntsville, headquarters of the system, and began their work. I accompanied the committee by request and assisted them in getting their work under way. I furnished them with facts, names, dates and other information that made their work remarkably easy. Within less than a week they had collected a report so full of cruelty and brutality that it was decided best to return to Austin and report to the Legislature before going further with the investigation.

Senator Harry Hertzberg, of San Antonio, introduced a bill in the Senate within a few days after the committee's return to Austin, prohibiting the use of lash and chains on convicts. This bill was passed to engrossment by the narrow margin of nine to twelve. Senator Bailey, of Cuero, stated on the floor of the Senate that this bill would "destroy the morale of the penitentiary system and prove a great injury to the State." This will give an idea of the opinions held by some Texas lawmakers relative to penal reform.

When my charges of cruelties were first published, they were branded as false by certain Senators. After they were found to be true, a fight was made against banishing brutality. I believe, however, that a complete reformation will take place within the next few years. It must be done at the ballot box, and that is where we expect to win.

The Texas prison farms should be sold. They are isolated and brutalities are carried on all over the system. Men have been beaten to death. Some are

scarred from head to foot by the teeth of the dogs kept on these farms, a twenty-three men have been shot down by guards during the past two years. The present system is a disgrace to civilization.

GEORGE W. DIXON.

Houston, Texas, February 25, 1921.

(Comment by the EDITORS: We congratulate Mr. Dixon on his efforts to secure more humane treatment of the convicts in Texas. Our latest advice is to the effect that the use of the bat, lash, whip and chains on convicts is generally prohibited, with an amendment that corporal punishment may still be inflicted by the unanimous consent of the Board of Prison Commissioners and with the approval of the Governor. We are not prepared to agree with the suggestion that the prison farms of Texas should be sold. They should be placed under different method of control. You may practice brutality on prisoners confined within walls as well as on the open farm. It is becoming generally recognized throughout the country that farm work for convicts is both healthful and conducive to reformation.)

### BRUTALITY IN A MICHIGAN REFORMATORY

We were unprepared for the following information which comes from Michigan. There has been an investigation of the cruelties said to be perpetrated on the prisoners at the State Reformatory at Lansing, resulting in the usual exoneration. From the *Detroit News*, we quote part of the testimony before the investigating committee. "Harry L. Hurlburt, warden of the prison, explained to the committee how the flogging apparatus is worked. The man to be flogged is blindfolded, handcuffed and shackled at the ankles. Then he is stretched out on a ladder which is made to fit snugly over a barrel. His hands and ankles are fastened to the ladder.

"The prisoner is blindfolded, the warden said, so he will not see who is flogging him. His back is bared and a piece of stout linen cloth placed over the bare spot. The instrument used in the padding is a heavy strap about four inches in width, punched with small holes about an inch apart, and fastened to handle. The strap is soaked in water, according to the warden, till it becomes pliable.

"Dr. Robert McGregor, prison physician, holds the pulse of the man being flogged and gives the signal for the flogger to stop.

No. 1—Thomas Schultz. Boy of 21 years old, seven months after being sent from the insane asylum was given 181 lashes and kept in the dungeon during the period of the floggings for nine days, and fed on bread and water.

Sent to Jackson Prison March 12, 1918, for larceny—two to five years.

May 15, 1920—Sent to Ionia State Hospital for the criminally insane.

Aug. 12, 1920—Returned by order of Dr. McGregor, prison doctor, cured.

Nov. 3, 1920—Three months later, assaulted a guard. For this and a few minor offenses, none of them serious, he was sentenced to receive 181 lashes.

Nov. 4 he received 40 lashes; Nov. 5 he received 35 lashes; Nov. 6 he received 26 lashes; Nov. 9 he received 40 lashes; Nov. 13 he received 40 lashes—Total 181.