

A BEAUTIFUL SYSTEM!

The Penitentiary Convict Lease System of Tennessee.

THE BARBARITY OF BARBARITIES.

Extracts From the Report of a Legislative Investigating Committee—A System a Thousand Times Worse Than It is Generally Believed to Be.

Now, that attention is being called to the evils of the convict lease system here in our own state, it may be of interest to see its workings in other states in order that we may see to what brutal depths men's greed will descend, and what the natural tendency of the system is under favoring circumstances.

At Coal Creek, the committee found: "The location badly located for sanitary reasons," its location being in close proximity to the mines—to obtain the most work from the convicts.

"The bedding was fitting to a degree; changes were made every three or four months, most of it once or twice a year—the look of things indicated the latter figure—the convicts had no change of clothing but slept two in a bed naked or in the clothes they worked in; the beds were without sheets or pillows and were covered with grease, grime and coal dust. The convicts were furnished with the usual suits and shoes, but no drawers, night shirts or socks, as required by law, notwithstanding the bitter cold weather, we have had this winter. The clothing was washed once a week and then given out indiscriminately, no man getting the clothing he had worn before; many of the prisoners were afflicted with running, syphilitic sores, and the medical report on this custom is that it is a most dangerous, disgusting and outrageous practice. The same methods, we regret to say, prevail in all the prisons.

"Our conclusions as to their feed were formed from what we saw, the convicts' testimony and the testimony of the steward and his books. From this we figured that the convicts were fed at a cost to Mr. Chumbley of 10 1/2 or 11 cents per day, or, say 3 1/2 to 4 cents per meal. We wish to condemn as a petty meanness and cruelty, probably originating in grasping greed, the compelling of prisoners to carry in their hands through the dirt, grit, water and smoke of the mines their sodden piece of corn bread and fat meat which constitutes their only dinner. The committee was informed by the inspector that the mine was in a dangerous condition from gas and water, and he predicts a terrible loss of life if it continues to be worked in its present condition."

The committee found that the method of punishment in use in this institution as in the other prisons, was to lay the convict flat on his stomach and whip him on his naked back with a heavy leather strap attached to a sick handle, the number of licks varies from ten to sixty, and these were given sometimes with one hand and sometimes with both hands of a stalwart guard. This punishment is inflicted for all breaches of rules and for failure to do the task assigned, which at this mine is about four tons of coal a day.

We believe that the diet furnished them is insufficient to keep up the strength to do the work. The committee found many brutal and degrading vices and practices, and recommend some positive action be taken to stop the open violation of the laws and cure the evils complained of or remove the convicts from this place. This, the Coal Creek prison, where our readers will recollect the union miners, driven desperate at the attempt to compete with convict labor producing under the lash four tons of coal per day at a cost of about 4 cents per ton for labor, last spring attacked the stockade and released the convicts.

And so on through the dreary tour of all the prisons, where the miscalled justice of the state turned over its unfortunate to be tortured in the living hell of corporate greed. At the risk of sickening our readers we make one extract more from the report touching the women's prison.

"While those women are, of course, of the lowest type as a rule, and in their illness and crowded condition are hard to manage, we must condemn the method of punishment used on them. They are compelled by the guard, in the presence of the other women and sometimes of men, to lie down on the floor, their clothing is drawn up, and stripped thus they are whipped as the men, on their naked buttocks, and sometimes, as the present guard, Mr. Cope, admitted, one foot of the guard is placed upon the neck or arms of the prisoner to hold her down as she writhes under the lash."

There are four illegitimate children who were born and are now living in the prison, as disgraceful evidence of the

guard's perversity in admitting his favorites. It is consoling to know that the wicked guard was discharged, but the wicked contractor remains.

The committee adds: "But to add to this inhuman treatment by neglect or overt act can but brutalize and embitter even a man of good character and impulses. The simple statement of facts contained in this report will hardly convey to the unreflective mind the enormity of some of the wrongs endured by the prisoners. Many men are poor, hunger is known outside prison walls, dirty households are too common; men have slept in the gutter, and many of our citizens have endured with heroic fortitude privations even for months during the war between the states and were glad at times for even a piece of sodden corn bread, but conceive of the hopeless desecration of the man who for ten, fifteen, or twenty years has to bring himself every day but Sunday in a coal mine, with its attendant dangers and discomforts, toll to the possible limits of his strength, carry his indigestible and unsustaining food in his dirty hands to return at night to a supper whose unvarying monotony causes his stomach to revolt, is cabined and driven into a room where fifty others are driven in and packed like cattle fixed for shipment, to sleep in his dirty working clothes with another person, and so cramped that he cannot turn or stretch, and in a bed that from three to six months reeks and stinks with filthiness, and in an air de-vitalized by fifty pairs of lungs and made noisome by the exhalations from fifty dirty bodies; a man whose spirit of manhood is broken and who is made to write under the lash for failure to complete his task, who has not a single foot of space nor a single thing he can call his own, nor a moment of privacy, an almost de-individualized unit of a suffering brutal throng; conceive of an unvarying daily round of such life for five, ten, fifteen or twenty years, and you have a partial idea of the fate of some of the poor wretches at Coal Creek." The committee recommends that the state abrogate the contract and work the prisoners on its own account. They say "The controlling motive of those in charge under the contract system will always necessarily be to make the last possible cent out of the flesh and blood bought with their money and never to reform."

"We order those things better in France." Here in Nebraska our conditions are such that we have not been able to reach the bad eminence of Coal Creek, but in our own feeble manner we have given proof that opportunity alone was lacking to reach that point. It may be that strangulation is more merciful than the lash, and that if the coal creek convict, who found that ten cents worth of food per day did not give him strength to mine four tons of coal per day, deserved the lash, it follows that the Nebraska convict who lacked the strength and mechanical knack to wield a seven and a half pound adze all day, and probably "tighten" some fifteen casks per day—a fair day's work for a trained workman—deserved, as he received, death. The system is wrong in every respect: wrong in its effect upon the free workman, upon the convict, and even upon the contractor who seeks to benefit by it. Abolish it.

PROFIT SHARING. What is technically known as profit-sharing or industrial partnership is designed to unite the industries of the owners of capital and the workmen. The control rests in the capital and its owners but those who do the work are given a share in the profits, when there are any. Customary wages and salaries are paid, interest is paid on capital, and whatever profit then remains is divided by some previously agreed plan between the two.

The business or economic logic assigned for this arrangement is that interested labor will be more careful and efficient than the labor which has no contingent interest. It is a familiar fact that slave labor is inefficient, and it is also well known that men working for wages aim to do only a minimum day's work. If the slave converted into a freeman, educated and well fed becomes a better producer; if the wage-earner turned into a small proprietor becomes more energetic and more careful—then the same logic will make the wage-earner who has an interest in the profits, more industrious and less disposed to carelessly waste material or to do bad work. There being thus a larger profit, the profit-sharing dividends on wages is in reality paid out of the increased efficiency of the laborer. The dividend may be a small portion of this extra yield, or may be the whole of it, or it may exceed it and be partly drawn from the ordinary profits. But whatever additional product results is a clear economic gain.—St. Louis Post Dispatch.

Review of Reviews. The "Progress of the world"—summing up the recent movements, political and otherwise, of the past month—is practical, strong and full in the April number of the Review of Reviews. This editorial department is universally regarded as one of the best features of the most remarkable magazine of the day. The American editor discusses the full restoration of the Democratic party, the Hawaiian question, and a variety of other issues, while Mr. Stead contributes a most brilliant and graphic discussion of the English political situation, and the merits and demerits of the Gladstone Home Rule bill. The department of Current History in Caricature also may, perhaps, be called stronger than usual this month, although it is always full of variety and surprises. It covers a wide range, quoting from Italian, French, German, Australian, Canadian and English, as well as from American caricaturists.

An Alliance Reformer. Editor ALLIANCE-INDEPENDENT: In your issue of February 23rd, is a very serious article upon "Our Social System." You enumerate some of the frightful social inequalities existing in modern society, which result in sorrowfully blighting the souls of the upper and lower classes alike; the rich capitalists become hardened, selfish and cruel, all the natural fountains of their souls become dried up and obliterated; while the unwilling poor are year by year becoming physically, mentally and morally dwarfed.

Does not such an appalling social situation take one's breath away? Let any reader sit down and try to realize the awfulness of such an unnatural and demoralizing situation and the very best that he can do will only be to get a faint glimmer of the sorrowful and blighting reality of it. That class who have by lying sophistries, bribery and the corrupting of the press continually brought over a majority of the voters and legislators of this republic to their abject service in enacting laws to enable them to absorb to themselves all the cream of the profits of manufacturing, transportation and agriculture—will they ever be awakened or quickened in conscience? Let us not lose any sleep over such a visionary and chimerical idea. In your editorial you said: "There must be a general resolve on the part of the people to right wrongs, to establish justice and to make the world what it ought to be." These words deserve to be emblazoned upon a monument so high as to pierce the very clouds of heaven. But how can voters be aroused and quickened into a "resolve to right wrongs, to establish justice and to make the world what it ought to be?" The last paragraph of your editorial answers the question thus: "It is not impossible to right existing wrongs, but it can never be done till the people generally see these wrongs, and resolve in their hearts that they shall be righted. To this end let us work." In response to this last sentence let the combined voices of all Humanitarian workers reverberate into one grand swelling deafening chorus of "amen, amen!" Now Brother Thornton, I crave your forbearance and sufficient space to lay before the readers of THE ALLIANCE-INDEPENDENT a plan which is the result of many months of serious thought and sorrowing anxiety: First in importance and the main foundation upon which to achieve all political success is the influence of an able edited newspaper press. Its influence is constant, unceasing and insidious (either for good or evil as the case may be. The plutocrats have understood this for many long years and their satanic editors have been the main instruments in bringing the laborers and producers under the iron heel of soulless and capitalistic taskmasters. However the wasting of words to prove a self-evident proposition ought never to be necessary, and now with more intense anxiety and earnestness than I ever felt at any previous hour of my 61 years of life I beg and plead with every and all antimonopolists of every shade and degree to reorganize, reorganize, REORGANIZE! Let those who love the old Farmers' Alliance proceed at once and reorganize it being sure to amend Article II of the constitution which reads as follows: "The Farmers' County Alliance shall meet in December, March, June and September, and oftener if deemed necessary, and the delegates to the same shall be elected by Subordinate Alliances at their first meeting in November, February, May and August, or as soon thereafter as practicable." Let the constitution be amended so as to do away with all county meetings except one in each year for the purpose of electing county officers who shall hold their respective offices for the term of one year. Now Mr. Editor in all seriousness have I watched the workings of this dear old organization, and in sorrow I have to say that by and through the frequency of these recurring county meetings have the blighting seeds of dissensions, divisions, indifference and weariness in well doing crept into this one of the most beloved institutions that ever existed. There are always some indiscreet delegates at every meeting who are so short sighted as to want to oust the in's and install new men. When an officer has tried faithfully and conscientiously to serve the alliance for three months and a minority or a majority show hostility towards him his feelings are wounded and he and his friends remember it with more or less bitterness, and at every recurring county meeting there is more or less bitterness added to nullify that brotherly feeling which should prevail. One year is a short enough time for any alliance officer to serve and to get experience in the duties of his office. But there are two other and greater objections the first of which is that delegates feel more and more reluctant to neglect their pressing work to attend a county meeting that partakes largely of the nature of formal routine. The last and greatest objection is the aggregate sum of money which has been voted out of the different subordinate alliance treasuries to pay the expenses of delegates for railroad fare and board while attending these county meetings. More than \$100,000.00 have been expended in this

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OBTAIN CHICAGO PRICES FOR ALL YOUR PRODUCE.

The way to do this is to ship your Butter, Poultry, Eggs, Veal, Hay, Grain, Wool, Hides, Beans, Broom Corn, Green and Dried Fruits, Vegetables, or anything you have to us. The fact that you may have been selling these articles at home for years is no reason that you should continue to do so if you can find a better market. We make a specialty of receiving shipments direct from FARMERS AND PRODUCERS, and probably have the largest trade in this way of any house in this market. Whilst you are looking around for the cheapest market in which to buy your goods, and thus economize in that way, it will certainly pay you to give some attention to the best and most profitable way of disposing of your produce. We invite correspondence from INDIVIDUALS, ALLIANCES, CLUBS, and all organizations who desire to ship their produce direct to this market. If requested, we will send you free of charge our daily market report, shipping directions and such information as will be of service to you, if you contemplate shipping. When so requested proceeds for shipments will be deposited to the credit of the shipper with any wholesale house in Chicago. Let us hear from you, 47-85

SUMMERS MORRISON & Co., COMMISSION MERCHANTS, 174 South Water Street, Chicago. Reference: Metropolitan National Bank, Chicago.

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THE FARMERS MUTUAL INSURANCE CO. OF NEBRASKA. INSURES ONLY FARM PROPERTY

FARMERS, we invite your attention to the Farmers' Mutual Insurance Company of Nebraska, if you are in want of insurance you can not afford to insure in any other company, and if you do not want insurance now, write and get a copy of our By-laws and Constitution and learn what we are doing anyway. Remember we are for Farmers only.

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