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SARAH B. HARRIS.

Editor

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OBSERVATIONS.**The Penitentiary.**

The good people of New York are shocked to find out that Sing Sing is breeding tuberculosis and typhoid fever. In spite of all the efforts to lessen the ravages of pulmonary consumption the ratio of deaths from this disease has steadily increased in the prison. Expert investigation into the very favorable conditions for the propagation of this disease in the Sing Sing prison, has established the fact that a factory for the development of the germs could do no more satisfactory work than is done at Sing Sing. The prison was built in 1824, just seventy-five years ago on made land between the New York Central railroad tracks and the Hudson river; and the main floor is only five feet above the water level. Its stone walls are two feet thick and the windows are narrow slits, penitentiary style. Light travels in straight lines and a narrow slit between walls two feet thick will admit a direct ray of sunlight only for a few minutes each day when the sun and the earth sustain certain exact relations. Not once in seventy-five years has a ray of sunlight touched the damp cells which generally hold two men, except in the case of a prisoner condemned to death, who is granted the solitude, and the space of a whole cell. The cells are three feet three inches wide by six feet and nine inches deep and a trifle more than six feet high. Each cell contains about 145 cubic feet of air space. The amount of air necessary to each individual is variously estimated, but in England no individual cell contains less than 8.0 cubic feet of air and the school book physiology assigns one thousand to two thousand feet to each individual.

The old Nebraska penitentiary

cells were four feet wide by seven feet deep and seven feet high, allowing 196 cubic feet to a man, but most of the cells were occupied by two men. Therefore each man gets only 98 feet of the two thousand feet of air he is entitled to as a human being. His share might be decreased somewhat on account of his crime against society but to starve his lungs with only one twentieth of his proper share of atmosphere is a crime which society is committing against 287 prisoners now confined in the Nebraska penitentiary. That they are starving for air their pallid, clammy faces prove. Doubtless all of the prisoners deserve to be restrained, but the idea that the prisoner is a man who can be tortured has been relinquished, and is only practiced by mobs, thoroughly brutal gaolers or boards that build prisons. The ventilation at the Nebraska penitentiary was so bad that it makes a visitor, unaccustomed to its villainess, faint. The sewage and drainage of the building is bad and the principle element of foulness is not the fumes of cooking. Cells into which the sunshine can not penetrate, and out of the way of direct draughts of air get foul and fouler. Sunshine and fresh air are a cure for tuberculosis, and by the same token, the dead, damp air of the Nebraska prison propagates the germs of tuberculosis.

What is the use of pronouncing a building all right, when it is all wrong? The Nebraska state penitentiary is in an unhealthy location. It is built on an old fashioned unsanitary plan. Little provision is made for the comfort of the prisoners. The warden's and officers' rooms are large light and airy, but the cell rooms are gloomy and pervaded by an indescribable but very offensive odor. We have no right to keep even criminals in an unhealthy place.

All prisons of the old-fashioned Sing Sing type were demolished long ago in Great Britain. A prisoner has just the same right to good and sufficient air as he has to good and sufficient food. It is quite as inhuman to starve lungs as it is to starve stomachs—or to dole out to the prisoners poisonous food.

The New Cells.

Just at this time when the old cell-house at the penitentiary has burned down, it is very fortunate that the Governor of Nebraska is a man who has made a study of the relations of the state, or of society to criminals. The new cell-room will contain steel cells with smooth surfaces that do not soak up moisture and filth like stone walls and mortar. Built with a tall stack or chimney, in the cell-room, the heavy, foul air will be drawn up and with the new plumbing which will be introduced into every cell the new room will not be such a disgrace to the state. Why, the dungeons of the middle ages, where men rotted in darkness and foul air were not very

much worse than the cells provided by Nebraska for convicts.

In spite of the youthfulness of Nebraska as a state, in spite of the altitude and the nervous tension that increases the activity of our minds and bodies, Nebraskans are a conservative unemotional people. *Nil admirari* is their motto. Two years ago when a battalion of soldiers, passed through Nebraska, on its way from the Cuban to the Philippine side of the Spanish-American war, the crowds at the stations watched the trains pull in and out, with characteristic Nebraska phlegm. There was no shouting, no wild unrestrained tossing of hats into the air, no demonstrations such as the troops had been greeted by in the trans-Mississippi states. The men and officers asked the reason of the silence, and were told that "It is our way." Perhaps the resentment which regards the distinction gained by another as a personal reflection on our own obscurity has something to do with the apathy with which measures of reform, and the occasional presence of men and women who have signalized themselves, are received. At any rate frequent reports of the disgraceful condition of the penitentiary has failed to arouse any interest. And unless the cell house had burned down it would doubtless have been very difficult to secure an appropriation from the legislature to make the wards of the state more comfortable. The convicts have reason to be thankful therefore for the fire which destroyed stone cells soaked with the accumulated smells and disease germs of years.

"Thoroughly Obnoxious."

A very competent forewoman of a long established publishing house in this city once discharged a printer without alleging any cause of complaint. The president of the local printers union wrote a letter to the forewoman informing her that it was the custom of the union to request in such cases an explanation from the employer. The man's character was familiar to the union and it was only as a matter of form that she was requested to explain his dismissal. After considering her trials with the printer the forewoman wrote the union that she dismissed — because he was "thoroughly obnoxious." Without specifying the daily annoyances caused by a spiteful, unreliable employe, the forewoman summed up the effect of the man's presence in the composing room, his constant complaints and petty tyranny exercised over his associates by the quoted phrase. The president and every member of the union who knew the man understood exactly what she meant.

Many a man and woman lose their jobs because they make themselves "thoroughly obnoxious." Overweening self-esteem and a constant desire to attain a salary and an eminence

which they do not earn and are not fitted for, a temperament which belittles the work and merits of others, and an absolute absence of the sense of propriety, are the characteristics of a character thus described. Men receiving a much higher salary than the printer lose their jobs because they can not resist the temptation to render themselves "thoroughly obnoxious" to the company or individual that employs them. In investigating the specific causes why such an individual was let out, a committee of investigation frequently blames an employer because a committee from the outside has not sustained an employer's relations with the ousted, has no personal acquaintance with the employe in question and does not realize the force of the description—"thoroughly obnoxious" as applied to the dismissed.

The Closure Rule.

Senator Platt is as much of a nuisance, and the same sort of a nuisance in the United States senate as Croker is in New York. One is a republican and the other a democrat, but they stand for the same thing, plunder. Senator Platt was very much annoyed when Senator Carter defeated the rivers and harbors bill by talking until the close of the session. As everybody knows this appropriation of \$50,000,000 included apportionments for the improvement of obscure and unnavigable rivers and creeks along with monies for rivers and harbors that repay development. Senator Carter called it "vicious legislation" and announced his intention to talk the bill to death before the close of the session. The majority had decided to vote for the bill. Experience of minorities, of their frequent righteous cause, of their habits of independence and of reliance upon their own conscience and of their indifference to their own conspicuous isolation, for righteousness' sake inclines a student of politics, to respect the minority which so frequently governs the majority. The minority in the Nebraska legislature, which opposes the election of Mr. Thompson is right. The minority in the United States senate, headed by Carter which opposed the will of Platt and the rivers and harbors bill was right. The historical prestige of the minority will doubtless prevent the minority in the senate from voting for closure and thus yielding the salutary negative power of the minority.

Betting on Salvation.

The Reverend Richard A. Morley, pastor of the Sheffield Avenue church of Chicago, has agreed to pay Duke M. Farson, revivalist, one thousand dollars if in the course of two weeks he "converts" fifteen souls. There are all kinds of people but to rise in meeting and request prayers inducted thereto by a man who has put up one