

REFORMATORY REFORM

BY

ISAAC G. BRIGGS

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C. 4

NEW YORK, TORONTO

BOMBAY, CALCUTTA AND MADRAS

1924

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

EPILEPSY, HYSTERIA
AND NEURASTHENIA

Crown 8vo. 5s. net. 1921

METHUEN AND CO., LTD.

Made in Great Britain. All rights reserved.
Printed at The Bowering Press, Plymouth.

TO

LOUISE F. PHILLIPS

YOUR calm belief in the finality of the order of things in which you work, I view with as much astonishment as you do my predilection for the untried and unknown.

* * * * *

THEY do not see the facts to which we call attention because they do not *feel* them.

* * * * *

BY maintaining certain institutions we might alter, we perpetuate certain evils we might cure.

DICKINSON.

PREFACE

THE problem of the treatment of the Juvenile Delinquent has been much before the public eye of late. The fact that both the Labour Research Department, and "Copec" have considered the treatment of crime and the criminal indicates that public opinion is moving in the right direction.

Few writers, however, know anything of the actual experiences, difficulties and requirements of the inmates of our minor penal institutions. In America, from whence many excellent books have come, the term "Reformatory" indicates prisons and places like Borstal, rather than the institutions as we know them. Such experiences can only be known by one who has been "reformed," and such are not given to writing books. I therefore hope that the plain tale of my own experiences, plus the details of methods in general use, and various suggestions, will prove useful to students.

The Science of Penology, yet in swathing bands, is largely a matter of opinion, rather than of fact and experiment. This opinion is bitterly divided on almost every point. Personalities are too common. The conservative penologist regards the reformer as a sentimentalist who does not understand the difficulties of the

problem, nor the refractory character of the material. It is the old jibe of the "practical man" at the "theorist." The reformer regards the present system as foolish and illogical, and considers both present methods and present men as unsuitable to reform the criminal. As the present men defend the present systems, he concludes that the men, like the systems are foolish and illogical, from whence it is not a great step to believe that the men are simply trying to bolster up the system for their own pecuniary advantage, for any man will defend a system which gives him and his family bread, and will oppose any reform, however good, in which no niche is left for him.

From this arises many of the personalities. The reformer would sweep away the system, and replace it by another, with men suited to run that new system. The conservative assumes that when the reformer considers him unsuited to run the new system, it is because he is unsuited to run the old, present system, whereas it is usually because he is so well fitted to run the old system, that the reformer considers him unfitted to run the new one. The conservative is extremely sensitive to criticism, and seems to consider that a doubt as to his ability to accomplish a certain task, is a general doubt as to his personal character and ability to accomplish other tasks, which is by no means the case. Speaking generally, the personnel are part of the system. Indeed, save for necessary organisation, in penal matters

the personnel *are* (or ought to be) the system. Consequently, if the system needs radical change, the personnel must be involved in that change, and that although they may be, in themselves, admirable men. If these considerations are given proper weight, many personalities would be avoided.

In this book, the author presents certain facts, and many of his own opinions, including judgments on men and systems he himself suffered under. He has endeavoured to be judicially impartial, to get the detached air of the historian; he has not tried to make a case by special pleading, nor to attract attention by sensational methods. He is no hero, and while he considers most of the men he met while at a Reformatory were not fitted for posts under the new system he advocates, he freely recognises they were not villains, but respectable, worthy men doing what they considered right.

A book is not a debating platform. One point of view only is put before the reader; he is asked to pass a stern judgment on an *ex parte* case. Fair play demands that men who cannot put their view before the reader should not be named (save in quotations from their own statements). Accordingly, *all names in Part One are fictitious*, common names being chosen. The author is attacking *systems*; no reflection is intended upon *individuals*.

It may be said that in twelve years things have so

changed that the author's experiences have only an historical interest, and shew what great improvements have been made. Minor improvements have been made (some of these are indicated) but, in the main, things have not changed much. From various causes, usually difficult to define, the criminal in common with the rest of the race, passes through subtle changes; the type gradually becomes different. The Fagins and Bill Sykes' of Dickens' day have disappeared. Costume has changed, methods and men have changed, and violence has largely disappeared. The criminal has progressed like the honest man, but the prison system can claim no credit for this change. Natural changes, national and international changes must be discounted, ere systems are credited or discredited.

The author believes that men and systems at other schools do not vary greatly from those at the school he has sketched, a belief which gained strength from the detailed observations of a fellow University student, who had been an officer at a well-known and highly-praised reformatory school. He discussed the subject at great length with the author, being then, and now, ignorant that the author knew anything about such schools.

The reader may also object that the character of the author is abnormal, and that his experiences and reactions are not common to the average boy. This is true, but most of the experiences are necessarily common

to all, while the fact that the author had a very easy time may be held to balance any peculiarities of his. If this plain tale does not carry a conviction of sincerity and truth, there can be no other reply to the objection that no reliance can be placed on the word of a convicted criminal.

The author's aim is to stimulate the thought of the increasing number of thoughtful, humane citizens who are interested in a grave problem. Criticisms and facts, whether proving or disproving his ideas will be welcome.

I. G. BRIGGS.

September, 1924.

CONTENTS

PART I

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. IN WHICH I DESCRIBE MY EARLY LIFE -	I
II. IN WHICH "JUSTICE GIVETH EVERY MAN HIS OWN," INCLUDING MR. BRIGGS -	9
III. IN WHICH I AM PLACED IN THE SCALES OF JUSTICE AND KICK THE BEAM, WHEREON THE OTHER PAN IS HEAVILY WEIGHTED	15
IV. IN WHICH GOD AND JAMES SMITH START TO REFORM ME - - -	20
V. IN WHICH I REVIEW THE APOSTLES OF REFORM	24
VI. IN WHICH, IN LIKE MANNER, I REVIEW A FEW OF THE APOSTLES OF LUCIFER -	35
VII. IN WHICH I TALK GARRULOUSLY ON A NUMBER OF THINGS - - -	41
VIII. I START A NEW CHAPTER, THAT THE READER MAY REFILL HIS PIPE - -	48
IX. IN WHICH I RECORD SOME OF MY OWN EXPERIENCES - - -	58
X. IN WHICH I TREAT OF PLEASANT THINGS, INCLUDING HIGH DAYS AND HOLIDAYS	67

CHAPTER	PAGE
XI. IN WHICH I AM LIFTED TO A HIGH PLACE, FROM WHENCE I FALL - - -	77
XII. IN WHICH WE ARE INSPECTED, TO PROVE THAT GOD AND JAMES SMITH ARE WORKING ACCORDING TO HOME OFFICE RULES - - - -	85
XIII. AVE ATQUE VALE! - - -	95

PART II

I. THE CHILDREN'S COURT - - -	107
II. PROBATION - - - -	122
III. FURTHER DETAILS OF REFORMATORY AND INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS - -	131
IV. FURTHER DETAILS AND REFLECTIONS -	147
V. BORSTAL TREATMENT - - -	158
VI. AFTER-CARE BY THE BORSTAL ASSOCIATION	182

PART III

I. A CRITICAL CONSIDERATION OF THE PROBLEM AS A WHOLE - - - -	193
--	-----