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GLOOM IS BANNED AT NEW PENITENTIARY FOR U. S. WOMEN

Washington—The first federal prison for women in the United States is not a prison—it is the Federal Industrial Institution for Women, formally opened at Alderson, W. Va., on Nov. 24.

This institution is the fulfillment of a desire on the part of penologists and humanitarians which wrung from a reluctant Congress the opportunity for conducting the experiment.

"Prisons are dreary things," said a man in protest against visiting the institution. True, and this is why this experiment has been started. It is not dreary and it may revolutionize the treatment of prisoners and their relation to society. In two essentials, the new institution is fortunate, its location and the character of its sponsors.

In the beautiful country beyond White Sulphur Springs the Government purchased 500 acres overlooking the Greenbrier river valley. The institution lies in its own setting, perhaps a mile from the village of Alderson on an irregular plateau guarded by hills and mountains in every direction. The buildings of modified Georgian architecture, designed by the Supervising Architect's office of the Treasury, are placed about two grassy quadrangles of differing angles.

The quadrangles are called campuses, emphasizing the academic appearance of the institution. It looks like a new college, or one of the modern country schools. There is no jarring note to indicate that this is not a well ordered place for normal members of society. To be sure, it is on dress parade for

the opening, but no penal, no eleemosynary institution in the United States has ever been so well equipped, could put on such a dress parade.

Honor College
One is met at the station by an ordinary automobile, probably lent by a neighbor in the village—for, contrary to predictions, the neighborhood has embraced the new prison with great friendliness—and motored up to the bustling administration building.

"Name? Staying how long? Cottage No. 11." And the visitor was conducted to one of the cottages facing the campus, ready for prisoners, but not yet occupied. The warden had a room for a window and the heat, and asked if everything was all right, did not look like a criminal.

"Would you like any pressing or unpacking done? Ice water, then?" she was shortly to leave on parole. Did I think the board would meet that day? No, she would not go back to the place where she got in trouble. She would join her son in a Middle West city and if all went well she would open a little shop, but she would do nothing illegal. It was probably in connection with a little shop in another city that she had learned the prohibition law and found herself in the toils of the law.

Had I seen No. 12? That is the honor cottage and was eager to be viewed. The warden said it was unnecessary for her to stay in the little reception room, but who passes in or out. Doors to the rooms of the inmates stood open, pretty curtains at the windows, pictures and personal belongings about, like a girl's room at boarding school. No dormitories, each girl having her own privacy. The mid-day meal was being prepared. A row of pies fresh from the oven stood on a table.

"Gentlemen like pies," said the prisoner, who had made them. Eight prizes she had taken at the local fair and another girl in the kitchen had taken ninth. Pretty for one cottage. Pantry shelves were filled with jars of vegetables and fruits put up for the winter.

The dining room, flooded with light on three sides. Seven round tables are set, four girls at each table. This cottage built on the same plan as the other cottages. The only difference is that the inmates earned the right to be trusted more than the others.

Few Unruly Girls
One who strayed where he would and enter any building without hindrance. The visitor was looking for unruly girls and bolts and nuts. Finally he saw among trees on a lower level at one corner of the campus a building with iron barred windows. A woman came out with keys in her hand. Yes, she was in charge. This was the building of "decreased privileges." How many were there in it? Three, two of them who had run away, getting no farther than the village. Three, and 28 in the honor cottage, mused the visitor.

Facing the more distant campus at the far end is the reception building. Here are brought female prisoners from various state prisons, and some are now coming from the courts. Here they are examined and classified, every three months there is a reclassification, so that the prisoner may be fitted more efficiently for her return to society. It is a part of what Mrs. Willebrandt calls the "new note" to lead the history of each entrant and gauge her capacity to learn something that will help her to support herself when she leaves the protection of the institution.

In the Industrial Building are machines which the prisoners learn to handle. They make the clothing and domestic linen for the institution and use an iron hook rug, upholster old furniture sent by the Government from other places where it has had use. They also make frocks and coats and hats for girls to wear away from the institution so that they will be presentable for new positions. Later they will help to supply other federal institutions.

All Learn to Read
In connection with cooking classes, girls are taught to set the table and serve. There is instruction in Americanization for those who need it and those who cannot read or write must learn to do so before they leave.

A brilliant note is introduced by pictures of birds on the walls. There are also charts with illustrations of dresses and estimates of cost. There are simple poems, illustrated so that they can be more easily understood.

Some distance away lies the farm, in charge of a woman. She has planted the hillside with fruit and pruned the old orchard until its fruit took first prize. Acres of vegetables bountifully supply the institution tables and there is milk enough from the cows to go around and have enough cream left for a part of the butter. Hens, sick chickens, form an important part of the live stock.

Attorney-General Sargent, in turning over a symbolic key to Dr. Mary Harris, the superintendent, said that women had had leading part in the formulation and working out of plans for the institution, and that the execution had been in the hands of a woman, the Assistant Attorney-General, to whom is committed advisory charge of all federal prisons and prisoners.

Hope to Find Good in All
"Mrs. Willebrandt has watched over, cared for, and fought for it as a mother for her child," said Mr. Sargent. "Like a true mother she knows those who are sent here have done wrong, are wrong in their relations to their fellows, but cannot believe that any of them is wholly bad, devoid of some germ, some instinct, which if it can be properly cultivated,

will spring forth into a useful life." Mrs. Willebrandt's address is "The Greenhouse," 1200 1/2 day in society's attitude toward those in restraint and the maladjusted. Instead of the former treatment, the unit should be the individual. Each prisoner is a concrete problem with a special key to be found for his problem. It is this dealing with the individual which is the special characteristic of the new federal institution. Mrs. Willebrandt expressed the hope that it would become a laboratory for working out the individual treatment of offenders. Even an selfish basis this is an attempt at self-preservation for society.

Mrs. Julia K. Jaffray of the advisory board, called attention to a bill before Congress to permit the women of the country to donate a chapel.

Mrs. John F. Sipple and Mrs. Lenna L. Yost pledged co-operation of the General Federation of Women's Clubs and the W. C. T. U., respectively, for the work of the institution.

Young Reggie had just been chastised by his paternal parent for allowing the garden roller to run into the greenhouse wall. He sought consolation from his mother.

"Mamma," he asked, "did Grandma spank Daddy when he was little?" "Yes, dear."

"And did his Daddy spank him?" "Yes."

"Well," said the small boy wearily, "who started this thing, anyway?"—Answers (London).

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(Signed) **JOHN E. FERGUSON,**
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