The Eccentric Was Right

SO SAYS MICHIGAN EDITOR AFTER TOUR OF PRISONS

Note: The following article was written by J. E. McMullen, editor of the Linden Leader on his return from an inspection of the Ionia Reformatory and the Michigan State Prison at Jackson. He was the guest of The Eccentric on the inspection tour which was suggested when he advocated harsher methods in dealing with prisoners. His change of heart, following the sight of prisons horrors is apparent in this article. Articles by other editors who made the trip will appear in subsequent issues.

By J. E. McMULLEN

Editor Linden (Mich.) Leader

On the invitation of Mr. George Averill, editor and publisher of the Birmingham Eccentric, I accompanied him with a party consisting of Norman Orr, prosecuting attorney of Oakland county, Murl H. DeFoe of The Charlotte Republican, and Fred D. Keister of the Ionia County News, to the prison at Ionia last Friday, and by the courtesy of Warden Shean was given liberty to see and even converse with some of the prisoners. The trip was gotten up to convince me that Michigan prisons were not the play houses I had imagined, and before going further I must confess my ignorance of the inner workings of Ionia and Jackson institutions.

After entering the prison portals proper we were ushered into the dormitory where 180 boys and men have sleeping quarters, which on the very start I must say is a crying disgrace to the great commonwealth of Michigan, for a more revolting place for prisoners ranging in age from 16 to 70, with line after line of cots, divided only with space for a small box where prisoners are supposed to keep their keepsakes, and while the sheets were clean enough the mattresses (God save the mark) were possibly a thousand shades darker by years of use. Imagine, if you can, a large room, with concrete floors and concrete walls, with steel barred windows, without a single picture of any kind, always the eternal sameness, and when allowed to look into eyes of fellow prisoners that carry the same drab look. Thanks to Gov. Green, he spoke of the needed change in his message, and in my humble opinion, if a dollar is appropriated for any other cause this damnable dormitory should be abolished and replaced with modern cell blocks. "Reformatory!" what a misnomer, as if the human mind could catch a glint of inspiration in such a place. In the shirt factory, where enough shirts in two days can be made for every man in Michigan, pretty good looking shirts at that, but watch the workers, you men and women who have boys. There they sit at power driven sewing machines, and if they can complete 18 shirts a day they make the princely sum of 50 cents, and mark you, no matter what happens they dare not speak to the next man only a few inches apart, and at this work they labor for ten hours, a pretty long day. It is no fault of the humane warden or his attendants—it is the system. Were I younger I think I'd sin enough against society to get a three months' term, just to catch the "reform" feeling many of these boys must have. In the furniture factory they also work, but have to more body and limbs in their labor, and at the same time attain some degree of efficiency in their respective jobs which perchance is useful to them on the outside. Other departments of labor were, as far as I could see, much the same. As for eating, I noted one commendable exception, they were allowed to talk.

As to punishment for infraction of the rules I noticed for minor offences the prisoner was caused to stand erect for a few hours at a time, while for greater offences they were put in cells, narrow cells at that, where light fails to penetrate, and for a couch a narrow board to lie on tilted against the wall, covered with a thin blanket and for dining, boys read this, they receive four small slices of bread without butter or olee, and two cups of water for each 24 hours, while on the fifth day they get one meal, and if signs of contrition are in evidence they are released to take up the daily grind.

I met a Linden boy there, whom I'm glad to say his conduct is highly spoken of, and given as much work on the outside as possible along electrical lines. What I saw at Ionia prison was enough to keep me awake Friday night, though I laid on a downy bed at the Downey House in Lansing.

Thursday morning we motored over to Jackson, visiting both the old and the new prisons, and it is needless to say Warden Harry Jackson gave us the once over, and taking it for granted that we had nothing of a material nature that was offensive or defensive on our journey, he took us in charge and without hesitation let us see everything. Both prisons are massive structures, and are decided improvements in many ways over Ionia, in my estimation, and because of its greatness we are unable to give you a comprehensive word picture in this article, for it is the last word in modern prisons.

Its massive steel cell blocks, built like a modern sky scraper, where tier upon tier of cells are in evidence. Here there were nothing of the dormitory idea, except in rooms where eight men are placed, and even there was taste and order, for it being Saturday afternoon the men were at leisure, many of them reading, others spending their time in making certain articles of their own fancy. There were pictures of home and loved ones on many cell walls, making it more humane, while of course the great steel bars ever before them compelled all to feel the power of authority that was over them.

Here too the many departments of labor were all that could be desired for the prisoner, who is determined to make the best of it, have an air of what you might say congeniality. The labor was all useful, though to be sure it is not what many would follow if on the outside, and to thinking minds labor must be the greatest blessing.

For instance, the large binder twine department was a sight to behold, with its multiplied machines, each man in silence doing his part, and everything geared up to make production of the highest grade possible. The furniture factory too, in the variety of articles, in their finish and taste of design were fine. Then too in the granite shop, where the block is taken and worked over into things of beauty, but no matter where you went, if a man was able he was at work, and no matter where he is the system can check up on him in a moment.

The dining hall in the new Jackson prison has a capacity of seating 1700 men, and is operated on the cafeteria plan. As the men pass in each takes a tray and advancing to the servers are given a large aluminum plate of a combination stew and meat, potatoes and other vegetables, one biscuit, half a pickle, a small dish of jelly, a cup of chickory coffee, which they carry to their respective places and eat in silence. If bread is wanted the prisoner raises his hand and he's given a slice. A checkup is made on every diner, and if all is not eaten he is questioned as to the reason. The system is a decided saving over the old plan.

If you have a relative or friend there and you want to visit them you are given one hour in the visiting room, the prisoner one side of a wide table and you on the other, with a guard looking on to see that nothing is passed between you. All letters, coming in and going out are read. Hence the prisoner cannot do anything without strict supervision.

Punishment is much the same as at Ionia, only the solitary cells seem more dark, I know, for they shut me in. Then if a prisoner is stubborn he is placed against the grate and a half circle door laps around him, and there he stands for eight hours in a day, with no chance of stooping or sitting down. I tried that too.

However, in both prisons, if a man takes it for granted that he is there and is determined to make the best of it there are certain incentives by way of priveleges which can mitigate his situation considerably. Only a fool will attempt the bravado act, for there is unlimited power against him.

Armed guards are stationed at intervals on the outer walls, who keep strict watch over every inch of the walls. Only two escaped from Jackson in four years, and all other attempts were frustrated.

What is here written I confess is only a fraction of what could be said, but I think it is enough to convince any wayward boy or man that "CRIME DOESN'T PAY!"

It would be folly to attempt an explanation of how prisoners are made, for too often they are not made, they are born that way, yea cursed into the world, who perchance need sane mental treatment rather than physical restraint, while in many others the lack of home discipline is sadly in evidence, for even before their teens they demand and get what they want regardless of what it may be or how it may inconvenience the parents. Then too, many parents leave it to the schools to mould the life and character of their offspring, which is absolutely wrong to start with.

I saw Lattimer, who killed his mother, and who has been a prisoner over 40 years. He is one among many who has cultivated his mind, and because of it is hundreds in the bank than millions on the brain.

No gentleman has ever heard your story before.

To achieve disarmament build battleships by public subscription.

A man's reputation is that which is not found out about him.

A man who hides behind a woman's skirts today is not a coward; he is a magician.

When a man says his word is as good as his bond—get his bond.

We have been told that man is the noblest work of God, but nobody ever said so except man.

Optimism makes a man of 95 buy a new suit of clothes and two pairs of trousers.

It's a wise wife who laughs at her husband's jokes.

Judge not a man by his clothes, but by his wife's clothes.

Poets are born, not paid.

The road to success is filled with women pushing their husbands along.

It is not so much what a man stands for as what he falls for.

There are no idle rich; they are dodging people who want their money.

Motor cars are increasing by leaps and bounds. Pedestrains are surviving by the same process.

A kangaroo is just an abortive attempt by nature to make a safe pedestrian.

"Adam's rib," a small part that has developed into a loud speaker.

The one thing that hurts more than paying income tax is not having to pay income tax.

WE HEARD IT SAID BY—

Eddie Edwards, local music teacher and organist at the Methodist Church: "Today's music is for the feet and not for the head; it is the day of jazz and not the classics. But the pendulum will soon swing the other way and we will witness a greater mass appreciation of the finer things in the musical world—and people will be happier and kindlier, for music is a universal language of Heaven."

STAR GAZING

Exclusive Central Press Dispatch to The Eccentric

New York.—There are 13 young misses in Hollywood who are just about the happiest baker's dozen to be found anywhere actor folk congregate. They are the lucky girls to be chosen 1929 Wampas Baby stars, composed of players who have shown great promise in their film work an dbid fair to rise to greater heights during the coming months.

Gloria Swanson is just about the most depressed person in Hollywood these days—her husband, the Marquise Henri de la Falaise, is making another of his journeys to Paris. Every time they get nicely settled in the film colony he has to make a hurried dash abroad.

This year's lucky crew, as you perhaps have guessed from reviewing the merits of the various younger film folk, includes Josephine Dunn, Ethlyne Clair, Caryl Lincoln, Mona Rico, Doris Dawson, Helen Foster, Loretta Young, Jean Arthur, Betty Boyd, Anita Page, Doris Hill, Helen Twelvetrees and Sally Blane.

A FEW WISECRACKS FROM MY LORD

A Bachelor and one of the industrial leaders of England, Lord Dewar, is also known in the British Isles for his humorous and witty remarks on life, marriage and other social institutions. Too bad his lordship isn't also a playwright, for many of his brightest mots seem admirably adapted to inclusion in one of those typically British teacup comedies. Here are some of his favorite wisecracks as they were recently printed in the London Evening News:

Life is made up of trials, with an occasional conviction.

To some mothers life is just one darn stocking after another.

Most men are believers in heredity, until the son makes a fool of himself.

Man reaps what he sows, unless he be an amateur gardener.

Four-fifths of the perjury of the world is expended on tombstones.

Providence never intended us to be equal, except when we are asleep.

No man is so good but a good woman can make him better.

A golden wedding is when a couple have gone fifty-fifty.

Marriage is a great institution—for those who like institutions.

Many a bachelorship has been wrecked on a permanent wave.

Marriage is a committee of two—with power to add to their numbers.

There are more Mormons in London than in Salt Lake City, but their wives don't know it.

A husband should tell his wife everything he is sure she will find out, and before any one else does.

A philosopher is a man who can look at an empty glass with a smile.

If husbands went everywhere their wives told them to go, there would be fewer divorces, but more widows.

Divorce is a great institution; it keeps women in circulation.

It is much better to have a few inclined to want a pardon, but he's better off where he is.

Another man who was 17 when he entered for a certain murder in Detroit, has been there 43 years, and apparently is little better for his long sojourn.

I saw young Deacons, who killed the school teacher, tucked in a narrow cell like a caged beast. Young Arthur Rich was being shaved and I failed to get a good view of him. However, he is only one of the many who had things too much his own way.

Until the world knows better prisons may be necessary, but after all is said and done I am inclined to think there must be a better way, for while it may hold the criminal in restraint it is degrading to this twentieth century civilization that so many young men are inclined to go wrong. It is you, and you and I that are responsible to a greater or lesser extent, and it is my honest prayer that the God above us, while inspiring human minds to bring forth physical inventions for the race, may inspire others to devise ways and means to overcome this gigantic pile of human waste.

BOWLING

The standings of the Birmingham Monday night league are as follow:

	W	L
De Soto Sales	27	15
B'ham Dept. Store	25	17
R. A. F. Real Estate	22	20
Star Lunch	22	20
Williams Boot Shop	17	25
Jeff's Sandwich Shop	14	28

High Scores were rolled by S. Baynes with 255 and H. Jagger with 202.

The scores of the three dual matches follow:

Star Lunch vs B'ham Dept. Store:				
Ryan	143	155	117	415
Matice	136	170	174	480
Jagger	151	142	202	495
Uberoth	153	150	129	432
Baynes	115	166	255	536
Totals	698	783	877	2358
Bierer	187	176	196	559
Nixon	189	123	156	468
Davidson	106	144	160	410
Jewell	162	179	143	484
Rose	118	157	183	458
Totals	762	779	838	2379

Williams Boot Shop vs Jeff's Sandwich Shop:				
P. Williams	184	152	148	474
Sticke	141	159	190	490
R. Brown	164	157	178	499
Chapman	153	116	172	441
Paxon	185	183	158	526
Totals	827	787	846	2480.

Moore	147	193	197	537
Wilcox	132	123	143	398
Johnson	162	136	167	465
Gravlin	152	141	169	462
Grant	175	158	179	512
Totals	768	751	855	2374

De Soto Sales vs R. A. F. Real Estate:				
Green	155	132	152	439
Gravlin	198	137	145	480
Adams	184	154	167	505
Dolan	133	130	178	441
F. Williams	177	169	144	490
Totals	847	712	786	2345

L. Hascall	131	161		292
Moore	113	165	187	465
Kimp	155	156	135	446
Kurth	179	192	157	528
Anderson	185	146	195	526
Gibson		146		146
Totals	763	820	820	2403

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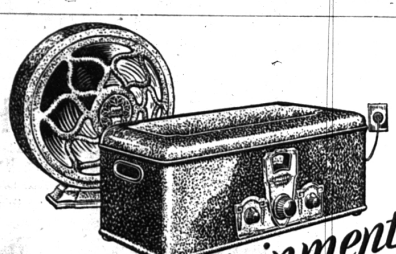

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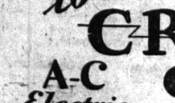

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See Our Week-End Specials in Friday's Detroit News and Times