

**A TREATISE ON THE MODERN SYSTEM
OF GOVERNING GAOLS,
PENITENTIARIES, AND
HOUSES OF CORRECTION, WITH A VIEW
TO MORAL IMPROVEMENT AND
REFORMATION OF CHARACTER**

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A Treatise on the Modern System of Governing Gaols, Penitentiaries, and Houses of Correction, with a View to Moral Improvement and Reformation of Character by James Palmer

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JAMES PALMER

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A T R E A T I S E
ON THE
MODERN SYSTEM OF GOVERNING
GAOLS, PENITENTIARIES,
AND
HOUSES OF CORRECTION,
WITH A VIEW TO
Moral Improvement and Reformation of Character;
ALSO, A DETAIL OF
THE DUTIES OF EACH DEPARTMENT OF A PRISON,
TOGETHER WITH
SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE STATE OF PRISON DISCIPLINE,
AT HOME AND ABROAD,
AND ON
THE MANAGEMENT OF LUNATIC ASYLUMS.

BY MAJOR JAMES PALMER,

One of the Inspectors-General of Prisons in Ireland.

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PREFACE.

Most of the opinions in this publication have been brought before the public in various shapes, within the last thirty years, and it may require some explanation to account for an intrusion that at first sight appears uncalled for. I trust, however, I shall stand acquitted when I state, that I am not aware of any attempt to give practical instructions on all points of duty and detail, to the various officers of a prison, of any description, and to define the system and management that has been laid down by the best judges on the subject, for obtaining the ultimate object of all imprisonment, viz., the *prevention of crime* and the *reformation of the criminal*. My object has been to collect the best practical opinions; to add such as experience has taught me, and to arrange the whole in a plain manner, so that it may become intelligible to all. If I have in any degree succeeded in this, the errors in other respects will be excused.

The office I have held as one of the Inspectors-General of Prisons in Ireland for twelve years, will plead an apology for my venturing on the subject. It has given me abundant opportunities of investigating the details of prison discipline in all their bearings, and I may say with confidence, that my colleague and myself have taken a great interest in them.

I have divided the subject into chapters for the convenience of reference, and I found it necessary occasionally to exceed the limits of mere instruction to officers, in order to prove the principles I maintained.

I have studiously avoided the subjects of *jurisprudence*, *increase of crime*, with its *causes*, and *legal enactments* to enforce the system proposed, the latter of which is of vital importance to secure uniformity. But such commentaries would not be suitable for a public officer to enter upon, and even if they were, I feel myself quite unqualified for the task.

In dedicating this work to the Lord Lieutenants and Magistrates of Great Britain, I feel I have acted as I should. They are the natural and authorised guardians of the county institutions; with their countenance and assistance the principles I have ventured to recommend, and the suggestions I have made, must obtain a fair trial, and without their approbation and support it would be vain to expect the county to provide for, or the officers to administer, an effective and salutary system.

The reader will find many observations repeated in various chapters, and some, perhaps, which he may consider would be better placed under another head; but this has not been done without consideration. Both these apparent errors in the arrangement will, I trust, be found generally useful in a book of mere instruction, and will call the attention of many readers to points which they would not otherwise be informed upon, from the natural tendency of persons to study only that part of a work which applies to their own office.

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A TREATISE

ON THE

MODERN SYSTEM OF GOVERNING GAOLS,

&c.

CHAPTER I.

ON CRIME AND PUNISHMENT.

In all nations of the world the principle of their penal law would seem to have been *revenge*; a principle founded upon the supposed claim of justice, upon the life, liberty, person, or property of the delinquent. Subservient to this principle, and naturally flowing from it, was that policy which sought the repression of crime by the terrors of punishment. This appears to have been the scope and limit of men's notions on the subject; benefit to the criminal seems never to have formed any part of the design; the state of the gaols, from which all idea of humanity was banished, fully demonstrates this fact.

It was falsely supposed that severity of human suffering conveyed a lesson of morality, and that reformation was the natural effect of punishment; to attempt the amelioration of criminals by any other instrument would have been conceived a misapplication of humanity, and a condescension derogatory to the dignity of the community; we cannot therefore be surprised that the progress of society has been marked by the multiplication of penalties, and the increased severity of their character, and that invention has often been active to discover new