

**CRIME AND
CRIMINALS,
1876-1910**

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Crime and Criminals, 1876-1910 by R. F. Quinton

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BY

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PREFACE

I HAVE attempted in the following pages to give an outline of the principal changes that have taken place of late years, and of the progress that has been made in our methods of repressing crime and dealing with criminals, together with the results that have been achieved under these methods. On the actual efficacy or superiority of our system I feel too diffident to dogmatise. The subject is one on which widely different opinions are held by able and conscientious thinkers. Further, I cannot lay claim to any experience as a writer of books, although I have been in practical touch with the problems involved in prison administration for several years. That the system, however, as it exists to-day, has merits of its own, few

people who have witnessed the practical results of its working will be inclined to deny.

My aim has been to give, as moderately and impartially as I could, the results of my own observation and experience of the system as I found it.

Let me premise that for the greater part of my service I was engaged solely in medical work at Portsmouth Convict Prison, and then, in succession, at Millbank, Hull, Manchester, Liverpool, Wandsworth, and Parkhurst Prisons, and that during this period of twenty-five years I had nothing to do with discipline in an official capacity. A medical officer in these circumstances is somewhat favourably placed for observing the general working of the machine. He is the recognised and responsible protector of the prisoner from any undue harshness of treatment that may tend to his physical or mental detriment, and he is very often the confidential repository of the prisoner's grievances, or complaints

of unfair dealing on the part of the staff. Later on in my service as Governor at Holloway Prison, I was called upon to carry out disciplinary duties myself over female prisoners. The recollection that for so many years it had been my function to temper the wind of discipline to the shorn lamb who transgressed the rules served me in good stead, and exercised a wholesome check on any tendency I might have had to harsh measures. Although Carlyle has said that "Womankind will not drill" (from his perhaps more limited experience), I found that female prisoners were quite as tractable and amenable to discipline as men, and they could be drilled also. Many of the younger women in fact quite revelled in their Swedish drill under a very capable lady instructress, who soon imparted to them a martial step and bearing, so that their best friends would hardly know them. Suffragettes were of course a little difficult, but even they were not wholly intractable, or

insusceptible to the exhortations and blandishments of our very patient and efficient female officers, who were generally credited by the Suffragettes with at least good intentions, even if they were somewhat lukewarm in the matter of the vote.

The point of view of any official on the question of prison treatment is of necessity absolutely different from that of any prisoner, but more especially so from that of the prisoner who is capable of writing and publishing his ideas and theories for the information of the public. It is indeed very doubtful if the great mass of prisoners who are inarticulate as to their prison experiences would confirm, or agree with, the opinions put forward in their behalf by the more cultured members of their class (for whom as a rule they have no special affection), who are much more sensitive to the demerits of the frugal fare offered by the Prison Commissioners, and to the disagreeable restrictions of captivity, than their less