

**THE PRISON QUESTION. A
THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL
REVIEW OF SOME MATTERS RELATING
TO CRIME, PUNISHMENT, PRISONS,
AND REFORMATION OF CONVICTS**

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The Prison Question. A Theoretical and Philosophical Review of Some Matters Relating to Crime, Punishment, Prisons, and Reformation of Convicts by Charles H. Reeve

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CHARLES H. REEVE

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THE PRISON QUESTION.

A THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW OF SOME
MATTERS RELATING TO CRIME, PUNISHMENT, PRIS-
ONS, AND REFORMATION OF CONVICTS. WITH A
GLANCE AT MENTAL, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL
CONDITIONS; AND SOME SUGGESTIONS
ABOUT CAUSES, AND THE PRE-
VENTION OF CRIME AND
THE PRODUCTION OF
CRIMINALS.

DESIGNED TO SHOW HOW SOCIETY MAY PROTECT ITSELF AGAINST THE
DISORDERLY ELEMENTS, AND CHECK THE RAPID IN-
CREASE OF THE PRISON POPULATION.

*All of our efforts will fail unless we adapt our methods to the
operation of the natural forces.*

BY
CHARLES H. REEVE.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGES
CHAPTER I.	
THE PRISON QUESTION, - - - - -	7- 13
CHAPTER II.	
MENTALITY, - - - - -	14- 17
CHAPTER III.	
PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ENERGY, - - - - -	18- 26
CHAPTER IV.	
THEOLOGY, - - - - -	27- 42
CHAPTER V.	
MIND, - - - - -	43- 62
CHAPTER VI.	
NATURAL FORCES, - - - - -	63- 70
CHAPTER VII.	
MARRIAGE, - - - - -	71- 89
CHAPTER VIII.	
SOCIETY, - - - - -	99-111
CHAPTER IX.	
GOVERNMENT AND THE CRIMINAL, - - - - -	112-120
CHAPTER X.	
LEGISLATION AND THE CRIMINAL, - - - - -	121-138

CHAPTER XI.	
CONVICTS AND GOVERNMENT, - - - - -	139-148
CHAPTER XII.	
PUNISHMENT, - - - - -	149-158
CHAPTER XIII.	
PRISONS, - - - - -	159-172
CHAPTER XIV.	
REFORMATION, - - - - -	173-189
CHAPTER XV.	
CONCLUSION, - - - - -	190-194

INTRODUCTORY.

SOME noted man—perhaps the Rev. Sidney Smith—was asked to review a book, and this was his review: “Most of it is old. What is old has been better said before. What is new had better not been said.” Some who read this little book may be disposed to take such a view of it; but new or old, well or ill said, the truths stated in it cannot be found elsewhere associated together in application to the prison question, nor addressed to the common comprehension which it is desirable to reach. Discussions on the subject here treated, have been mostly before learned bodies and in scientific language. The common readers, to whom this is addressed, have given but little attention to the subject-matter, and it is important that they should give more. Reformers and prison officials may find things in it they can use to advantage. It is not expected that its contents will meet with general approval and acceptance, nor that it will escape criticism and perhaps some ridicule. It would be commonplace if it should. It contains statements of fact, which, if seriously considered in the connection they are here placed and sought to be applied, must be of value; and when so considered they will be likely to modify some prevailing opinions, to the betterment of the unbalanced classes as well as of the general community, whatever may provoke that consideration.

The fundamental propositions laid down in this book were outlined by me in a public lecture twelve years ago, and were urged with some emphasis. They were briefly urged in

papers read by me before the National Prison Congress at Detroit in October, 1885, on "The True Theory of Reform," at Boston in July, 1888, on "Dependent Children" and at Nashville in November, 1889, on "Arousing the Public." My aim in this little book has been, to group some important, well-established facts and apply them to the subjects of prisons and reforms, in such order as will interest the general public so far as I can reach it; and so aid in creating a public opinion that can intelligently and practically deal with and dispose of the defective classes and the causes that produce them.

THE PRISON QUESTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE PRISON QUESTION.

IN 1878, I read a paper before the Philosophical Society of Chicago on the "Rationale of Punishment" for public offences. The views then briefly presented are elaborated in this work. They were in advance of the times then, but experience and concurrence of thought have shown them to be generally correct, and they are being tried in practice in some respects to a limited extent, in some localities. The time is not distant when the public opinion will fully endorse them, and become more radical in its efforts to suppress vice than is herein suggested. The ideas advanced have passed beyond the mere force of propositions, and sooner or later, to careful observers, they will be regarded as real theories, because they are in harmony with their environment, and will continue to be so as the field of inquiry and development grows larger.

The rapid and alarming increase in the numbers of criminals and in the extension of the planes on which they act, as well as of increase of the demented, and the professional paupers,—being out of proportion to increase of population,—present problems for solution in social, political and mental science, that call for the continued and diligent efforts of the ablest minds in the land. An impractical theology on one hand, and a blind agnosticism on the other, when applied to the subject, the one misdirecting practical energy and true humanity by a dogmatic view of Special Providence, and the other breeding a disposition to construe liberty to mean license, and hence, a misappropriation and misuse of privileges, have brought about and are maintaining conditions that operate to