

WOMAN IN PRISON

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Woman in prison by Caroline H. Woods

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CAROLINE H. WOODS

**WOMAN
IN PRISON**

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WOMAN IN PRISON.

BY
CAROLINE H. WOODS.



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WHY WRITTEN.



I WAS reading an evening paper. I glanced over the advertisements. One attracted my attention, and held it so strongly that I read it over and over, again and again. There was nothing unusual in it to ordinary observation. It read, "Wanted. — At the Penitentiary, a Matron. Inquire at the Institution."

I turned the paper over to read the general news; but could not place my thoughts so as to comprehend the meaning of the words before my sight. Without the intention to do so, I looked again at the advertisement. It became a study to me.

Said Thought — If you were to answer that advertisement, and obtain the situation, it would place you upon missionary ground, and at the same time give you employment which would afford you a support while you are teaching the ignorant. You would get knowledge in the position. A new phase

of life would be opened to your view. You would have an opportunity to observe, practically, how well the present system of prison discipline is adapted to reform convicts, and repress crime. But the cost is too much. I cannot become a Matron in a Penitentiary.

I laid the paper down, without reading it, because I could see nothing in it except that advertisement.

The next day I went in town, sat down in the office of a friend, and took up a morning paper. No sooner had I opened it than that advertisement spread itself out before me. It changed the form of its appeal; left out what my selfishness might gain, to enlist my compassion and aid, entirely, in what I might accomplish for others. It called to me, in piteous tones, to go work for the prisoner. It was the echo of a voice that I long ago heard, Come into our prisons, and help us, we beseech you!

I cannot! I have other things to do, and they are as much for the benefit of humanity as anything I may be able to accomplish for you. My spirit darkened as I made the answer; a cloud of guilt settled down upon it. I threw down the paper in order to dissipate it, and to avoid the plea.

I turned and talked with my friend; but my thoughts were not in what we were saying. That advertisement followed them, and filled them to the exclusion of every other subject.

In the abstraction which it caused the hour in which I was to leave the city passed, and I missed my train. I must remain and avail myself of another.

While I was waiting, that advertisement returned to my reflections, and urged its cause imperatively as a command. It was a call, to me, resistless as the voice that awoke the young Israelitish Prophet from his slumbers. In another moment the struggle with my pride was over, and my spirit answered, — I will go, even to lust-besotted Sodom if thou leadest, Light of my path!

I seated myself in a street car, went to the prison, applied for the place, and obtained it.

Day by day I wrote down what I saw and heard, what I said and did. Why? In obedience to the same Voice that called me to the work.

The tale is before you.

May it touch the heart of every one who reads the story, and melt it into a compassion which will labor for the redemption of the prisoner; into a pity which

will echo around the cry — Open the prison doors, not to let the prisoner go free, but to let in, to him, the light of moral knowledge, and the discipline of Christian charity.

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