

**PUNISHMENT: A
PLAY IN
FOUR ACTS**

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Punishment: A Play in Four Acts by Louise Burleigh & Edward Hale Bierstadt

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LOUISE BURLEIGH & EDWARD HALE BIERSTADT

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BY

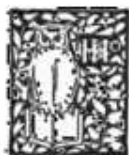
LOUISE BURLEIGH

=
AND

EDWARD HALE BIERSTADT

WITH INTRODUCTION BY

THOMAS MOTT OSBORNE



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LOUISE BURLEIGH

AND

EDWARD HALE BIERSTADT

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Gift
D.C. Quirk
6-6-56

THIS PLAY IS DEDICATED
TO
THOMAS BROWN, AUBURN NO. 33,333X
WITH THE
AFFECTION AND ADMIRATION
OF THE AUTHORS

INTRODUCTION

TO write a truthful and effective play in which certain characters shall be criminals or ex-convicts is a difficult task, even for an experienced dramatist; for while the psychology of the prisoner is not fundamentally different from that of other men, yet he has lived under such abnormal conditions,—conditions so compelling, that it is hard even for the most practised student of human nature to comprehend his point of view. Fully to understand the convict one must go to prison; and few dramatists are eager to do that.

Still more difficult is it to write a play dealing with the actual life of the prison; for the task of making the plot deal with real prison material and yet make the facts seem both true and interesting to an audience, is almost insuperable. Many of the important details of prison life are certainly not agreeable, and in a drama would hardly seem credible.

The authors of *Punishment* have succeeded to a very remarkable degree. They have caught the prison atmosphere; they have woven into

their dramatic scheme a number of actual occurrences and have made them appear plausible and convincing. There is nothing strained or improbable in the development of their plot. Out of truthful material they have made a most interesting play. To have succeeded in doing this is an achievement.

I can vouch for the accuracy of the prison life depicted in *Punishment*. I have seen something of that life, so close to the lives of all of us and yet so inconceivably remote, both from the side of the prisoner and from the side of the prison official; and I think I should be quick to detect a false note. To me *Punishment* rings true; just as in a different field and dealing with quite another branch of the problem Galsworthy's *Justice* rings true. *Punishment* is worthy of a place beside that bitter masterpiece.

There are those to whom realism means nothing that is not disagreeable; but to my mind not the least of the merits of this play is that it closes on a major chord. Fortunately a prison play can now do that and yet remain truthful; that is where the American has the advantage over the English dramatist. The authors of *Punishment* have caught the spirit of our new American penology; and have not only written an important play, but one that must

aid in bringing home to the public a great truth: that it is impossible to solve the problem of crime and imprisonment through brutality and disregard of the human nature of the convict,—but that it can be solved by means of sympathy and understanding. To aid in bringing that great truth home to the public, by means of the drama, is an important service.

THOMAS MOTT OSBORNE.