

**SOCIETY AND PRISONS:
SOME SUGGESTIONS
FOR A NEW PENOLOGY**

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Society and prisons: some suggestions for a new penology by Thomas Mott Osborne

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THOMAS MOTT OSBORNE

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SOCIETY AND PRISONS

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PENOLOGY, according to the Century Dictionary's very excellent definition, is: "The study of punishment for crime, both in its deterrent and in its reformatory aspect; the study of the management of prisons."

It is my purpose in this series of lectures to give a survey, — brief, although I hope not necessarily superficial, of the relation between criminals and Society; and having in mind the recent very striking and important developments in Auburn and Sing Sing prisons, I have ventured to take as my subtitle:

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR A NEW PENOLOGY

The "Yale Lectures on the Responsibilities of Citizenship" were established by the late William Earl Dodge "for the purpose of promoting among its students and graduates, and among the educated men of the United States, an understanding of the duties of Christian citizenship and a sense of personal responsibility for the performance of those duties."

In sending me the invitation of the President and Fellows of Yale to deliver these lectures for

1916, the Secretary of the University wrote me as follows: "It has been the thought of our committee that having heard the general subject of citizenship developed, it would now be well to have various public movements and needs presented"; and it was suggested that I should speak to you on Prison Reform.

Feeling, as I have long felt, that citizenship has no responsibility greater or more pressing than the state prison, I gladly accepted the distinguished honor conferred upon me by the President and Fellows of Yale. I have a double gratification in doing so. First: because I knew personally and highly esteemed Mr. Dodge, having sat by his side as a delegate to the Sound Money Conferences at Indianapolis in 1897-8; and secondly: because the honor is not altogether a personal one, but is bestowed, through the lecturer, upon Yale's great sister University. I should hardly be human, if I did not indulge in a considerable measure of pride in being the first graduate of Harvard to be accorded the very great privilege of giving the Dodge Lectures.

I

CRIME AND CRIMINALS

IN a discussion of any sort it is well to make sure that the principal terms employed are clearly understood by every one concerned.

It is not necessary in argument [writes Gilbert Chesterton] to settle what a word means or ought to mean. But it is necessary in every argument to settle what we propose to mean by the word. So long as our opponent understands what is the thing of which we are talking, it does not matter to the argument whether the word is or is not the one he would have chosen. . . . So long as we know what a given word is to mean in a given discussion, it does not even matter if it means something else in some other and quite distinct discussion. We have a perfect right to say that the width of a window comes to four feet, even if we instantly and cheerfully change the subject to the larger mammals and say that an elephant has four feet. The identity of the words does not matter, because there is no doubt at all about the meanings; nobody is likely to think of an elephant as four feet long, or of a window as having tusks and a curly trunk.

In a discussion of penology it is especially desirable that there should be no misunderstanding of terms; for not only has a really scientific, first-hand study of many important elements of the subject been sadly lacking, but we are met at every turn by those treacherous half-truths,