

(November 23, 1908.)

The Reformatory Idea.

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REFORMATORY.

Mr. President, and Gentlemen of the Canadian Club,—As preliminaries have been dispensed with, I shall follow the example and set aside the expressions of pleasure I had in mind because of my visit to Toronto, and get into the subject on which I am here to speak, namely, "The Reformatory Idea." You know when a man mounts his hobby and there is a time limit, he is apt to ride for a fall.

"The Reformatory Idea." Perhaps I cannot do better than read for you what a noted author called my "profession of faith," in which is briefly detailed what we did in Ohio in regard to this idea. I do not know what he meant by my "profession of faith," but here it is:

"It will be seen that the reformatory process is not a round of transcendental nonsense, as unwise advocates and partially informed opponents of the movement have represented it to be, but on the contrary it consists or should consist of the most practical and common sense methods. It should be characterized by thorough, firm discipline, in which there is nothing to degrade, distort or demean, but everything to stimulate the self-respect of the inmate. Reformatory administration and treatment, while avoiding the windy waste of speculation as to 'defectives,' 'innate criminals,' 'degenerates,' etc., aims through the scientific study of heredity, environment, physical and psychical peculiarities of each individual, and by prudent experimentation to arrive at a degree of scientific precision in classification and methods."

The reformatory scheme may be briefly stated as follows:

First. Society to be protected and strengthened by curing and restoring the offender.

Second. Probation on suspended sentence; imprisonment on indeterminate sentence; release on parole for a year, as the necessary conditions for proper control.

Third. Physical, intellectual, industrial, moral and religious training the means employed.

Fourth. Punishment in the form of deprivation and pains of recovery a necessary incident of the reformatory processes.

With proper facilities and wise administration, it is believed by the best informed and most experienced authorities that at least seventy-five per cent. of young criminals may be thus reformed. To some this may appear to be somewhat optimistic, but the success of the New York, Massachusetts and other reformatories has placed this movement past the experimental stage.

However, I am well satisfied that no man can effectively serve the reformatory, or any other work of moral uplift, who is handicapped by the spirit of the cynic or the pessimist. He must be an optimist.

Now my definition of an optimist and pessimist is this: If I hold up a doughnut, or fried cake, with a hole in it, up before them, the optimist sees the doughnut, while the pessimist sees the hole in the cake and mourns the mutilation. (Laughter.)

Now I want to read you my latest deliverance after going through a great deal of experience from the time I wrote that. I didn't have enough experience then.

This is to the Governor of the State of Ohio:

"Permit me to say in closing this, my eighth annual report, that a retrospect of the eight years' experience in dealing with the young men committed to our care does not weaken or destroy my faith in the reformatory method of dealing with the youthful criminal. John Fiske said that the greatest and most hope-inspiring fact as to frail humanity is its 'improveableness.' The Pharisee who is so good that he cannot, and the criminal who is so bad that he will not, avail himself of this comforting truth, represents, let us hope and believe, the exceptions, and not the rule among men.

"These exceptions are, however, sufficient to measurably justify the contention of the pessimist and sober the zeal of the optimist. The latter has, however, upon the whole, the larger truth, and is best able to distinguish between the substance and the shadow—be that shadow never so dark.

"I am strongly inclined to believe that it is better,—more wholesome—for us who are charged with the practical administration of a reformatory to lean to the optimistic; otherwise, we might be disposed to minimize our efforts by absolving ourselves from responsibility by attributing our failures to the total depravity of the offenders rather than to find the explanation largely in our own limitations as to means and

methods; the want of resourcefulness, or lack of knowledge, experience or wisdom. Truly the winning of these young men from a liking or weakness, for wrong-doing, justifies the best scientific means and processes available. But the winning of men from bad to good, from good to better, or the best, must ever remain a divine art that no man or group of men can hope to fully master. The degree of success attending our efforts thus far justifies the existence of the institution, and the failures should not discourage, but stimulate to more strenuous and more wisely directed effort."

"Now that has to do with my 'profession of faith' in the matter. The first was largely prophecy, the other retrospective, and while my beliefs in a great many things in reformatory work are lessened my faith has grown stronger. Pet notions have given way, and more and more I come to feel that it is an art.

"Now the ideal reformatory,—I am not going to describe the Ohio State Reformatory, because we are only working toward that ideal, and we are working along these lines. Some gentlemen before me have honored us with their presence, and if I go astray they can correct me—in private at least—but I have heard Canadians are not given to attack behind a man's back.

"The ideal reformatory is a non-partizan institution, or it is a failure. (Applause.) I mean by that that men make such institutions, not fine buildings and good laws, but men all along the line, men who are charged with the importance of the objects of the institution. In our institution we have a board of managers of six members, the spirit is excellent, the best men employed, because they are to practise this divine art of winning men to good, and you cannot do that with men who practise good to bad. And you must select your men with reference to the work they do, like every business man in the country. You may have a man at the head, an official board, constituting the body, but your subordinate officers are the hands and fingers of the administration, and if that hand lack strength and vigor and courage, if those fingers are palsied, or crippled, or harsh or cruel or any of those things that make for unrighteousness and mis-government, the institution will be a failure.

"Therefore, there should be, First: Wise selection of men, thorough trial, dismissing those who fail, keeping those who possess that peculiar quality of tact,—down our way we call it sanctified gumption. (Laughter.)

"Another requisite for the ideal reformatory. It must be based on the indeterminate sentence, may be not absolutely so; our sentence is not so. We have a minimum of one year. You cannot do much with a young fellow who needs training in less than that. Special care may be used in special cases, or executive clemency, but he must be protected from political or social influences, and if he be a man he can stand, because standing he falleth not, and when he fails to stand he falls.

"Our sentence is a minimum one of a year; there is a maximum set,—a very high maximum of seven and ten and fifteen and twenty years, and that is the limit, established by law and not by the court, and we cannot retain a man longer than the maximum period, but in practical working we seldom or never reach that and do not feel that limitation.

"The ideal reformatory should fly with two wings. You remember what happened to our Dayton man down in Virginia when he tried to fly with one. There ought to be a probation wing to a reformatory, and a parole wing. There are many young men who offend against the law and classed as felons under the old law would be sent to the institution, who could be better saved under normal conditions of life.

"Because I want to tell you the best substitute ever devised by man is a poor substitute to those we call the home, and others. And through our probation wing now we are saving many, many young men without their ever going to prison, without the State being expensed, and without them and their children being disgraced, and we are doing it well, I think.

"I witnessed the receiving of a man into your local prison to-day. I beg pardon for speaking of it; I generally fight shy of these local references, but I happened to witness something this morning. A young man twenty-eight years of age came into that prison and confessed that he had been eighteen times sentenced to the same prison, and the longest term was six months. If there is a man under Heaven that can justify a system that will make that possible I am surprised. Our indeterminate sentence may be subject to criticism, but it fades into nothing compared to that.

"Now in our institution in Ohio the man on suspended sentence passes out of the hands of the judge in court. His picture is not taken, he is not measured; he is allowed to go to his place of employment. We furnish him with papers on which to make a report to us. We have field officers who go about over the State visiting our 'boys' on parole. I like to

call these men 'boys.' I can get folks interested in boys when I cannot in men. Our 'boys' are from 16 to 30 years of age. And these field officers look after both the probationers and parole men. They are not in uniform; they try as far as possible to be anything but conspicuous in this 'boys' affair. They counsel them. If I get word that a boy needs help I send a man. I have two, and could have more if I wanted; I shall ask for more by and by. Real, careful and honest supervision, by men trained to the work, by men having natural gifts in that line, is invaluable, and no system that does not carry with it careful, wise supervision, will succeed.

"The work must be central, otherwise you have as many probation systems as counties, and no man can give his whole time to it; but when it is central you have uniform treatment without the influence of local prejudice or politics. I have all the use in the world for statemanship, but none for mere politics, having spoils as the object. (Applause.) I can see that you are wiser than we have been down in the States. (Laughter.)

"Now then, I want to go just a little into particulars. You know I am on my hobby now. Fundamental lines of activity in a reformatory, after they go there, the probationers sifted out, then those actually committed. What are we going to do with them? We have five fundamental lines of activity.

"First: Religious. We believe the first of the number is religious and moral training. I believe that a reformatory that does not take fundamentally the religious sentiment in every man's soul,—I do not mean denominational, I mean religious,—makes a fundamental error, and the man who stops with that makes just as great an error; a poor hand with one finger! We have the chaplain, prayer meetings, Bible study classes, some voluntary and some compulsory meetings, also a school of ethics which has been the greatest idea for good. Practical ethics, not those fundamental, heavy ethics no man can handle, but the practical kind. I mean the ethics that can be brought home to these boys. I could not find a text book, so we made one. What is the duty of a prisoner? What is his duty to his cell-mate? What is his duty to the officers? To the outside world? Leading out to all civic questions. That school has been of infinite value to us. I wish I had time to read some of the letters from boys who got their first ideas of citizenship. How these things are neglected. I hope it is not so in your schools.

"Educational. We have in our reformatory a complete graded system. Many of our fellows are illiterate; some are educated in a measure in foreign languages, but all are without sufficient education. We try to give to them the equivalent of our common school course in Ohio, and we have a superintendent of the school. All these fundamental departments ought to be under the head of trained men, selected because of their fitness for the place, and that is what we have.

"Industrial. I used to put it next to Religious, because I found more men actually saved where I could point directly to the influence of our industrial work than under any other agency. Many a young fellow has self-respect come to him, and courage, when he discovers for the first time that he has power in his brain and skill in his hand to do things worth while. (Applause.) And I will tell you, my friends, the church may bring spiritual life and the school intellectual life, but the young man is safe only when his feet rest upon the rock of economic independence. That is why I put industry so high.

"And so in our institution we have a superintendent of industrial training schools. We have sixteen distinct schools,—a seventeenth including the farm. We find it is not practicable to teach these boys trades, so that we can certify them as tradesmen. It bears a fraud on its face, because the boy knows he is not getting that, and the people he goes to work for know it. So candor in a reformatory is essential, whether you want it or not, if you are going to succeed.

"We say, 'we hope you will get out before you get this trade learnt, but we will certify you as a skilled man, and advance you to an apprenticeship if you please.' We are not practising a fraud. We are not claiming to make tradesmen and not doing it. And we have no trouble in finding employment for them. We have no apprentice system in the United States, and contractors are glad to get these young men and we find in every line of skilled activity a demand for our boys.

"A man came to our institution the other day, a sort of a wag, and not very elegant; wags are not, always. He said: 'Mr. Leonard, this is all right except for one thing. You have industrial training down in the Soldiers' Orphans' School and in the Reformatory; now a boy has got to be a son of a soldier or a son-of-a-gun to get a chance.'

"The Discipline. Now the ideal reformatory is very far different from the traditional prison. You cannot reform men

by practising those old traditions. They are the most near tradition of anything we have, and it is high time that Christianity devised something superior. Now discipline is just as necessary in a reformatory, and has to be strong, and firm, and kind and tactful. The thumb represents that in the hand. The thumb was the last created and evolved, and it is the most awkward. Now think of running a prison just for thumbs! Nothing to it. The thumb must be ready to get them all down when occasion arises. Discipline must be strong enough for war, and gentle to give encouragement or bind up wounds. That is what discipline is.

"I want to give you a few practical illustrations about this matter of discipline, and now I have to talk shop, and I hope you people are not afraid of the pronoun 'I.' I will try and keep you so busy that you will forget it. What is the use of my coming here to a lot of earnest-purposed men if I am not to speak out of my own experience. (Hear, hear.) You sent a commission down there that did us the honor of inspecting our institution, and you have invited me here, and I must talk of things as I see them, and I am never dogmatic; a man can knock me down and reason with me any time. (Laughter.)

"Ever since prisons were prisons there have been 'trustees' in prison, men with wooden legs, men with wooden heads and wooden hearts, and some sycophants and traitors unspeakable, and some good, penitent true men, but these were the minority. When we started our reformatory down there we had one primary farm, nearly 700 acres now of excellent land. It was a spectacle to see a man, so-called convict, go out to plough corn and a guard costing \$840 a year following him with a rifle. It made expensive corn and was a sight for gods and men. The mother of invention is necessity. I could not show our balance-sheet to the managers. Economically it was a failure. As a place of training it was a failure. Something must be done, and I went right to the source I have learned to trust ever since,—human nature in the boys themselves. Is it possible that there are men who do not need to be guarded? Going to treat them all alike. I believe to-day I could send out 400 of the thousand inmates of Ohio State Reformatory to work outside and it will not be necessary to restrain them with armed guards. (Applause.) I have not done that. I am a timid person. Some courageous man could do it. But I tried it with ten, and two ran off. (Laughter.) I tried it with twenty, and three ran off. I tried it with forty, and two ran off. This summer I tried 150 men and not one

ran off. A change in human nature? Oh, no. Same kind of people, but you have to make an atmosphere. You know what that means. You have your civic sense in this fine city. There is a Toronto atmosphere. You could not have such a club as this if that were not so. There is atmosphere in a church that will give you the grippe. (Laughter.) I do not mean disrespect to the church, because the church you know will save you from burning, but—how is this brought about? I cannot tell you. I wish you would come and live with us a while. (Laughter.) Now, gentlemen, there is nothing invidious in that. Remember our institution is for first offenders only. But if you come down there as Mr. Hanna did (laughter) and study it, that is the only way to understand it. I had to study it, and lived through it. But we have an atmosphere, and it finds expression in our school of ethics.

"I introduced the question: 'If the superintendent is disposed to give the inmates an opportunity to show their manhood and demonstrate that they want to be law-abiding, as the best ground for parole, what is the duty of the inmates in regard to that institution?' And those boys went for that. You would be surprised how freely they talked. Well, it didn't work all out, but it created an atmosphere. And I had to have the officers all get religion on the subject. Officers have to be converted to these things. It was astonishing to them to put a lot of felons on indeterminate sentence and not know when they were going away on that great farm, with groves and railroads.

"We had 250 out. Two boys tried to run away. The officer caught one; I always like to have fellows who can run fast. They are not armed. He caught one of those boys, and when he got back a mile and a half to the group of eighteen, one of them was sitting on the other who had tried to run away, and they were giving him a talk something like this: 'We are not knocking you; it's in your own interests not to run away. You have no sense. The superintendent said he wouldn't put a man out here unless he was two and half inches above the ears; you have that, but you have no sense.' There are little things that count for much. We would not dare to disregard some of the little conventions of life. When I thought of putting this mob out I would take a fellow in the quiet, lonesome hour, and I would say: 'It seems to me you have some sense; I think you could go without an armed guard.' If he says he can, I give him the opportunity; if he says no, I don't. I say, 'I have to certify that you cannot be

trusted, and that you tell it yourself,' and then he reconsiders. Little measures as well as great measures are reconsidered, you know. Then I devised this point: I said, 'Now, my boy, we are here by ourselves, be sensible; I don't ask you to be so awfully good; don't you see it is foolish to run off? I have armed guards, but I want to give you a privilege.' Here is a bond; there are some colored inks and it is burdened with all the ponderous language that our lawyer friends have invented to keep their profession secure. (Laughter.) I do not know any other reason for preserving it, do you? But there is some plain English down here. That is written by ourselves so the boys could understand:

"John Doe shall well and faithfully execute the trust reposed in him and abide by the rules and regulations governing the said trust, and on the release of John Doe from said reformatory he shall be given this bond to keep and retain as evidence not only of his good conduct as an inmate of the reformatory but that he enjoyed the confidence of the management on the ground that he conducted himself in all things as a man and good citizen."

"My friends, I have boys who said, when the clerk failed to get these things ready, say: 'I'd rather stay a day and take that with me.' Here is a little card goes with it. I don't give that boy that confidence with a string to it,—not a visible string. Here is a pass; he can take that and present it to any gate in the prison and go out, no questions asked. And here is my letter to him on the back of it:

"John Smith,'—by the way we do not say 'Number 647;' John! How that does go to a man's heart. Don't you know when your girl first called you John? (Laughter.) Just the same on our side.

"In giving you this pass, I give you my confidence as to your good sense and your manly gratitude. I am sure that you will fully appreciate this opportunity to demonstrate, not only to me, but to the board of managers and your friends who await your restoration to freedom, that you have the self-control, the respect for law, and a proper regard for your word of honor that justifies us in permitting you such a large measure of freedom, free from any show of force or the surveillance of armed guards."

"Remember when tempted that trustworthiness is the bedrock of character."

"In the school of ethics they debated three long weeks on the question, 'What is the bed-rock of character?' And when they had made it up and put it to vote they said 'trustworthiness.'

"Now, my friends, I want to take up several things. The bad boy. The fellow who is hard for us to handle is the fellow without any moral creed in his make-up, the boy without any moral stamina. We are going to have a further classification and another institution in Ohio for them. We had one fellow, and oh, he was so bad. I told him one day: 'I am waiting for you, to see the day when you have joy in right-doing.' He said: 'You cannot make any officer in this institution believe that.' And I said: 'I know, but you can. Some fellows would have to have a new brain and nervous system, but the Lord has done that for you, but you are shamefully using his gifts; you are a six-cylinder machine and all you have got to do is to get on the right road.' I said: 'All you have to do is to turn round.' Six weeks later I got a little letter from him. They have the privilege of sending sealed messages. And all that was on the letter was: 'I have turned round.' (Applause.) You ought to see how that fellow is going, and by the way he is living in Canada. I do not know but that the bond between us was that he was Scotch-Irish.

"There is another boy, a hard problem, one of those ill-ordered sort of fellows without discipline; he does a small offence, he becomes an offender, the cumulative process simply swamps him, and he is discouraged, and a discouraged soul is a sad spectacle. What are we going to do with him. If I make him eligible for parole it becomes a matter of personal favor, which in an institution ought not to be. What are we going to do. We had no precedent. I would not be afraid to make a precedent, and I said: 'What has the world always done?' I read my Bible and found that the children of Israel had a city of refuge for fellows hard pressed. What does the business world do? They tell me sixty per cent. of merchants, over the line at least, have gone through bankruptcy and succeeded afterward. Why not do it here? So I instituted a bankruptcy court in the prison, and in order to have the law represented I put the assistant superintendent in, and in order that the Gospel might be represented I put the chaplain in.

"Any inmate, because of misconduct, who has lost so much time as to make his prospects of parole reasonably remote, may make written application to the superintendent for clemency that may come within the superintendent's discretion. If

the party making the appeal has a clean record for at least thirty days previous to the application the appeal will be referred to the bankruptcy court, which will give the applicant a hearing, review his case carefully and make a report of the findings to the superintendent. In case the appeal is granted, he will be placed in the second grade under the same conditions that apply to inmates entering the institution, and his consideration for parole will not be prejudiced by his previous record. Our board of parole honored that court.

"If any of you come to our institution and look around and ask me what is the best thing we have done, I would have to take my little book and read that rule about the institution of the bankruptcy court; this work has been a great help to us.

"Now, then, I have just one or two boys I want to introduce. The important fellow is generally smart, and thinks he is smarter. He finds fault with the institution and its management. What are we to do with him? I will give you one instance. I agreed with one man. I said, 'Yes, I agree with you that you are getting worse, but it does not prove that reformatories do not reform. Didn't you ever know the devil was in heaven once. What made him bad? Do you suppose it was vile companions? Was it the institution up there? Well, my boy, you think about it.' That came home to me another way. An officer told me of a boy talking that way, and another said: 'Did you ever tell the "super" all that? No? Well, I did.' 'What did he tell you?' 'He told me to go to Hell.' (Laughter.) So the boy said, 'Oh, no, the superintendent never used any such language.' So the boy told him the story and he said, 'Well, I guess I won't go to see him.' And that is one of the ideas we have to combat, that the reformatory is a sort of Keeley cure, where they throw them in a hopper at one end and grind them out fine gentlemen. And I impress upon them that they are struggling every hour in there for the mastery.

"One more: the rebellious fellow. Now we have no dungeons. Can any gentleman tell me why a black, dark cell tends to moral advancement? On the contrary the light cell has much to recommend it. I had the honor of building a place especially for these fellows. I call them the reflection chambers. We have a population of 1,025 to-day, unless some of those trustees have run off, and we have five of these reflection chambers; we always have rooms to let.

"They said to me: 'If you stop whipping and hand-cuffing and all those tortures you will have havoc here.' No such

thing. A fellow who goes down now into the reflection chambers is regarded as a fool, and it is a wholesome thing to have a man regarded as a fool rather than a hero. I have here the orders and warrant,—and he is never put there except by order of the court, and when he thinks it out he can come up for a hearing, and is released. While he is there, we are very careful,—large, light cells, and the doctor sees him every day, and he has an opportunity to come before the court every day, and when he comes out everybody knows that he hauled down his flag, and he doesn't swagger, and public sentiment is with us. We never had a boy stay there over three days in the history of the institution.

"Tell you more. John was rebellious and stubborn; and I said, 'Oh, how that boy is like I was!' And I ran my hand across his forehead. There is a great deal in touch, and I thought this boy would surrender; he looked up with a sort of smile, and I said, 'How is your pulse, John? Are you sick?' He said, 'No, I have done all the work I am going to do.' I said: 'Don't say it that way, John. Nobody is going to make you work, John.' Of course I could have had the boy whipped. Whipping is so easy; you don't have to think about it. I have some prison friends that do occasionally whip. They whip very wisely, and think it is the only way; they can't do without it. I have labored with them early and late and asked them to make the experiment. One or two of them have, and they do not whip any more. I wouldn't whip this boy, but sent him down to the reflection chamber. I said: 'Do you know what work is, John. Work is simply swapping service for things you want.' I just gave him that little talk on political economy we all commence with. 'Now there are 100 men working for you; some cooked your breakfast, kept your room warm and drew the water, and don't you think it would be mean for you not to swap something for it.' 'I guess it would, but I am not going to work.'

"He was in the reflection chamber thirty hours and wrote: 'Mr. Leonard, come down and see me.' I wrote: 'That is work, and we are not swapping.'

"Mr. Leonard, I want to see you. I am tired being a fool.'

"I have discovered that in prison or out when a man discovers he is a fool salvation is knocking at his door. Smilin', he said: 'I am ready to go to work.' I said: 'All right.' That boy went out of there and went to work in Cleveland and later became a foreman in a Cleveland factory after he was through

with us. We kept him on parole a long time because of certain conditions, and after he was through he wrote me a little letter like this: 'Now that I am free of your custody I want to write to you of some things I did not feel free to before. Mr. Leonard, all the good I got in the reformatory I got in thirty hours.' John is mistaken, he got the schooling that gave him his job in Cleveland. John was not quite a philosopher, but he said: 'When you told me about swapping I saw the point, but I was just too mean to give in and the reflection chamber was just the place for me.'

"I have a motto over my desk. Some people ask me what it means and I say: 'If you cannot understand plain English you will have to go where I learned the spirit.' It is this: 'Always do your stunt, and never, never grunt.'"