

MY APPRENTICESHIP TO CRIME

An
(To the memory of my
Autobiography

Grace Maria Treadwell.

-by-

ARTHUR HARDING

been sentenced to a flogging by the prison authorities.

I will relate the case history of three men who were known to me, who suffered a flogging in prison for attacks upon prison officers. All three men exhibited signs of mental disorders. The first was CHAPTER 10. Steven Cooper, aged 32 years.

Lived in Bethnal Green. Corporal Punishment. He was one of the gang of young men who belonged to the Charlie Walker gang.

A police officer of H. Division was prominent in sending many of these villains to prison; his name was Detective Sergeant Ambrose Rayner, who dressed as a seaman would hang about the haunts in the worst districts, and was very successful in clearing the night prowlers from the streets. This officer had the reputation of being a very efficient officer for apprehending many pimps or ponces, mostly of alien birth, who infested the Aldgate and Whitechapel districts.

It is being suggested today, 1969, some sixty years after these events that the only deterrent for violence by criminals in carrying out their raids on banks and jewellers' shops is to bring back corporal punishment. To give these criminals a taste of their own medicine.

I have known many men who were flogged in prison for attacks upon prison officers. I have knowledge of a prison officer who while a prisoner of war in South Africa was flogged by the Boers. By a strange irony of fate, this officer who had suffered the brutality of a flogging, volunteered to flog others who had

been sentenced to a flogging by the prison authorities.

I will relate the case history of three men who were known to me, who suffered a flogging in prison for attacks upon prison officers. All three men exhibited signs of mental disorders. The first man, Steven Cooper, aged 32 years.

Lived in Bethnal Green. He was one of the gang of young men who belonged to the Charlie Walker gang.

This man, while serving a sentence of 18 months in Wormwood Scrubs prison for an offence of which he was innocent, a victim of the identity parade, which I have related, this man attacked a warder for no apparent reason. He was ordered to be flogged; the date, some time about 1905. On his release he behaved like a wild animal. He was no thief, he was mentally sick. I don't suppose he ever stole anything in his life. The only things that had any interest for him were women and drink.

I saw the scars of his flogging on his back, not a pretty sight.

I was present at the Old Bailey in December, 1911, when he was sentenced to 3 years penal servitude, by Mr. Justice Avory, for shooting at an unknown man. Some time after his conviction he cut his throat, but prompt medical attention saved his life. Transferred to Broadmoor criminal asylum where he served his sentence. When he left Broadmoor he was

taken to Claybury Asylum, Woodford, where he died in 1916. I

visited him in 1915. There is no doubt in my mind that he was insane and had become dangerous, so you can say this mentally sick man was flogged, sent to prison and treated as a criminal, when he should have been in a mental hospital receiving medical attention. to Dartmoor; while at work he

The second man was named Tommy Fenton, he was a native of Hoxton, who had served several terms in local prisons for petty offences, nothing involving violence. chains, and the While serving a term or penal servitude in Dartmoor in 1920, he assaulted a warder and was flogged. After his flogging he had to serve a period in solitary confinement. He had to wear the black dress and chains for six months. These chains marked him as a dangerous man, the chains being rivetted around his legs and fastened to his waist. He had to sleep, work and bathe with these heavy chains on his body. This degrading punishment was inflicted upon him for punching a warder with his fist. The officer was not even marked.

In 1955 (?) he committed suicide in a room he rented in Shoreditch, N. London. Since his release from Dartmoor, he had found work as a night-watchman and was known as "Mad Tommy". My verdict on Tommy Fenton - he was harmless, never hurt any person in his sad life. K. being committed to

The third case was a young man named Johnny K. When quite young, in the twenties, he was sentenced to 20 months H.L.

a good firm of solicitors, who listened to my story with great sympathy. So a well known barrister on the Western Circuit was briefed to defend Johnny K. The reason why he wanted his sentence made into three years was because his brother was serving three years at Dartmoor.

Johnny K. was also sent to Dartmoor; while at work he attacked a warder by striking him with his fist and was ordered a flogging. The punishment was duly carried out; he suffered the usual degradation of the black dress and chains, and the subsequent segregation from other prisoners. After some months his health deteriorated and he was transferred to Parkhurst, I. or Wight.

While serving his sentence at Parkhurst, he suddenly attacked another prison warder. The visiting magistrates ordered he should be tried at Winchester Assizes. During the time he was awaiting trial, he was located in the punishment cells. This young man's parents lived in Bethnal Green, and they asked me to take an interest in the case and help in his defence.

I enlisted the help of the local M.P. who happened to be Sir Percy Harris, Liberal Member; he had an interview with the Home Secretary. After Sir Percy had confided that there was a grave probability of Johnny K. being committed to Broadmoor, if there was any recurrence or any violence, I decided to brief a good barrister to defend him. So I went to

a good firm of solicitors, who listened to my story with great sympathy. So a well known barrister on the Western Circuit was briefed to defend Johnny K.

On the day of the trial, I went to Winchester to see what I could do to help. The counsel I had engaged told me that the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Hewart, would try the case; he also said the L.C.J. was against any sentimental pleas for leniency, therefore he would advise Johnny K. to plead guilty. Now this counsel, who afterwards became a well known London magistrate, was very wrong about the L.C.J. Lord Hewart, who was opposed to harsh treatment for young offenders who had never been given a chance.

The judge questioned the prison Governor on the number of times Johnny K. had been punished for trivial breaches of the prison regulations, such as talking. It was evident that the judge was favourably disposed towards the prisoner. He told the prisoner he had been ill advised to plead guilty, but having done so he must punish him. He sentenced Johnny K. to six months. This happened in 1921.

I have known Johnny K. for many years and today, 1969, he is a very old man always in and out of hospital suffering from some kidney trouble, which doctors say could have been caused by the flogging.

I have met many old convicts who have suffered a flogging.

One man I was friendly with came from Birmingham, a rough, tough, ignorant brute, who seemed to be ready to assault any person or official, but underneath all the bullying and bluster he was not willing to incur the risk of another flogging.

Many men who inflict violence upon others are themselves scared of a beating.

I have no doubt that a flogging effects a man mentally, he is not the same afterwards. I have never known a man to be proud of the fact that he has been flogged. It is true the reputation of the man is enhanced by a "bashing". People become afraid of him and he expects to be admired.

Police inspector Javert, who considered it to be his duty to send Jean Valjean back to prison and in pursuit of this object used every trick however illegal and wicked to accomplish this purpose.

The last had of London seemed to be a magnet attracting the C.I.D. officers, none wanted to be transferred to other divisions when they received promotion; so it was with The Weasel. He spent most of his 42 years in the police division known as B, which covered Shadwell, Wapping, The Highway, Whitechapel, Bethnal Green and Spitalfields. His H.Q. was at Loman Street, Whitechapel. In this small police station in the centre of his manor, D.D.I. Wensley was lord and master of all under his command.