

MY APPRENTICESHIP TO CRIME

An
(To the Memory of my
Autobiography

Grace Maria Treadwell.

-by-

ARTHUR HARDING

M.O., all particulars were entered into a ledger for future reference.

I had no money, no valuables, and my clothes were so shabby I had to have prison clothes.

CHAPTER 5.

After a bath, Holloway Prison, with a prison kit containing sheets, pillowslip, towel, etc. We were then served with

1902.

supper, one pint of cocoa and an eight ounce loaf of bread;

Holloway Prison was built and completed in 1852. The foundation stone has this inscription on the face: "May God preserve the City of London and make this place a terror to evil doers."

We were then taken to the halls and looked in empty cells. I was alone, at last alone, to think what a cruel world it was to those whom poverty

This prison was originally controlled by the City of London, had deprived of the means to fight against oppression. It had accommodation for some 350 prisoners of both sexes.

It is interesting to compare the treatment I received. Holloway Prison is sited in North London, it has a castellated aspect, looking very forbidding. Today, 1969, because I was poor and without friends or influence, and those who had friends and wealthy relatives,

it is a prison for women and young girls awaiting trial at the assize courts and also for Borstal.

In the first place, I would have had legal assistance, a solicitor to protect me and to demand my legal rights.

In 1902, Holloway Prison was a remand prison for men without any doubt I would have been released on bail. awaiting trial at assize courts, the Old Bailey, and for all

Secondly, if the court had done its duty, if not allowed prisoners on remand. bail, I would have been sent to a remand home. Rich or poor,

The Black Maria arrived at Holloway Prison about 4 p.m. that was my legal right. After alighting from the police van, the prisoners were marched

I want to make clear beyond dispute that on this date in to reception room, where each prisoner was examined by the February, 1902, when I first entered Holloway Prison, this was

M.O., all particulars were entered into a ledger for future reference. In fact, I had never been convicted for any offence; or had I had no money, no valuables, and my clothes were so shabby I had to have prison clothes. I was a restless one. I have never After a bath, we were supplied with a prison kit containing sheets, pillowslip, towel, etc. We were then served with supper, one pint of cocoa and an eight ounce loaf of bread; no butter or margarine. I was very thankful for the food. I was very hungry, not having eaten since breakfast. After supper we were taken to the halls and locked in empty cells. I was alone, at last alone, to think what a cruel world it was to those whom poverty had deprived of the means to fight against oppression. It is interesting to compare the treatment I received because I was poor and without friends or influence, and those who had friends and wealthy relatives. Like gypsies, no one In the first place, I would have had legal assistance, a solicitor to protect me and to demand my legal rights, without any doubt I would have been released on bail. Secondly, if the court had done its duty, if not allowed bail, I would have been sent to a remand home. Rich or poor, that was my legal right. I want to make clear beyond dispute that on this date in February, 1902, when I first entered Holloway Prison, this was

the first time I had ever seen a prison warden or had ever been in prison. In fact, I had never been convicted for any offence; or had any conviction recorded against me. My first night in prison was a restless one. I have never forgotten the suggestion that for some reason the police considered me so dangerous that I had to be securely locked up in a cell like a wild animal. The material discomforts were nothing, the food I considered to be good. The bed was better than I had at home and also much cleaner, these things were nothing compared to the mental torture I was experiencing.

Since my arrest I had not seen or heard from my parents or any of my family. Not one friendly face nor one kind word; I was an outcast from my kind. Years before we had wandered around the streets with no place to rest in; it seemed we were always to be treated as outcasts. Like gypsies, no one wanted us. The next morning, I was served with breakfast: one pint of tea, one eight ounce loaf. After cleaning the cell we were unlocked for chapel. Most of the men seemed to be wearing their own clothes and appeared to be very prosperous business men. After the chapel service we were unlocked for exercise in the grounds.

The large space between the cell blocks was laid out in

large oval circular paths, where prisoners exercised on a two-foot wide concrete path. The men walked round and round for an hour. After some thirty minutes exercise, the parade suddenly stopped at a signal by a warder blowing his whistle; all the men faced one way. The reason the exercise stopped then became clear.

A large number of C.I.D. officers, with a number of warders from other prisons, were about to inspect the prisoners. These C.I.D. officers drawn from all over the London police divisions were inspecting the prisoners for the purpose of identification.

Any old offender who had previous convictions would be noted and their prison numbers would be recorded. Each prisoner on parade wore a prison number or a badge.

The C.I.D. officers and warders from other prisons would exchange greetings with each prisoner they recognised, all in good humour, some of the prisoners seeming to be actually pleased that the officers had not forgotten them.

This practice of visual identification to prove previous convictions was the recognised legal method in use in all the criminal courts of England and Wales; it was open to abuse because it depended on the integrity and infallibility of an individual police officer or warder.

In 1902, fingerprints were beginning to be used for the

purpose but the system was in its infancy. There were not sufficient data to test the efficiency of the system for it to be accepted without some misgiving and doubts.

Remembering the case of Adolf Beck, one may wonder how many innocent victims paid the penalty for the faith placed in human infallibility.

After the identity parade, the exercise was continued until 11 p.m., when we were taken back to the cells and locked up for the day.

When I arrived back from the exercise, I found pen, ink and paper, etc., so I could write a letter home to my parents to inform them of the trouble I was in. I asked my mother and sister to come and visit me as soon as possible, so I could tell them what had happened to me.

The first day in prison was very long. I was kept in complete solitary confinement for twenty-two hours a day.

The prisoner without means, therefore those who had been driven to commit crime through poverty, had to be content to wear prison clothes, to eat prison fare, to clean other prisoners' cells, wealth had its privileges even in prison.

About the third day of the remand I received a visit from my mother and sister. They told me that they had not been informed of my arrest and remand. They had been to my firm in Shoreditch, but could not get any information from the firm;

they had come to the conclusion that I had joined the Army again. Mother promised to be at the court on my next appearance.

In 1902, a poor prisoner without means and ignorant of the law was helpless in regard to putting his defence to the court. If I had had previous experience of the working procedure of criminal courts, I could have applied for some of the money which the County Court had awarded to me for my accident, and I could have engaged a lawyer to conduct my defence, but of all this I was ignorant.

Needless to say, these first days of remand passed very slowly. I was satisfied with the prison food, but having to be shut up for twenty-two hours every day was mental torture.

The day arrived for the hearing at the court. I had not seen the man, Charles Walker, during the remand but on the morning of the hearing I saw him in the reception room when we were changing clothes. After all the preliminaries had been completed for leaving the prison, we were sitting on a form eating the breakfast we had been served with. I sat next to Walker.

He first asked me, "How old are you?" I told him, "Fifteen." He said, "Say you are older because they will say I'm a trainer of young thieves."

Not a word that he would speak for me and tell the truth. No, I am afraid that Charles Walker did not have the intelligence

His evidence was that he saw Walker pull the bale from the cart and the younger prisoner helped him, giving a better explanation for his association with one so much younger and less experienced than himself.

I was sorry for him. This young man, Walker, was a typical product of Brick Lane. He was a known thief with many minor convictions, his age twenty-six. He was in bad health suffering from tuberculosis which in 1902 was very common among the half-starved people of the crowded streets of Brick Lane.

His race would soon be run, his early life had been spent in punishment, and still more punishment in reform schools. I don't suppose he ever owned a new suit in his life. He was one of many thousands who lived and died without a chance to be anything better than a number in a convict prison. When Walker was taken into custody he had no money. When I was searched, I had no money.

When all the formalities were completed on the morning for leaving the prison, we were taken by the Black Maria to Worship Street police court, where we arrived about 9 a.m. There were four remand prisoners for the court; we were all put in a cell to await the court hearing.

Some time after the morning cases had been heard, Walker and I were placed in the dock and the case began.

P.C. Stevens entered the witness box, gave his evidence, or rather, read his evidence from his notebook, which he laid on the ledge of the witness box.

His evidence was that he saw Walker pull the bale from the cart and the younger prisoner helped him, etc. Case for the prosecution. Court decision: committed for trial, in custody. No bail. The magistrate asked no questions, made no comments, no inquiries concerning my age, parents or home life, whether I was employed or not.

This magistrate was not a credit to the legal profession or to the bench. Like the court where he presided, he belonged to the Victorian age whose only faith was punishment, more punishment, and still more punishment. These Victorians who sat on the bench distributing what they called justice, in those so-called glorious years, sent even little children to die on the scaffold. No one was safe from their cruelty. One may be permitted to ask why any court should be permitted to refuse bail to a young lad who had never been convicted before.

The following are the legal grounds for refusal of bail:

1) After we were sent for trial at the Sessions, we were put back into the cells where my mother visited me and brought me some food. She told me the policeman on the door of the court would not allow her into the court. We were taken back to Holloway to await trial on the 4th March, 1902, at the North London Sessions, Clerkenwell.

7) The time passed very slowly in prison. The fervent wishes of the City Fathers - "Make this place a terror to evil doers" -

was indeed being faithfully carried out.

9) the likelihood of interference with witnesses;
 Shut in a cell in solitary confinement every day, no work,
 10) mental condition of the accused;
 no one to speak to, prison clothes, prison food, prison
 11) a person charged with treason;
 discipline, prison punishment for breaking any prison regulation.
 12) a person who has been committed for sentence;
 Yet I had not been convicted of any crime. We proudly boast
 13) a convicted person;
 in England every person is innocent until proved guilty. We
 14) murder;
 have said it so often that we really believe it. Yet the
 15) housebreaking, likelihood of the offence being repeated.
 reverse is true. We treat every defendant as guilty until
 it is illegal to require excessive bail.
 he is proved innocent.

If the magistrate refuses to grant bail where none of the
 I had already been judged guilty by the magistrate without
 grounds for refusal exists, or the magistrate demands excessive
 even a trial.

bail, this application may be made to the Divisional Court
 I was treated as a convicted thief serving a sentence.
 for a writ of habeas corpus on the ground that imposition

One may ask why should a magistrate refuse bail? One may
 of excessive bail amounts to a grant of no bail, contravenes
 be permitted to ask why any court should be permitted to
 the Bill of Rights 1688 and makes the imprisonment unlawful.
 refuse bail to a young lad who had never been convicted before.

None of these grounds for refusal of bail by a magistrate
 The following are the legal grounds for refusal of bail:
 existed in my case, so the magistrate was acting unlawfully

1) prisoner has no fixed abode;
 in refusing me bail and I was being imprisoned unlawfully.

2) is a prostitute;

In Holloway were many old-timers. Some of these characters
 3) is an alien;

looked with sympathy at young lads who were on the first rung
 4) has suicidal tendencies;
 of the ladder which will inevitably lead to a convict prison.

5) the nature of the charge;
 From some of these old timers I received much good advice.

6) the nature of the evidence;

They advised me to plead guilty and then I would be tried
 7) severity or the punishment likely on conviction.

by a judge who was very lenient; this humane judge was named

8) the likelihood of the accused absconding;

Mr. O'Connell and he had a good reputation among old offenders.

- 9) the likelihood or interrence with witnesses;
- 10) mental condition of the accused;
- 11) a person charged with treason;
- 12) a person who has been committed for sentence;
- 13) a convicted person;
- 14) murder;
- 15) housebreaking, likelihood of the offence being repeated.

It is illegal to require excessive bail.

If the magistrate refuses to grant bail where none of the grounds for refusal exists, or the magistrate demands excessive bail, this application may be made to the Divisional Court for a writ of habeas corpus on the ground that imposition of excessive bail amounts to a grant of no bail, contravenes the Bill of Rights 1688 and makes the imprisonment unlawful.

None of these grounds for refusal of bail by a magistrate existed in my case, so the magistrate was acting unlawfully in refusing me bail and I was being imprisoned unlawfully.

In Holloway were many old-timers. Some of these characters looked with sympathy at young lads who were on the first rung of the ladder which will inevitably lead to a convict prison. From some of these old timers I received much good advice.

They advised me to plead guilty and then I would be tried by a judge who was very lenient; this humane judge was named Mr. O'Connell and he had a good reputation among old offenders.

I was also told of a missionary who attended the Sessions by the name of Mr. Wheatly, who took charge of young offenders if the Judge decided to give the lad a chance.

Unfortunately, I did not take their advice to plead guilty because Walker had told me that I must plead Not Guilty, the same as he. What a disgrace to a Christian country that it permitted young lads to be kept in prison without any responsible person to give advice and assistance to the lads, which would help them to give the facts to the court.

On 4th March, 1902, all prisoners awaiting trial at the North London Sessions were collected after breakfast. Those who were wearing prison clothes changed into their own clothes, then we were all lined up and searched. When a person is committed to the Assizes for trial, he comes under prison administration for safe custody. The police cease to be responsible for his custody. All Assize Courts, such as the Old Bailey and the North London Sessions House, are in the custody of prison warders who take charge of all prisoners awaiting trial.

In 1902, we still had the Grand Jury to safeguard us against a false or perjured charge. Holloway Prison ceased to be a remand prison for men soon after March 1902, when the women prisoners at Wormwood Scrubs were transferred to Holloway. After March 1902, Brixton

Prison, S. London, became the remand prison for prisoners or for those awaiting trial.

Clerkenwell Sessions House stood on Clerkenwell Green, in Clerkenwell Road, N. The sessions were held every fourteen days. There were two courts presided over by a lawyer named Mr. O'Connell who was the chairman of No. 1 Court. He had the reputation of being a humane judge. No. 2 Court was presided over by a lawyer named Mr. Loveland Loveland, a stern Victorian, totally devoid of any sympathetic impulses.

It was my destiny to appear before Mr. Loveland Loveland, and to suffer from his ideas of justice tempered with mercy.

The cells under the Sessions House were very dark, damp and bitterly cold; they were like the cells in Newgate Prison, only fit for the Dark Ages. On arrival at Clerkenwell we were all placed in large cells below the level of the road, where we had to wait until our cases were heard. I listened to the stories told by the old timers in the cell we were put in, many of these men being the victims of unemployment who had no other alternative but to steal.

In 1902, when I took my place in the dock with Walker, the Judge with his wig and robe, the lawyers and other court officials, were all new to me. Everything was strange. I was scared, my tongue seemed so dry I could not speak the words "Not Guilty". I was too dumb to know what was really happening.

The warders standing guard over me seemed a perpetual menace. Everybody and everything were unreal. Even the language used seemed strange. What the Crown counsel was saying to the jury sounded like a foreign language, and when the Judge spoke, not a word was intelligible to me. Looking back over the years, the details of that so-called trial are completely obliterated from my memory. Amnesia is Nature's way of shutting out the things that we wish to forget, because the memory would mentally affect us to an abnormal degree.

Even now, sixty-seven years after that day, I still feel bitter towards all those who took part in that mockery they called a trial, which resulted in sending me to prison and ruined my life for the next twenty years, and so began my apprenticeship to crime.

The Judge never raised a finger to look after my interests, even though it is considered to be a duty for the Judge to study the interests of those defendants who are not legally represented. I believe the case lasted about an hour.

My mother and sister were not allowed in the court. I was told the sentence by the warder when we were taken below to the cells. Walker received three years penal servitude, such was the thing we call justice. I, being a first offender and because of my age, twelve months hard labour.

My poor mother collapsed and fell down the steps outside

the court. The kindly policeman who would not let her in the court, although she had a legal right to be in court - I say, this so kind policeman, no doubt with a grin on his face, told my mother the sentence.

CHAPTER 6.
Walker was taken to Wandsworth Prison in South London, where he would serve the first nine months of his sentence in solitary confinement.

Wormwood Scrubs Prison was built on scrubland in 1874. About 4 p.m. those prisoners who had been sentenced were brought up from the cells and assembled in one part of the building to await transport to Wormwood Scrubs Prison.

Millbank, on the north bank of the Thames. Soon after, we were placed in prison vans and driven to Wormwood Scrubs Prison in West London.

the Thames. Today the Tate Gallery, Thames House and Imperial Chemical House stand on the site of Millbank Prison.

The goal delivery to Clerkenwell Sessions took place every 14 days, and always numbered some 80 prisoners, who had been committed for trial for all kinds of offences except Crown cases of High Treason, murder, etc., which were dealt with at the Old Bailey.

The 80 cases were disposed of in the four days from Tuesday to Friday. So, you see, Justice was swift, but not always sure.

for extras.

The prison is built on twenty acres in West London, near to the White City and next to a large hospital.

It took 200 convicts to build the prison; the stonework was