

How Atlanta Prisoners Listen In

Radio Equipment in Federal Penitentiary, Atlanta, Ga., Does Its Share in Making Good Citizens—Symbolizes New Era in Prison Work

THE Federal Penitentiary at Atlanta, Ga., has a radio receiving set, with which it is able to hear not only the local stations, but many of the high powered transmitters located east of the Rockies. The apparatus was presented to the prison by several manufacturers, following the great success of the initial experiments performed last Summer. At that time the radio truck of the *Atlanta Journal* made regular visits to the prison yard, providing radio concerts through its loud speaker equipment. When winter came and the yard was closed, Chaplain (Father) Hayden was able to secure gifts of radio equipment for permanent installation indoors.

The effect of this is described as follows by one of the prisoners:

"From time immemorial men and women have devoted their lives to prison reforms, have striven to bring about the purpose of the law, which is not vengeance, and less of punishment than of reform. But throughout all the ages nearly all movements for the betterment of prison conditions have been aimed at lessening the physical punishment and giving little thought to or care for the mental punishment of imprisonment, which is by far the greater. If, when we enter a prison house, by the turning of a key, we could lock the door to the brain cells of memories, bitter and sweet, to the brain cells in which are hoarded the myriads of pictures of the past, and keep the doors locked till we pass out again, then, verily, the prison of today would hold but few terrors. But the haunting memories of the past, the bitter dreams of what might have been, rising like fireflies in the dusk, fastening themselves like leeches upon us throughout the long evening hours when no toil claims our thoughts, and throughout the silent watches of the night, constitute the real hell of prisons, the scorching flames of the furnace of vain longings and regrets that mar all men and benefit none.

"Not by brooding over a past irrevocably gone can a man shape the course of the oncoming years with even the glimmer of hope of success. Ashes and smouldering embers are poor foundations for the house of the future. And, hence, anything tending to break



The effect of radio in the penitentiary is described in this article by a prisoner, who terms it epoch making, because its entertainment brings smiles to lips that have forgotten how to smile and awakens aspirations for better and nobler ideals

the chains that shackle a man to the skeletons of his past, that stirs within him new thoughts, new hopes, new illusions and, through them, new resolutions, is a movement that will carry in its wave a moral uplifting beyond the power of man to estimate.

"THE installation of a radio receiving station in each of the four vast cell houses in this institution is an innovation which should prove epoch making in the annals of prison reform. Music has tamed wild beasts of the jungle where the whip failed utterly. And music will bring smiles to lips that that have forgotten how to smile, will soften the hardening tendencies of the heart, will call forth ambition slumbering in the stupor of indifference, will awaken aspirations for better and nobler ideals. Too much credit cannot be given the sponsors of this movement for the moral uplift of the prisoners.

"The old prison methods were to crush the spirit in man, to strip him of his last shred of manhood, to rob him of every remnant of self-respect and self-confidence, and to turn him into a sneaking, skulking, shifty-eyed creature who, when released, would seek the dusky byways of the slums, shunning the light of God's sun. But the old prison system proved a boomerang that struck back at society. Now, in most of the penal institutions—though not yet in all—the methods are to trust men, to put them on their

honor, to inspire self-confidence in them and thus fit them to face the future. And, verily, it is better to trust all humanity, even though we be deceived ten thousand times, than to distrust one of our fellow men. The aim of the present administration has been to trust a man till he proves unworthy of such trust. And let it be said in all truth that few and far between are those who have proven themselves unworthy of the trust placed in them.

"This policy of trusting has been evidenced in many ways—the latest being in permitting inmates to give a concert once a month at the *Atlanta Journal's* broadcasting station. The first concert was given on May 7th, 1922, when WSB was still a babe in swaddling clothes. Few, aside from its immediate neighbors, heard it. The second concert was given on September 30th at midnight. It had been widely heralded in the newspapers and from broadcasting stations all over the country and, when Lambdin Kay, the whiskerless announcer and favorite of all the broadcasting stations in U. S. tapped his gong and announced the program, a nation stood by and listened in.

"ACROSS the portals of the prisons of the past was written, invisibly, yet visible: 'All ye who enter, let hope depart.' Across the portals of the prisons of today is written: 'To ye, who are worthy of trust, trust shall be given.'"