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## A YOUNG MAN'S SAD LOT

A PRISON CONVICT WHOSE LIFE WAS SPOILED.

By Being Sent to Penitentiary Instead of a Reformatory—The Case of Leo Rogers, Who Broke Prison. One of those bitter courtroom episodes which are repeated day after day in a thousand courts throughout the land, took place in Judge Lavell's chambers on Tuesday afternoon, when Leo Rogers, who made a sensational escape from penitentiary after seriously wounding Guard Berrigan, on March 22nd, had eight years added to his sentence of seven years.

There were only a few persons in the room as the youthful prisoner stood up to receive his sentence, for the heat was oppressive and the blinds on the windows had been pulled down to keep out the rays of the sun. But in the half-darkened room one could see the tears streaming down the cheeks of even visiting lawyers. It took less than forty-five minutes to dispose of the case, but they were heart-rending minutes for all.

The smooth-faced lad of seventeen who had already served two years of his sentence, sat very quietly throughout the proceedings and only occasionally moved over to speak to his counsel, A. R. Day. His right leg was shackled with a heavy steel weight, his prison garb was dusty and streaked and at his feet lay the old straw hat which protects perspiring convicts from the heat in the summer. Behind him sat R. R. Creighton, warden of the penitentiary, with a guard at his left holding the handcuffs to be applied the minute sentence was pronounced. Seldom has there been a sadder sight or one to arouse sympathy as that of the young so-called criminal with cropped hair, whose fingers twitched continually on the table.

Almost directly opposite him were his heart-broken parents, who had come all the way from North Bay to plead for mercy for their son. The lad's mother's face was stained with tears and swelling under the open showed that this was not the first occasion for weeping. Her husband sat beside her, but he too suffered from the strain, for nothing could assuage the broken hearts and the bitter hopes of fond parents who viewed their son—even though his face was turned from theirs—sitting in convict's garb and in the worst disgrace that man can face.

There were only four or five others in the room, including court officials and representatives of the press, but all were touched with sympathy for the boy who, ranking under a sense of injustice for being confined in prison at the age of fifteen years, when the joys of youth were but beginning to be unfolded, took the law in his own hands and now sat awaiting the consequences for his folly.

He pleaded guilty to the charge of attempting to escape from the penitentiary and for grievously wounding a guard in the execution of his duty. In summing up for the prosecution, John L. Whiting, K.C., reviewed the incidents leading up to the trial—how the lad had delivered a fake note to Guard Berrigan, how he had struck the guard and dangerously wounded him with a knife and another heavy instrument, how he had escaped from the confines of the prison and how he had been ultimately brought back within the walls.

Rising to plead for himself the young man in a quiet north country voice, and with scarcely any emotion but with intense earnestness, told the court that he had been misled by the youth of the prisoner and imposed a sentence of eight years for assaulting a guard and two years for attempting to escape, to run concurrently. He reminded the prisoner that the maximum penalty which might have been meted out to him but that with good behaviour the term might be considerably shortened.

While Rogers stood and took the judgment without a whimper, his only words were, "Your honor, I'll try to do my best. If there is any chance for redemption I'll try to make a man of myself and I only hope that it may not be too late yet."

He thanked Mr. Day, held out his arm to be handcuffed, and for the first time turned towards his mother who patted him softly on the cheek while hardly able to bear up under the ordeal. Her eyes welled with tears and all she could say was, "My poor, dear boy." And while she was receiving the sympathy of the few men present, her son was whisked away to the grey, forbidding walls at Portsmouth which he will spend the rest of his fifteen years' sentence. Leo Rogers is once more known only by a number and will be until the gates open again and he has the opportunity to prove the manhood which he confesses a desire to attain.

Red Cross Society Competition. The Canadian Red Cross Society has announced a competition for designs for their certificates of recognition of war work. Two designs are asked for, one for certificates to be for chartered branches of the society, and one for other bodies which have assisted it in its work. A prize of one hundred dollars is offered for each of these designs. The regulation size for the certificates is approximately nineteen by thirteen inches, and it is required that all designs shall be suitable for reproduction by lithograph. Candidates for this competition may not submit more than one form of design for each form of certificate. All designs must be received at the head office of the society in Toronto not later than July 31st, and must be packed flat. The prizes for the winning designs will be awarded by a committee of which Her Excellency the Duchess of Devonshire, president of the society, has graciously consented to be chairman.

story of his downfall, and as usual it could be blamed upon bad companions whom he had met when he was released from the restraints of parental control. When only fifteen years of age he had been sentenced by a magistrate in North Bay to seven years in the Portsmouth penitentiary on charges of theft. On three charges of robbing hardware stores he pleaded guilty but he could not admit that he had stolen a railway speeder or a horse for which he was given three years. He stated that he had understood that he would be remanded for seven days, whereas he was brought up five days before the anticipated time and consequently was unprepared to go on with the case because the lawyer he had engaged was busy on high court duties. In court, he had opposed the contention that he had stolen the horse and speeder, but twice when he had endeavored to plead he was told to remain quiet. Moreover, he claimed that the prosecuting counsel had made him say almost anything.

When he was put in the police station he had an opportunity to escape with several military deserters, and being only a boy of fifteen and by no means familiar with the rigor of the law, he had taken it. For that offence he was given an additional two years, which with two years for robbing hardware stores made seven years. While at Portsmouth penitentiary during the past two years he had never forgotten what he considered to be injustice and he sought at the first opportunity to gain for himself that freedom for which his youth craved. He said that he had no intention of wounding the guard but he wanted to get away so badly that he had to take whatever chances he had.

Speaking on his son's behalf, Mr. Rogers pointed out that he had been brought up on the farm up to the age of thirteen years and that he had always been a good boy while he was at school. He had enlisted when he was fifteen years of age and had met a chum while he was working on the C.N.R. who seemed to have led him astray. He told his father that he was going to work on the C.P.R. after he had enlisted but his father had taken him out of the army as soon as he learned it. The lad's father said that after his trial he had called up the jail to find out when he would be leaving for Kingston but everything was kept in an uncertain state and when his mother and two sisters went to see him they were bitterly disappointed to find that he had been sent to the penitentiary without having an opportunity to say good-bye. His father stated that his son might be slightly disordered in the mind but that he was not treated fairly not only because he thought he had been sentenced on a charge but because of the chum with whom he was associated was sentenced to two years and released after one year and four months at Burwash while his sentence was for seven years.

In summing up the evidence, His Honor stated that he was at a loss to understand why a fifteen year old boy had been sent to penitentiary for seven years, but that as he was not familiar with all the facts he could not pronounce the judgment, even if he were called upon, to be harsh. Nevertheless, Rogers had had an opportunity to secure his earlier release through official agencies and he had not chosen to do so. His Honor stated that the last time he had occasion to sentence men for escape it was for the term of ten years. He urged the prisoner to remember that the guard was merely doing his duty in trying to stop him and that the convicts must realize that the guards must be protected. He said that he had had the opinion that nothing could have saved Rogers from the gallows.

As it was he was influenced by the youth of the prisoner and imposed a sentence of eight years for assaulting a guard and two years for attempting to escape, to run concurrently. He reminded the prisoner that the maximum penalty which might have been meted out to him but that with good behaviour the term might be considerably shortened.

While Rogers stood and took the judgment without a whimper, his only words were, "Your honor, I'll try to do my best. If there is any chance for redemption I'll try to make a man of myself and I only hope that it may not be too late yet."

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