

Yom Kippur at the Western Penitentiary! How cold and gruesome that sounds to you who worshiped in beautiful temples and synagogues. Yom Kippur, the Fearful Day of Divine Judgment, spent among our unfortunate brethren in bondage!

When Harry Sirvan, the Chairman of the Penal Committee of Pittsburgh Lodge No. 44, Independent Order of the B'nai B'rith, extended me the invitation to assist in the conducting of the services at the Penitentiary, I gladly accepted. I wanted to see for myself our Jewish prisoners—I wanted to talk to them—I wanted to pray with them. And so I went.

It was the first time in my life that I ever undertook such a task, and I was a little afraid. Afraid of what? I don't know. . . . The account of the indescribably horrible conditions which exist in some of our penal institutions was still fresh in my mind. We made our entrance with ease. There was no searching for concealed weapons, no signing of names, no conventional red tape. A friendly "How do you do?" from the smiling Deputy, and the heavy iron doors swung open for us to enter. I couldn't help but ask myself whether the exit was as easy. . . . No sooner did our party begin to climb the steel stairs than the voices of men praying in a Shule were distinctly heard. "For the sin which we have committed before Thee" . . . "For all these, O God of forgiveness, forgive us, pardon us, grant us remission!" Those were voices coming from aching hearts. There could be no doubt about the ardor and intensity of feeling.

I looked for a chapel and I found a synagogue—a synagogue with a Torah, a Perpetual Light, Yahrzeit and Yom Kippur Lights. A Congregation bearing the significant name of Agudus Achim,—the Union of Brethren—in misery.

I counted thirteen men. Thirteen men praying with taleisim, and one of them acting as Chazan. Not in uniforms were they dressed, not in stripes, but either in white suits or in civilian clothes. Stripes and shackles are a thing of the past in this institution. Only a memory. And some of the men whom I met carry this bitter memory on their faces. . . . How humble and repentant they appear! Yet they are human beings even as you and I. I was happy to learn from the Warden that our Jewish men are entrusted with the greatest responsibilities. One of them is in charge of a school, another is the chief clerk with a staff of over sixty men under him, another is the head of the clerical department, etc. The Warden has faith in them, and they have faith in him. Stanley P. Ashe, the new appointee, is a model Warden, a real humanitarian. I was thrilled when he referred to each one by name and not by number. Brothers, he called them. And how loyal they are to him! As I stood in this little sanctuary and noticed the Ohio River peacefully floating by, I almost forgot that I was amidst men deprived of the freedom to enjoy the beauties of nature beyond their prison walls. Yet there was no bitterness and no rancor. Each understood his mistake in life, and was paying the price in silence. But there was disappointment in their faces. They cannot understand the neglect on our part. Daily they look at their Christian neighbors who are constantly visited by representatives of various churches and organizations. Daily they hear words of cheer from Christians,—but not from Jews. We seem to have forgotten them—buried them into oblivion. Our indifference is ironical and pathetic. It hurts them and hurts them deeply. They feel deserted. They feel lost.

What is it that holds us back? Why do we hesitate in such work? Some will sneer, others will shrug their

Yom Kippur at the Western Penitentiary

By MAURICE A. NERNBERG

shoulders. But it is not right. It is not fair. It is not just. We must not wait until our sympathy is aroused by some great catastrophe. We must take advantage of the opportunities that the new Warden, Mr. Ashe, so kindly offers us. He appreciates the tireless efforts and prodigious energy of our Mr. Sirvan, who for over thirty years has come in contact with our men. And never forget that they are our men! These men need a kindly word from us

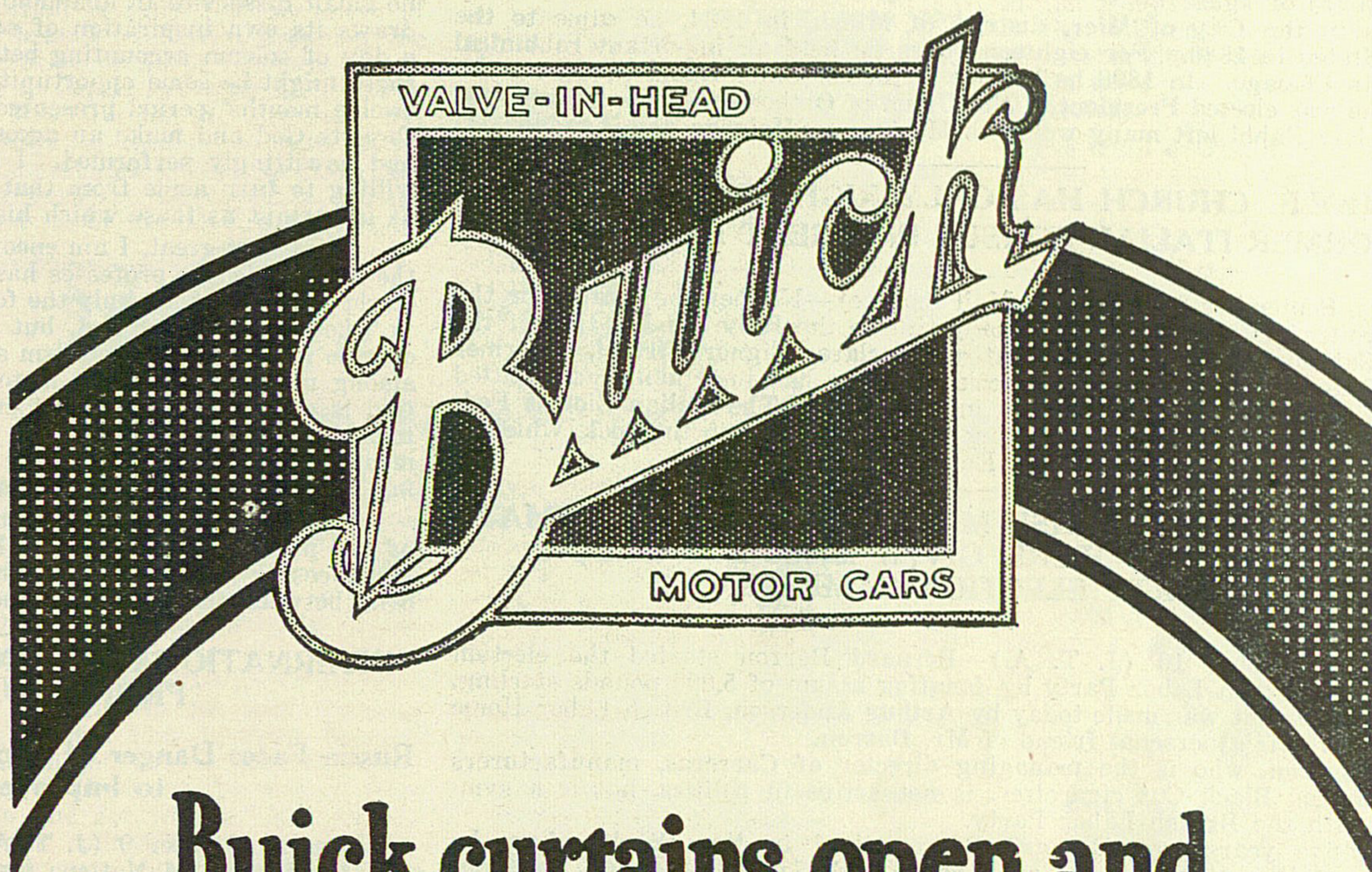
who are free men. Let us bring in a ray of sunshine and hope.

And they do not want your money. They have every comfort which prison life under a liberal warden can give them. Think of their spirit: only a week ago they made a collection among themselves of \$55 which they sent to the Erie Orphanage. Consider the sacrifice, and the tremendously long hours of work necessary on each man's part to save this sum. And for what? For themselves? No. They sacrificed to be of help to little children they have never seen.

They want us to come to see them more often. They are lonely. Some of them will breathe the air of freedom in this world no more; some will not be out for a quarter of a century. Keep their souls alive. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I do not desire the death of the wicked, but only that he turn from his way and live."

The doors swung open and I walked into the free air. The men left behind could be seen waving their hands towards me, not with despair but with hope and faith in the sympathy of their fellow Jews in the outside world.

Shall we forsake them?



Buick curtains open and close with the doors on all touring^{and} roadster models. They are snug fitting and keep out wind and rain ~ Any child can operate them.

F-30-12-A

Buick leads in Touring^{and} Roadster comfort!

Keystone Buick Co. { Baum Boulevard at St. Clair Street
Telephone, Hiland 3040

Penn Buick Company, Inc. { 112 Shady Avenue
Telephone, Hiland 2881

North Side Buick Garage { 210 West Ohio Street
Telephone, Cedar 2352

W. J. Dible Garage { 919-929 Penn Avenue
Franklin 8250 Wilkinsburg, Pa.

WHEN BETTER AUTOMOBILES ARE BUILT, BUICK WILL BUILD THEM