

312 K St. N. E. Washington, D. C.

May 12-1898

A. W. Tourgee, Esq. Jamestown N. C.

Dear Sir:

As I am to write up a chapter on prisons and prisoners in the South for the proposed pamphlet to be published and distributed at the World's Fair I thought it best to write and ask if you can give me any suggestions, as Mr. Douglass has told me you are to write one chapter. For nearly six years I have been investigating the treatment of convicts in the South. I think I can safely say that I have got evidence enough of the barbarous treatment of convicts, nearly all of which are negroes, to shock the world.

In writing my chapter I shall confine myself mainly to official reports

I have lived here in Washington nearly nine years, have devoted most of my time (without pay) to helping the colored race. I have attended Police Court, visited them (the poor) in their homes, in the prisons and elsewhere, and I am more than surprised at the indifference shown by the whites toward this unfortunate class. When we (my husband and myself) first came here from Baltimore. I was formerly from Erie) we published a paper. I began visiting the colored people and felt that this was my work. I have bathed my pillow with tears, I have prayed until my very life was a prayer to God for the colored people. But alas! unless the outstretched arm of an

omnipotent God brings relief to that oppressed race I can form no idea of what the next twenty years will be for them. Of course I need tell you nothing. I cannot go any distance from this city without being warned of my danger in exposing these wrongs. A few years ago just as I was about to enter one of the largest cities in the U. S. the conductor of the train (a perfect stranger but who knew my errand there) came and whispered to me that I must be very careful to let nobody on the train hear me say what my errand was. In coming up the river a couple of years ago a man said to me, "There are people in Washington who would cut your throat if they knew what you

were doing, I found it just so when I went east. We talk about Liberia but had we not better remember our convicts at home if they are treated in such a manner that nobody dare expose it. I care not what is said however, I shall do my duty.

As I go over my prison Reports from different States, my newspaper clippings etc, etc. I find this wash of leasing convicts, and all connected with it as deep as the bottomless pit. I was surprised in looking at an old paper the other day which had an article of mine in on the treatment of convicts. ~~The~~ Inter-Ocean of 1890 to see an article on the same subject by yourself. It had escaped my notice. It is this that prompts me to trouble you with this letter. I used to know Miss Kilburn in Erie Perhaps you may have heard of Emily J. Olds. she was my sister.

Truly Clarissa Olds Keeler