

Florida's Torture Camps

Sunbeam Prison Camp Belies Name by Inflicting Cruelties That Would Have Gone Over Big in the Dark Ages

A **LTHOUGH** Prison Commissioner Mayo of Florida once boasted to *The Pathfinder* that Florida has "one of the most humane prison systems of any of the states in the union," frequent tales of brutality from prison camps there belie the statement. Stories of peonage and brutal lashings had an airing in 1923 in the conviction of Thomas Higginbotham, convict lumber camp boss, for second degree murder growing out of the fatal flogging of one prisoner. It was in 1925 that then Prison Commissioner Mayo proudly informed us that the system of hiring out prisoners to turpentine and other private interests had been done away with, that "the infliction of corporal punishment on the body of a convict was abolished by the 1923 session of our legislature" and "we have no dark cells in our state."

But the substitute for the lash has brought about an even more shocking condition if reports of circumstances attending the death of Arthur J. Maillefert at the Sunbeam prison camp at Bayard are to be believed—and there is good evidence that the facts are as given.

It seems that this 22-year-old Westfield, N. J., youth and former Rutgers student was serving a sentence for an attempted gas station robbery. Whether too ill to work or because he faked illness, it appears that he was stripped and placed in a 60-gallon barrel through which his head and legs protruded and he could move about only with difficulty. Somehow Maillefert escaped from this diabolical contrivance and, still naked, made his way into the underbrush and swamps