

convinced of the inefficacy of the law—in a certain direction—as a moral agent, and the omnipotence of the Beatitude: “Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.”

Man is the framer and dispenser of the law; but woman is the advocate, who, pleading in the court of love, may disarm the law of its terrors, and for the avenger substitute the Reformer.

Speaking of many things that are degrading and sensual and vile and inhuman, yet at which he, knowing human nature, cannot wonder, Ruskin proceeds thus:

“This is wonderful—oh, wonderful!—to see her,” that is, woman, “with every innocent feeling fresh within her, go out in the morning into her garden to play with the fringes of its guarded flowers, and lift their heads when they are dropping, with her happy smile upon her face, and no cloud upon her brow, because there is a little wall around her place of peace; and yet she knows, in her heart, if she would only look for its knowledge, that, outside of that little rose-covered wall, the wild grass, to the horizon, is torn up by the agony of men, and beat level by the drift of their life-blood.”

What is to be learned from this brief text, bristling as do all the authors' texts with suggestions? Among others, a lesson of influence, of influence for mercy, a pleading and a compassionate wail even for the convicted and condemned, the very outcasts of humanity. “*Not fit to live!*” most awful verdict for sinful man to return against his sinful brother! Truly is a good woman's influence great; great already in the missions of temperance, great already in the mission of the sick-room, how much greater might it not become. There is yet a field whose barren waste has hardly perhaps pulsated to her tread, where hardly a sun-scorched,

withered blade has rustled to her foot fall. Her light is required in the awful darkness of the cell of the condemned felon. As a man clothed and in his right mind, as one who has not thought lightly on this subject, as one who is in deep, solemn earnest in the appeal he is about to make, as one who makes it to the accompaniment of another refrain, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice,” I ask you one and all, whenever opportunity offer, to exert your influence for the abolition of judicial murder. I ask you to aid with heart and voice and pen and every power bequeathed you by an omnipotent and incomprehensible First Cause of Life to abolish the gallows, and so wipe out one of the last and foulest stains of infamy yet resting on the white face of your cross. Two wrongs will never make a right. One murder can never cancel another in the equation of life. Retaliation in cold blood can never avenge the victim to passion, or lust or insanity, cannot dry one tear, cannot provoke one throb from the pulseless heart, cannot do aught but sully the name of justice and dabble her fair hand in a fount whose every source is iniquity, the perpetrations of the very evil she denounces. And no law is justified in exacting penalty from the innocent, who must suffer even more than the guilty. Is not this written of the law, by a Prince of men, a prince without a pier, albeit in a metaphor:

“Soft.

The Jew shall have all justice; soft! no haste:

He shall have nothing but the penalty.

Therefore prepare then to cut off the flesh. Shed thou no blood, nor cut thou less nor more. But just a pound of flesh: if thou cut'st more Or less than a just pound, be it but so much As makes it light or heavy in the substance, Or the diversion of the twentieth part Of one poor scruple, nay, if the scale do turn But in the estimation of a hair, Thou driest and all thy goods are confiscate.”