

that the *nature* of the crime determines that. Indeed! After all, then, it is not a question of *time*, but a question of *turpitude*. In reality it would appear that the *time* in which a crime is committed has nothing to do with the question of punishment. Nor should it have anything. Imagine a criminal pleading that, as he took away a fellow-creature's life in a moment, he should be punished according to the *time* he occupied in the awful deed! Why, it requires less time to destroy a life than to break a house; but, on the principle of proportion (which proceeds entirely on the question of time), the burglar should undergo longer punishment than the murderer! What would be the *right* proportion of time between breaking a house and the length of punishment? I shall show presently that society knows nothing about such proportion—ignores it entirely—and would be speedily disorganised if it proceeded upon any such principle in the case of an impenitent felon.

Those of you who insist upon proportion, answer this inquiry: Thirty years ago a man forged your name for a thousand guineas; he did it in an hour; a few dashes of a practised pen, and the deed was done! That man never owned the act, never uttered a penitential word, was sent to prison for ten years, and now he is in society; have you forgiven him? have you restored him to your confidence? have you invited him to the society of your children? is he once more at your desk? You answer, *No*; but what becomes of your own argument founded on *proportion*? Remember the man was confined ten years for a deed done in an hour? Was not that enough? Think of an hour multiplying itself into ten years, and say whether you can reasonably demand *more*. But you say the man is *impenitent*; precisely so, and that is the very basis on which the Divine adjudication proceeds! You say that if the man had truly repented of his sin, and had brought evidences of his sincerity, you would have forgiven him; be it so; this is the Gospel itself, the very thing which your misjudged Creator does; for “if we *confess* our sins, He is faithful and just to *forgive* us our sins.” The sum of my answer is this, If a man continue to be *impenitent* respecting any crime, he is as guilty of that crime on the *last day of his life* as he was in the very hour of its accomplishment. Time has no influence upon his guilt. It is purely a question of the heart and life. And so long as he is impenitent he ought to be marked and avoided. Society does this; society punishes (more or less lightly, more or less directly) all impenitent offenders against its laws, and punishes them throughout their whole lifetime, which is as much of eternity as its retributive influence can encompass.

Look at this question of proportion in another light; a man who has maintained a good reputation for half a century as a pure, upright, noble man; who has figured on countless subscription-lists as a benefactor of the poor; whose name was the synonym of benevolence;—has been detected in the commission of a crime. That crime was being attempted secretly. The perpetrator little imagined that any eye was upon him. The fact is published, and how does society treat the tower which the man was fifty years in building? How? Why, society throws it down, and forgets half a century of goodness in one day's discovered villany! Where is the law of *proportion* in this case? Why not take off *one day* from the fifty years' reputation, and regard the crime as but a spot on the sun of a brilliant life? By so doing society would be rendered insecure, all guarantees of morality would be loosened, and character would be shaken at its foundations.

This argument of proportion is utterly fallacious. No crime is self-contained. All actions have influence. What is done in an hour may affect men