

(For the Odd Fellows' Record.)

THOUGHTS ON CRIME, ITS CAUSES,
PREVENTION, AND CURE.

BY A PHILANTHROPIST.

AXIOM III CONSIDERED.

Axiom 1.—No man is so utterly bad, reckless and depraved, but that he presents some good points.*Axiom 2.*—Crime is found to be hereditary in families.*Axiom 3.*—The erring of the lower classes usually and with justice, appeal to the examples of the rich, in extenuation of their crimes and vices.*Axiom 4.*—Evil associates are the most powerful corrupters of innocence; the conscience, like polished steel, preserving its lustre forever in a pure atmosphere, and tarnishing with rapidity in a dark atmosphere of vice.*Axiom 5.*—Injudicious legislation contributes powerfully to the spread of crime.*Axiom 6.*—Religion, education, industry, and good example, diminish crime.

WHAT an awful responsibility rests upon those whose station is such that their words and actions are looked upon as authorising the utterance of such words, and the commission of such actions, by any mass of individuals! This is a truth that it would be well if it were more constantly remembered by those who hold an elevated station, however so little, in society,—for no one is so humble, but his backslidings would be pleaded in extenuation by some erring fellow-mortal. Mouraful truth, that poor human nature so deludes itself as to think that we can purify foul linen by covering it with a dirty cloth. The sophisms by which the favoured classes hedge in their pet delinquencies, however shallow, easily suffice for those who do not wish to see them in their naked deformity, but they do not blind the lynx eyes of the lower classes. Let not the higher classes suppose that their failings, defects and errors, are not remarked by the lower. I can tell them, that they are remarked, canvassed, aye, and judged too, with unsparing equity, by those to whose opinion they may attach no importance, because it cannot harm their worldly prosperity; but never let us forget, that our example hardens their consciences to the commission of *greater crimes*, as they are considered by the rich. A sincere and well-disposed person told me a few years ago, that she had made an effort to reclaim a *fille de joie* from the error of her ways, and among other arguments she descanted upon the shame attending her avocation: the girl had listened attentively and with submissive emotion until this argument was posed, when she started up with her beautiful features distorted by a satanic convulsion, and said, or rather screamed, "shame! shame! look at Mrs. —" (then a leader of fashion) "riding about in her carriage, received in every family and invited to every ball—a worse character than myself—is *she* ashamed? no, no, it is only a shame for the poor." One would think that our pious friend would have been completely silenced by this home-thrust; but no, she mildly answered, (mark the sophism,) "my poor girl, you forget that Mrs. — has her husband; and as long as he is content with his wife, it is nobody's business to suppose that she is

guilty." *Ex uno disce omnes.* Montagne has justly said, that "laws are like cobwebs, the big flies break through, while the little flies are caught and devoured." Our memories need not be much taxed to recall several instances of late years, in this very town, of scoundrels of the deepest dye, who, by means of *long purses* or *influential friends*, have been returned *not guilty* by *juries* in the face of the clearest evidence, or the cases have been so hocused, (compounding a felony,) that no trial could be had; while we have seen a poor servant girl sentenced to the penitentiary for three years, for stealing a *pair of stockings*!!! What was true in France in the seventeenth century, is not belied in Canada in the nineteenth century. It is not, however, in this country only, that it holds good; but in the neighbouring republic it is held by the poorer classes to be an indisputable fact, that no rich man can be punished for any crime whatsoever. The executions of Lord Ferrers, Fontleroy, and Captain Moir, prove, that in England big flies do not break the cobwebs of the law so glaringly, as on this side of the Atlantic: the same observation applies to France and Germany, —still even in those countries, many crimes as well as vices, are more or less protected by wealth and influence.

To hug the subject more closely, we shall take crimes in the order of the decalogue, and shew how the example of the higher classes, re-acts on the lower.

The first four commandments refer to the duty we owe to our Maker, and can be considered together, and although apparently not very germane to our subject, yet I trust shortly to make it appear so. Religion is *fashionable* at present, therefore every decent well-to-do man wears the appearance of being pious, if he be not so in reality, and hence as much mischief is done by the glaring inconsistency of theory and practice exhibited by most sedulous church-goers, as by the open contempt displayed for religion by the more salient men of the 17th and 18th centuries. The first and second commandments are infringed by the man who makes a god of his gold—who pampers his belly—who neglects the poor—who rejects the petition of the widow and the orphan—who imprisons the honest debtor—who inflicts one unnecessary pang on any of God's creatures—who sets an example of ungodly living—who is a winebibber and a lover of strong drink—who doeth ought to cause his brother to offend. The third commandment is infringed by all who use the name of Jehovah irreverently—who take false oaths—(this is done frequently without a thought of its importance; witness the facility with which people used to take an oath at the custom-house to the contents of cases they had never seen)—who use profane oaths—who utter falsehoods. The fourth commandment is broken by those, who drive to church on Sunday when within convenient walking distance—who use two horses when one would suffice—who have two servants on the dickey, when one would do—who give their servants unnecessary labour on that day, as having dinner-parties—who stay from public devotions on frivolous pretences—who take long rides and shooting excursions.