

CRIMES OF VIOLENCE.

of six months in gaol for the pleasure of eating gratis. As auxiliaries to this grand motive not to steal, we have a vigilant police, the real effect of which is to make the calculation of the inutility of larceny rather more patent to the dishonest though not needy adventurer. As a further auxiliary we have the steady process of extermination of the breed of thieves, partly effected by the absence of demand for the thieving faculty in the midst of plenty, partly effected by bricks and mortar—railways and sanitary boards co-operating to that end—and partly again effected by the police. Given a continuance of material prosperity, and a continuance of order, the *professional* class of thieves is doomed to certain destruction under the processes thus described.

Not one of these means, which are so steadily operating to extinguish larceny, has any bearing whatever on crimes against the person—except, of course, the police; and there the action of that check is manifestly different as concerns crimes against property and crimes against person. In the former the police are a factor in the calm calculation of the thief, whereas in crimes of violence a policeman is almost as likely to be the victim as anybody else. The object of the thief is to evade the policeman. The fury of the doer of grievous bodily harm is just as often augmented, as it is stayed, by the appearance of a constable. His blood is up, and he means business; and, after all, knocking down a policeman does not materially increase the sentence for half-murdering some inoffensive old man. The element, therefore, of calculation of the chances of escape scarcely comes at all into reckoning with brutal assailants. Fear of punishment of course does; but, fear of punishment is one thing, and a calculation of the chances of evading punishment is another. Death itself is not nearly so effectual a deterrent as six months' imprisonment, if the odds are a million to one *against* incurring the former penalty and a million to one *on* incurring the latter penalty.

Not only are the causes which operate to stop larceny inoperative to check crimes against the person, but they even tend to augment and aggravate brutal assaults. "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked" is as true now as it was three thousand years

ago. The returns of the Excise are of themselves almost enough to account for the violence which reigns among us. It is not from vegetable-fed, water-drinking starvelings that acts which presuppose muscle and ferocity come. They may purloin, but they don't fight. The very plenty of meat and of drink wars against peace, for this plenty develops the brute both in body and pluck.

It may be said that, although the excitement of drink accounts for outrages committed under its actual influence, yet many of the worst cases of assault have occurred where there has been no proof of drunkenness. But such a reply would show some misapprehension of our meaning. That there is in the English nature a something, derived, as Hume would say, from the Saxon element, which may rise to sublime courage, and may sink to brutal ferocity, can hardly be denied. In war the English soldier has earned the name of "bull dog," and although in the present day his mercy may equal his valour, it was hardly so in the campaigns of the last century. Now, where there is neither morality, nor refinement, nor education, nor any atom of self-esteem, to control this something, it must more and more assume animal characteristics. In that case all that serves to develop the animal passions, augments it, till it assumes altogether abnormal proportions. Hence, it is perfectly intelligible that an era of unbounded material wealth should be coincident with an era of physical violence among the lower classes. Those who doubt, or have never considered, the effects on nations and individuals of diet had better read Mr. Buckle before they jeer at such ideas as mere speculations.

There is, moreover, this to be noted. During the eighteenth century the idle classes in this country were great eaters and great drinkers, and they were *pari ratione* great beaters. They beat their wives, their children, their men servants, their maid servants, their horses, and their dogs. It is true that the most aristocratic among them "pinked" people below them with the rapier on the least offence; but, although a rapier may be more genteel than a hob-nailed boot as a weapon, it is at least as uncomfortable to the party attacked. As morality, education, and refinement advanced, drunken-