

trated the greater offence laid to his charge, at the end of the hour's run between Woking and London he and his victim would infallibly be in the hands of the police. What was the offence then that he meditated? To triumph without the use of overmastering force over the virtue of a respectable woman to whom he was a perfect stranger and who had given him no encouragement? That a man of the world can have thought his success in such an attempt possible is surely beyond belief. We seem to be driven to the hypothesis that he mistook Miss Dickinson's character, and perhaps her indolence. The freedom with which she entered into conversation with him, no one else being in the carriage, though perfectly innocent on her part, was somewhat indiscreet and may have encouraged his illusion. Nor, by her own account, do his first approaches to familiarity appear to have been judiciously—though her subsequent alarm shows that they were sincerely—repelled. She did not at once speak that commanding word which uttered by the lips of purity quells and freezes any lust but that of a saint. So much we may venture to say at this distance from the scene of the occurrence and from all the parties concerned. The statements as to the lady's connections, if he had once fallen into a mistake as to her indolence or character, would naturally make no impression on his mind. Supposing this theory to be correct, Colonel Baker would still stand convicted of a gross and bestial act; he would still have disgraced his position as a gentleman and his calling as a soldier. He would still deserve punishment and degradation. But his conduct is at least reconciled with sanity and with those prudentia instincts which in even the most vicious men of the world become a second nature. It assumes the aspect not of a sudden and protentious outburst of wickedness, as the Judge in adjusting the penalty assumed it to be; but of the normal depravity of a licentious man who fancied that he had found a safe, and in his eyes a legitimate opportunity of gratifying his lust.

It is to be feared that in passing judgment on this and other strange phenomena of English society allowance must be made for a great change in English character. The vast increase of wealth, and the corresponding growth of the appetite for pleasure, the craving for strong excitement, together with the decay of religious belief and of the moral principles which in the mass of mankind are inseparably connected with it, have not only swept away the last vestiges of old English Puritanism, but made deep inroads on old English virtue. Fastness is the tendency and the tone of the rich of both sexes, and fastness is, with voluptuous surroundings, always on the verge of something worse. The manners not only of English youths, but of English maidens, in the present day, are very different, not only in form, but in the cast of character expressed by them from those of the old regime. French sentiment has invaded the theatre and the novel. Abandoned women, who thirty years ago would not have dared to show themselves in the resorts of decent society, now in London, as in Paris, flaunt with their dashing equipages in the park, receive the homage of men calling themselves gentlemen, and are talked of with interest by women calling themselves ladies. Suspicion in these cases generally outruns the reality; but suspicion points to the rapid spread of corruption among the higher classes of what was once the most moral of European capitals. Vice has a greedy ear to the report; fancies moral restraints relaxed more extensively

than they are; and wherever it does not meet with a barrier of ice imagines that impure fires must glow.—*The Nation*.

COLONEL BAKER.

Three juries tried the case of Colonel Baker at Croydon on Monday last. The first, some few thousand strong, yelling and surging about the Croydon Court House, condemned him to the gallows. First, because he was a man of high social rank, and a gallant officer who had served his country; secondly, because he had spoiled their fun by declining to act otherwise than as a man of honour under the charge brought against him; and, thirdly, because they could not get into the building to hear the evidence. The second jury, that impanelled by the sheriff, acquitted him of the greater crime and convicted him of the minor offence. First, because there seemed no other way of discharging their duty in the face of the evidence before them; secondly, because the judge told them to do so; and, thirdly, because Colonel Baker and his counsel scorned to ask them to do otherwise. The third jury consisted of those present in court other than the judge and the impanelled jury, and from these he received the verdict of an ominous silence broken only by the honest cry of "Bravo Baker!" as he left the court. The only approach to a sign of approval of which any of the principal actors in that day's proceedings was the subject.

Bravo Baker! with twelve months of imprisonment, £500 fine and the cost of this extensive prosecution. Bravo! for what ever your fault you have been man and gentleman enough to speak not a whisper which should not be heard to save yourself from ruin or raise a doubt as to the absolute purity of all concerned in the charge against you.

The judge spoke like a man, from the first earned away by a sense of indignation on account of an offence—common enough, we regret to say, in English life—let us speak the truth without sophistication. His jury spoke according to the evidence and the direction of the judge. The yelling jury spoke as they would speak if kept out of a wild beast show, or if told that a colonel was their natural enemy, or if they suspected any man of good position of the brutality they deem their own birth-right, but the quiet, thoughtful, unsworn jury who heard the charge and the evidence and saw the witnesses, spoke more to the truth than all the rest when they said nothing, for there was nothing to be said, or that should be said, except of a sort we are not yet quite prepared to hear.

Well might Justice Brett, with an amount of just sentiment which did him honour, guard himself from inflicting a sentence which would shut out its subject from an honourable career hereafter, and which would be, as he termed it, "personally degrading," while the hope expressed by the judge that "by some brilliant services" hereafter he might wipe out the stain of the present shadow, only echoed the feeling of all present that one of the most gallant officers in the Queen's Service must in time wipe away the recollection of what he will now, no doubt, justly suffer as an example to scare worse men from greater offences.

We are no advocates of military licence any more than we are apologists for the apparently more venial offences of civil liberties, but we heartily concur in the hope of Mr. Justice Brett, that Colonel Baker may hereafter be permitted to "serve his country brilliantly," as he has served her before, and continue to merit the high opinion ex-

pressed regarding him personally by such eminent men as Sir Richard Airey and Sir Thomas Steele. "I have," said Sir Richard Airey, "known Colonel Baker twenty years, both in the Crimea and in India, and have watched his career with great interest and admiration. He has devoted all his energies to the duties of his profession, and has risen to highest reputation as a cavalry officer. He has served in the Kaffir war, and also in India, and I have never known anything either discreditably or dishonourably attach to him." Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Steele, Commander of the Forces at Aldershot, said, "I have heard and agreed with the testimony of Sir Richard Airey. I consider the defendant one of the most valuable officers we have in the Service. He is a man of great energy, and he has every qualification for a soldier in a professional point of view. So far as I know, his conduct has always been that of an honourable man."

It is a heavy blow that such a man from the very exigencies of his own high character and position, should be necessarily made an example of from being deprived of the means of defence open to less honourable men; but though the age of shame is not past, though many a hypocrite will turn up the whites of his eyes at a colonel and a gallant officer taking unwarrantable liberties with a lady, the time will come before those dread twelve months are over when men, and women also, will deem the crime possibly misinterpreted, and the punishment the more grievous wrong.

Would every judge be off the treadmill if every kiss of an unhalloved kind were thus punished as an indecent assault?

Would every reverend brother be in his pulpit instead of in the dock if all his dear sisters could speak as some spoke recently in New York? Would every respectable city man come home by train smug and smiling if truth and a pretty face appeared against him before Mr. Justice Brett? And what would become of half the yelling class tomorrow if a tithe of their indecency or a hundredth part of their gross sensuality should occupy any police magistrate for ten minutes.

Let not this be considered an apology: it is not so. Colonel Baker has submitted to his fate without a murmur. And we say it does him honour, but what will many others do in penance for acts like that for which he suffers? Will they content themselves with, "Look here! you know, a fellow 'can't speak to a girl, you know," or will they shake themselves, and think how infinitely beneath the value of the candle is the game they play.

Colonel Baker pays the price, but at his cost many a man will have the benefit of becoming less bold, and many a woman see the propriety of being less attractive.—*Broad Arrow*.

THE VALUE OF COLONEL BAKER'S COMMISSION.

It is a matter of very little moment to the world at large whether one reporter who says that Colonel Baker sent in his papers about ten minutes after lunch on Tuesday, or another reporter who says he did not send in his papers till about twenty minutes before breakfast on Wednesday, is the more accurate in his statement. One Jenkins may have bribed an attorney's office boy with lollipops for the information, another may have learnt it on the best authority in an omnibus. The *Daily Telegraph* and its military contemporary may argue the point out as they like. We happen to know that the military contemporary is wrong, but for