

FORGIVE BUT NOT FORGET.

"Is there any use in preaching professional morality? Is there any hope of converting the quack and the quack imitator from the unethical error of their ways? Is there anything to be gained in favor of the dignity and respectability of the profession, by classing these practitioners among the goats, and stigmatizing them by a code of ethics?"

If this method of reasoning were applied to public morals, we might dispense with the pulpits, we might relax the moral restraint of public opinion, and let legal restraint degenerate. Shall we cease to raise the voice of warning against vice because sin is so common? Shall we stop fighting the drunkard-maker because the rum-shop flourishes? Shall we begin to believe that there is no use in jails and penitentiaries, and that criminals can be converted into shining lights of sainthood by mere moral suasion? Philanthropists there are who object to capital punishment, but even they do not propose to abolish the penitentiaries—just yet.

That sort of sentimental theory is pretty well exploded. We invite our readers to name one instance in the whole history of humbug and quackery, when a quack was persuaded to become an ethical practitioner by "brotherly love." We can name several where they have been influenced by public exposure, and the fact that their quackery did not pay. Our civil courts have the records of others, who were only "persuaded" by the powerful argument of prosecution. If the quack feels that he can be indifferent to the ethics which govern the rest of us, until he makes a practice—and perhaps money—by his imposture, and can then in a twinkling abandon his quack methods, and claim equality with men who have always been ethical, the fundamental idea of the code of ethics becomes fictitious. The thief may reform, and become honest, but he has to suffer forever the penalty of his crime in the public suspicion and avoidance. Men who have always been honest do not take kindly to reformed thieves, however much in their hearts they may pity them. We have no sympathy with the flabby sentimentality, which thinks that the open quacks can ever be accepted in ethical society upon a par with those who have always been ethical. We may forgive a reformed quack, but he cannot undo the mischief he did, either to himself or the profession. The sinner may have his sins forgiven, but no power on earth or in heaven has ever enabled him to obliterate the direct penalty of his sin. Variola may be cured, but the marks remain. When those who are tempted to imitate quack methods fully realize these facts, the temptations to err will have more restraint.