

society who are an unspeakable danger to the community. Of course, he will be punished ; but after his term of punishment ends we have no guarantee that he will not return to the same bad habits."

"Did you inquire into the causes which have brought him to this?" asked Fletcher, quietly. Struck by the words, Mr. Bremner looked keenly into the young man's face.

"No, I have not. You think, perhaps, that he may have been the victim of circumstances."

"He might be," said Fletcher. "I can hardly conceive it possible that any man would adopt such a career through sheer love of it."

"I do not know that," said the millowner, thoughtfully. "There is no doubt that we have among us a number of criminally-disposed persons who are the natural enemies of law and order, and always enemies to the community."

"I grant that, sir ; but I still hold that there are many causes—some removable—which have made him what he is. Take our prison system, for instance. Suppose that man gets three or four months' hard labour, as he most likely will, he will not come out of confinement imbued with any more kindly feelings towards the well-doing portion of his countrymen. Nay, I could almost predict that he comes out a worse man than he goes in."

The young man spoke with a considerable passion which strongly impressed those who listened.

"I think you had better go upstairs, Adair," he said, turning to his daughter. "Mr. Fletcher and I have several things to discuss affecting his future. Tell your mother we shall come up and see her in half an hour or so."