

the investigation, be satisfied that the death has not been in any way accelerated by the treatment the prisoner has undergone whilst in prison. That such a provision was necessary, any one who is at all acquainted with the sickening details which fired the heroism of a Howard, and led him to a life of self-sacrifice, in order to expose the cruelty and tyranny which never met the light of day, will readily acknowledge; and to read the accounts of the considerate care and attention now paid "to the prisoner and the captive," and contrast them with the past, makes the past appear a fable or the illusory dream of an overheated imagination. But is it really so? Is it not rather that the self-denial of a Howard has borne its fruit, and the coroner is now called upon to be the watchful guardian of the public—to prevent a relapse into the oppression of the past? We have said that the benefits of the office of coroner are to be measured not only by what it does, but by what it prevents. We take the case of the destitute and friendless prisoner. At the first sight it would seem an almost unnecessary duty that a coroner and jury should be empanelled to make an inquiry where no inquiry is sought or desired; in order to show its value let the converse be assumed—that there were no inquiry—would the care, the vigilance, and the attention which is now paid to the prisoner be the result? Would not the natural effect be produced of indifference and unconcern on the part of the governor, and relentless cruelty be exercised by the unscrupulous and irresponsible warden? But the very fact that there will be an inquest, conducted not by the nominee of the Government or the magistrates who have the control of the gaols, but by an independent officer and by a jury uninfluenced by any consideration but that of arriving at the truth, imparts a value to the inquiry in its *preventive* character which keeps every officer, from the governor, the medical officer, and the meanest official, to the faithful discharge of his allotted duty.

It may not be unimportant to inquire how far a similar inquiry would be beneficial in every case of death happening in religious houses. Rightly or wrongly, there are not wanting many who think that undue restraint is imposed on females who in early life have pledged themselves to perpetual vows from which they would be gladly released. If undue restraint is not imposed, then there is no reason why the greatest candor should not be displayed, and every opportunity afforded to convince the public of the groundlessness of suggestion; but, on the other hand, if it does exist, the public, through their officer, should require the fullest inquiry into all the circumstances of their treatment whilst an inmate of such an establishment.

But not only to the prisoner and the captive does the office of coroner act as a preventive, but the poor and the outcast—the Lazarus, who is laid at the gate of some hard-

hearted relieving officer, whose eyes are closed to pity, and whose ears are shut against the tale of sorrow; this man is *compelled* to observe and to listen to the tale of woe, lest, should death terminate his sorrows and sufferings, a day of exposure should be at hand to unveil, through the medium of the coroner's court, the obduracy and cruelty which familiarity with such scenes is apt to generate. And if, again, an irresponsible body of guardians should, through a too niggard parsimony, withhold from the poor the requirements of sickness, the coroner's office is ready to expose the meanness which misapplies the public trust, and thus, by the public odium which it produces, *prevents* the recurrence of a similar fatality.

Instances might be multiplied without end in which the coroner has stood as the guardian of the poor and the friendless, and, by timely exposure, *prevented* many a death. Who shall say how many a life has been spared which would otherwise have been a victim to the torture of the lash by the army flogging, against which the late Mr. Wakley battled so courageously, the whole influence of the Horse Guards? And how frequently does the exposure arising from the coroner's inquiry bring to light cases where the overtaxed milliner's apprentice, and other similar sufferers, have sunk from exhaustion into the grave, and where the inquiry of the coroner has brought into the light of day, many a case which, but for that inquiry, would have been unnoticed and disregarded, but which, being exposed, has proved a beacon to warn the public of the ruin which awaits the sons and daughters of toil, and thus *prevented* others from falling a prey to a similar fatality.

Another feature of the coroner's court which in recent times has been of most manifest utility to the public, is inquiry into the cause of death in cases of preventive disease. The inquiries before Mr. Humphreys, into the state of some of the dwelling houses in Bethnal Green, have led to important improvements in that district; whilst generally, in cases where preventable diseases, as typhus and cholera, prevail, the coroner has the right of holding an inquiry, and directing public attention to means for removing the causes of such diseases.

If then, the office of coroner is capable of and does in reality effect such beneficial results to the public, it follows that the public have a duty towards it: namely, of maintaining its independence and usefulness. But we reserve this subject for a future number.—*Journal of Social Science.*

COLONIAL CULPRITS AND EXTRA-DITION STATUTES.

When the many forensic contests arising out of the Roupell forgeries were before the courts, the counsel against the ex-M. P. and his family made the most of the improbabilities and singularities of the story. It was