

estimate the physical effect resulting from lengthened imprisonment, or other noxious causes; nor have we, indeed, any record or published report of any particular system of discipline or administrative economy specially established in our prisons, save those but recently, and doubtless judiciously, enforced in the Provincial Penitentiary by those invested with its executive control and surveillance. It is, however, to be hoped that, ere long, the powers of the Inspectors will be extended, and made to include all our penal and other public institutions. It is not my intention to disturb the quiet repose of those, from whom some enlightenment upon this interesting subject might very reasonably be expected, but a question, of so high an importance as that, bearing upon the mortality and physical effect resulting from any particular system of prison discipline and management, is one in which the parliament and public are deeply concerned, whatever Physicians to Gaols may affect to overlook. For if, in enforcing any system of discipline, it be found that the chances of life are diminished in any great proportion, every effort should be made (consistent with the infliction of such a punishment as is calculated to deter from crime) to reduce those chances to a minimum. "Under any form of discipline," says the late Mr. Crawford (a gentleman, whose name is an authority on prison discipline,) "there will be almost as great an *inequality* in the absolute amount of punishment endured, as there is variety in the constitution and circumstances of the individuals who are subject to it. But in no point is this defect of imprisonment so formidable and so deserving of the utmost attention as when it affects the *health* of a prisoner."

The physical condition of one man may be improved by the same discipline that consigns another to the grave. Every consideration, therefore, of justice and humanity would dictate, that where there was a remedy calculated to avert the evil, it should be applied.

Hitherto the effect of imprisonment on the *lives* of prisoners has not attracted the attention which is due to its importance. Capital punishment, as formerly inflicted, has been justly denounced, but the loss of *life*, incidental to imprisonment, *from causes which were remediable*, though noticed in official Reports, appears to have escaped the watchfulness of the public. Nor has the effect of imprisonment on mortality, so far as I am aware, ever been prominently set forth, so as to add to the deterring effect of a sentence on the criminal population generally. It has, therefore, been a sacrifice of life, without any corresponding object gained by it. On reference to several returns on the mortality of prisons, we have the important facts clearly established, that imprisonment for long periods produced every where a high rate of mortality, and that although, in particular instances, other causes might