

# The Lake Magazine.

VOL. I.

APRIL, 1893.

No. 9.

## CRIME AND CRIMINALS.

BY CECIL LOGSDAIL.

### I.—HISTORICAL.

In taking a careful, but necessarily incomplete, retrospect of the origin and development of Prison Reform, it is to be noted that the slow and continual transformation in ideas which has changed penal laws from time to time and suppressed old systems, has been in exact keeping with a spreading and increasingly nobler advance in philosophical thought, a more practical application of Christian doctrine to human needs and aims made manifest by the never-ending social transformation. A synthetical and rapid glance at this gradual change of ideas will give the key to the present prison system, define what crime really is, not in the legal or popular sense merely, but, it is hoped, in so far as it fixes responsibility for the injury done to the individual and to society at large, and show how far the remedies applied have proved adequate to meet the requirements of successive and progressive ages.

Punishment, regarded from a broad point of view, is not confined to prisons, but, in one sense, the entire world is a great penal establishment in which every human being has to pay a penalty "whether he will or no." All suffering, which is only punishment, is an evidence of human weakness and an imperfect social condition,—the consequence of errors or faults committed by ourselves or by preceding generations even from primeval times. In view of this, the holiest among mankind aim at perfecting themselves, not in the interest of self but for the general good, and regard the human body as a sacred temple in which every thought and emotion is offered up on the altar of Universal Love, while the modern devil is to be seen everywhere in that Self-love which

consists in the sacrifice of the intellect to the gratification of the senses, regardless of all others.

But though each man suffers his own secret punishment, great or small, self-imposed or hereditary, it happens only too often that serious misdemeanors are committed that directly injure others, impede the general progress, and imperil the safety of society. Then the social power in subjecting the transgressor to a treatment more or less severe, only makes itself the organ, so far as necessary for the public safety and to prevent disintegration, of this general inherent law in the constitution of human nature which, for each deviation from the right way, provides a punishment as a sanction of the true path and as a call for reform. How best society can discharge its duties in its relations to the general conditions of progressive activity, and to its members who are undeveloped or degenerate, is a question fraught with issues so momentous as to comprehend the whole range of applied ethics. As all rational life is a product of social conditions, increase in crime, vagabondage, and lunacy, is the surest evidence of degeneracy in any race, community, or nation, that cannot shew a greater increase in all products which multiply for good, arising either from a too rapid rate of transformation or a drag on the wheels which prevents or disestablishes certain relations of integration, differentiation, or segregation, necessary to complete organization. And failure in the reformation of criminals is a sure criterion that a minute and precise knowledge of those slow but certain processes of biological and sociological change by which the transformation of brutality into humanity is effected, is, as