

but do the newspaper reports of this or any other country warrant us in believing that the atrocious crime of murder is dying away? Robbery, forgery, and other crimes are punished with proportioned severity, yet who will venture for a moment to assert that robbery and forgery are on the decrease? But on the contrary, is it not our melancholy fate to read, day by day, and week by week, of forgeries the most atrocious, robberies the most flagrant; at one instant whole families are hurled from affluence to want, from comparative riches to the depths of poverty, by the duplicity of wretches whose existence disgrace the name of man; at another a father has been broken hearted by the conduct of a son and his grey hairs been brought with sorrow to the grave, by an amount of forgery which he is utterly unable to meet. Viewing all these things as they really stand, and the state of society as it really exists, I think you will find it almost impossible to arrive at any other conclusion than that the means now in force for the suppression of crime are totally inadequate to their work—there is a something wanting—there is a vacuum which requires to be filled, that something, is *education*, and that *vacuum* is its absence.” That the means for educating the poorer classes of England have until within the last few years been notoriously deficient, I think every one will be prepared to admit, and the natural consequence is, crime has reached a pitch almost unprecedented in the annals of any country in any age; “But why,” you may say “what has education to do with that?” I will answer you; the mind of man is naturally depraved, and it is next to useless to punish it in its natural state, the man may feel the punishment corporally and for the time being, but he will lack that refined feeling which makes the bare idea of punishment far more unbearable than its infliction. To an educated man, or to any one who has any sensitiveness of disposition, the very thought of disgrace, and having his name placed dishonourably before his countrymen, is of itself worse than the infliction of a thousand lashes or months incarceration in prison, and such a dread will make him think twice before he ventures to commit a crime, however trifling. It is of no use punishing a thing which has no feeling. Thousands of men have been confined in prisons, and have suffered the various penalties of the law; yet who in this audience or in the Province will venture to name *one* whom it has ever reformed?—a single *one* whom it has ever induced to depart from the paths of vice and enter those of virtue. Nay, I will advance a step farther; I will even assert, and go to the criminal courts to support me, that imprisonment directly defeats its own object; that instead of reforming, it hardens, and renders the recipient of punishment more incapable of regeneration. I boldly make this assertion, and defy any one to deny it.

That the Penitentiaries of this young country may be an improvement upon the Prisons of the old, I do not for a moment

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