

THE HUMAN WORD.

(From the Illustrated Magazine.)

AFTER the Board of State Prison Directors had heard the complaints of a number of convicts, the warden announced that all who wished to appear had been heard. Thereupon a certain uneasy expression, which all along had sat upon the faces of the directors, became deeper.

"Send a guard for convict No. 14,208."

The warden started. "Why," he said, "he has expressed no desire to appear before you."

"Nevertheless, send for him at once," responded the chairman.

The warden sank back into his seat. Presently the chairman remarked:

"There are ways of learning what occurs in a prison without the assistance of either the warden or the convicts."

Just then the guard appeared with the convict.

Upon stumbling weakly into the room, he looked around eagerly. His glance passed so rapidly from one face to another that he could not have had time to form a conception of the persons present, until his swift eyes encountered the face of the warden. Instantly they flashed; he craned his neck forward; his lips opened and became blue; his form grew rigid, and his breathing stopped. This sinister and terrible attitude was disturbed only when the chairman sharply commanded, "Take that seat!" And then he sank into the chair.

The chairman turned sharply to the guard. "Why did you manacle this man," he demanded, "when he is evidently so weak, and when none of the others were manacled?"

"Why, sir," stammered the guard, surely you know who this man is; he is the most dangerous and desperate—"

"We know all about that. Remove his manacles."

The guard obeyed. The chairman turned to the convict and in a kindly manner said, "Do you know who we are?"

The convict looked steadily at the chairman. "No," he replied, after a pause.

"We are the State Prison Directors. We have heard of your case, and we want you to tell us the whole truth about it."

The convict's mind worked slowly, and it was some time before he could comprehend the explanation and request. When he had accomplished that task, he said, very slowly, "I suppose you want me to make a complaint, sir?"

"Yes, if you have any to make."

The convict straightened up and gazed at the chairman with a peculiar intensity. Then firmly and clearly he answered, "I've no complaint to make."

The two men sat looking at each other in silence, and as they looked, a bridge of human sympathy was slowly reared between them. The chairman spoke to him tenderly:

"I know," said he, "that you are