

ing no huts prepared for their reception; they grumbled at having uncooked rations served out to them, alleging that the governor, in obliging them to cook, was violating the law which exempted them from work; they grumbled again because they had to find their own fuel in the woods, instead of seeing fatigue parties of soldiers told off to pick up sticks for them. All this naturally angered the governor, who, perceiving that the communists were bent on teasing him, retaliated by visiting all breaches of rules with rigor. M. Henri Rochefort was once sentenced to a week's imprisonment for being absent at the daily calling over of names; and a great hubbub was made over this affair when the news of it reached Paris; for it was asserted, erroneously, that M. Rochefort had only missed answering his name because he was ill in bed with ague. Many Radical writers took this opportunity of declaring that the climate of New Caledonia was pestilential, and that every convict caught the ague on landing. As a matter of fact, M. Rochefort never had a day's illness in the colony: and ague is quite unknown there.

Successive amnesties have relieved New Caledonia of its troublesome political population, and no difficulty is experienced in maintaining order among the ordinary convicts. For some time after their arrival they are detained in the Island of Nou, where they sleep by gangs of twenty in huts; and they wear convict garb, which is as follows: red blouse and green cap, with fustian trowsers, for those under life sentences; green blouse and red cap for those whose sentences range between ten and twenty years; green blouse and brown cap for those whose sentences amount to less than ten years. They are not chained in couples; but those who work in gangs at road-making have a chain with a four pound shot fastened to their left ankles, unless they be men who have earned a good-conduct badge; in which case they work unshackled. Ticket-of-leave convicts of both sexes must, during their probationary terms of five years, wear their pewter good-conduct badges; but they may dress as they like. It should be remarked that the rule forbidding probationers to enter public houses is an excellent one, for it keeps them out of the way of temptation at the most critical point of their careers.

The convicts get paid for all the work they do; one half their earnings being handed to them every ten days, whilst the other half is set aside to provide them a little capital when they get their tickets-of leave. By good conduct they may also earn prizes in money. A good-conduct stripe brings a franc per month; two stripes, one franc fifty centimes; and a good-conduct badge, which entitles the holder to a ticket-of-leave when he has worn it a year, brings two francs fifty centimes a month during that year. By this judicious system of pay and rewards the men are kept in good subordination, and it is seldom that the severer kinds of punishment have to be inflicted.

These punishments are deprivation of pay, confinement in cells, and for certain serious offences, such as mutiny or striking officers, the lash. Formerly convicts were flogged for attempting to escape, but this was put a stop to by the National Assembly in 1875. Flogging is administered with a rope's end on the bare back, the minimum of lashes being twelve, and the maximum fifty. It is the governor alone who has the power to order flogging. The penalty of murder would of course be death: but it is rather a significant fact, worth the attention of those who allege that capital punishment has no deterrent effect, that not a single execution has taken place in the colony. It would seem that even the most desperate criminals manage to exercise self-control when they know that murder will bring them, not before a sentimental squeamish jury, but before a court-martial which will have them guillotined within forty-eight hours.

The colony of New Caledonia is under the control of the Ministry of Marine and the Colonies, which generally has an admiral at its head. The Ministry of Justice has nothing to do with it, as the convicts all live under martial law. Tickets-of-leave, however, seem to be given at the discretion of the governor: and it would be strange indeed if out there, as in France, favoritism did not play a large part in the distribution of these rewards. Favoritism is, in fact, the great blemish of the French penal system. It smirches every part of it; it obliterates all laws; it is the occasion of the most crying acts of injustice. How it works in New Caledonia may be judged from the case of a man named Estoret, the manager of a large lunatic asylum at Clermont, who was sentenced to transportation for life in 1880 for the brutal murder of a poor idiot. Estoret happened to be a consummate agriculturist, and his fame in that respect preceded him to New Caledonia. The governor, being very anxious to develop the resources of his colony, soon found that Estoret would be just the man to help him. He accordingly appointed him chief overseer of farms, leaving him practically free to roam over the whole colony on parole. Estoret was never even put into convict dress, and he was not compelled to wear a badge, for he had no time to earn one. He was rendered perfectly free almost from the day of his landing, and appears to have done excellent work in his superintendence of the farms. His case shows, however, that the governor possesses the somewhat dangerous prerogative of reducing judicial sentences to nothing. Such a prerogative may no doubt be exercised at times to the great advantage of the colony, but occasionally it must be fraught with serious abuses.

In fairness one should conclude by saying that New Caledonia seems at present to be doing well; and that merchants who trade with it are beginning to speak hopefully of its future as a prosperous colony.—*Cornhill Magazine*.