

long standing in his case. Often it seemed to him that the multitudinous cry of misery beat upon the doors of the Home Office with frightful portents. What was the Home Office for, if not to look after the people, to take care if possible that the taskmaster did not lay on too heavily, and that those who ate their bread in the sweat of their brow had at least a fair meal? If a little ease, a little pleasure could be added, it would be so much the better for all. He knew, he had good reason to know, that nothing in this world is so dire as poverty (except superfluous riches); so he construed Government as a sort of paternal regulator. His idealism, in fact, was proof against the dry rot of routine.

In the discharge of his multifarious duties he had a disconcerting habit of going beyond merely official intelligence, and judging of men and things for himself. Thus, without warning he would ask for information on matters which, as tradition plainly showed, ought to be bound in red tape and laid for ever out of the way. Hence, permanent officials, living in continual dread of special statements, lamented that Government appointments had ceased to be sinecures.

"What are you to do?" asked a harassed secretary, "with one who works sixteen hours a day and doesn't turn a hair? who is eternally receiving deputations, investigating grievances, inquiring into this thing and that as if the Home Office were a kind of deputy Providence? If a Whitechapel costermonger called the Chief would receive him as if he were a prince, and we should all dance attendance on 'Arry. But then," with a happy little smile, "if there's anything in a fellow, you know he'll find it out; and by Jove! he'll remember it too."

The Home Secretary made a particular study of the prison and convict systems, and succeeded in establishing a commission of inquiry and reform. He was heard to say that while justice is justice it is no credit to a State to have overflowing jails. Petitions for the commutation of the death-sentence were his sorest trouble. How many nights he passed anxiously searching for something that would be a fair excuse for delivering a doomed wretch from the shuddering hand-shake of the hangman only those in intimate relations with him knew. But people understood it was a black case indeed when Sir Evan Kinloch declined to interfere.