

multitudes refusing to use sugar, as being a product of slave labor. This education of the public conscience by public meetings was now for the first time becoming a normal instrument of politics, and of such influence under popular government we, in our day, are fully convinced.

This anti-slavery crusade was but another phase of a work which may be looked upon almost as the first attempt at sanitary reform, viz., the investigation of the prisons of England and the Continent by John Howard. First captured at sea in 1756 by a privateer and sent to a French prison, he had personal experience of the abuses which existed; and in 1753, as High Sheriff of Bedfordshire, he had ample opportunities of studying the prisoners under his charge. Till his death, in 1790, prison reform became his life-work, and to Britain and the countries of Europe he revealed a mass of maladministration and atrocious treatment, which made the most indifferent assume an interest. Insufficient food and starvation only prevented by private charity, no sewers, no infirmaries, and no means of warming prisoners, and almost no water was, as a rule, to be found; while prisoners were crowded "in dark subterranean dungeons, reeking with pestilential effluvia." In most prisons there was no allowance for bedding or straw to lie on, and even if obtained was not changed for months. There was almost no ventilation, owing to the window tax; and so vile was the air "that Howard declared that after visiting the prisons his clothes were so impregnated that he could not bear to drive in a post-chaise with closed windows." Naturally, in such a place human life rapidly withered, and scurvy was deadly, while typhus, called gaol fever, raged with such virulence that more prisoners died from it than from the gallows; while if discharged they became sources of contagion wherever they went. Many gaols were private property, and here, as in too many public ones, evils of even a grosser kind prevailed, for chains, iron collars and even iron bars, removed by brutal gaolers only for bribes, were in use, while lunatics were often added, making pandemonium of Tartarus. Old and young, male and female were indiscriminately huddled together, and prisons for punishment became schools of vice. Such conditions seem to have been worse in England than in some other countries, as Holland and Switzerland, where Howard was told that gaol fever did not exist. Though Pitt recognized the evils and need of reform, as pointed out by Howard, but little was accomplished till the time of the great reforms in the third decade of the nineteenth century. Reference has been made to the great and rapid development of factories, and the aggregation in towns of a population once largely rural. One of the greatest evils resulting from this was the employment of cheap child labor, so many men being drafted away to the continental wars. Indeed, so completely did the great Pitt misconceive the situation, that in