

by a term equal to the original sentence; a second attempt called for a further term equal in duration to the two terms preceding, not to run concurrently; a third attempt condemned the culprit to a life term. Thus, a criminal who had been sentenced for five years and who tried to escape, had his sentence made ten years; if he tried again it became twenty. It was the most trying time for the civil authority in the history of the country. An obscure rascal who had been sentenced for ten years for trying to make some silver coins that would yield him a profit of 40 per cent. over the value as silver (and such profit was by statute enjoyed by the Government) endeavoured twice to escape, and got forty years for it. Trying again, he got a life-sentence; but being callous to the feelings of others he tried once more, and actually escaped, and brought much trouble to the Government. One member wanted to give him a second life-sentence, to run concurrently with the first life-sentence. Another honourable member said such a motion was d—d nonsense. Others joining in on both sides, the session broke up with language for which there is no English equivalent that could be put in type without risk of melting the metal. Jail-breaking continuing, accompanied by increasing rigour on the part of the authorities, the Church took the matter up, insisting on better treatment to prisoners as the way to lessen jail-breaking. It was declared that this step was necessary, else the nation would all lapse into barbarism. Besides, if there were no other reason, the Church would lose the support of the lower classes if it failed to protest. As the support of the Clergy was necessary to the Government, the ministers yielded and granted better treatment to prisoners, with rewards for good behaviour and long and regular attendance. To relieve and abate vagrancy, they also enacted that beggars could be jailed on the evidence of any citizen. Then a strange thing happened. Tales of the substantial living enjoyed by those in jail reaching those outside, large bodies of men, women and children went

before the magistrate, and charged themselves with having begged on the street; there was no alternative but to incarcerate them. The jails soon required large additions, which made work enough to temporarily afford relief; but the pressure became so great that the authorities passed another enactment that no more vagrants would be admitted, the qualification being raised to assault, stealing and house-breaking, old and tried hands being given the preference.

This bill having been rushed through with some informality, the question of validity was raised, and one of the Judges of the Supreme Court gave it as his private opinion that the law was *ultra vires*: this the people in trouble took to be as valuable an opinion as if given in court, and, as it coincided with their own, they determined to act on it. Assembled *en masse*, they passed a resolution "that the law had always given them the right to go to jail for vagrancy, that the recently enacted law was irregular, and that the raising of the qualification was an unjust discrimination in favour of a privileged class." The contention grew to a tumult; large delegations of poor people waited on the jailers and demanded admittance; the authorities read the Riot Act; the people replied by reading the clause of the constitution relating to liberty and equal rights under the law. As the authorities would not yield, the people pressed on to the jail, determined that they should seek redress by constitutional methods only, while the authorities gathered troops and munitions of war, to be prepared for the worst. Country people joined the throng, with varying purpose. Some farmers said it was a shame that the authorities should lose the chance of building up the jail into the largest concern in the country, and thus increase the home market. Others said: "Let them alone; if they come to blows there will be a greater demand for our products than all the jails in the country could secure."

When the excitement was at its height the people thronged to the jail doors, and the crush of those on the out-