

to go out to New Caledonia and be married, to make an application to that effect through the governor. Elderly women are always very prompt in making such applications; but they are not entertained. The matrimonial candidates must be young, and exempt from physical infirmities. Girls under long sentences readily catch at this method of escaping from the intolerable tedium of prison life; and the pretty ones are certain to be put on the governor's list, no matter how frightful may be the crimes for which they have been sentenced. The only moral qualification requisite is to have passed at least two years in the penitentiary.

The selected candidates have to sign engagements promising to marry convicts and to settle in New Caledonia for the remainder of their lives. On these conditions, government transports them, gives them a decent outfit, and a ticket-of-leave when they land at Noumea. Their marriages are arranged for them by the governor of the colony, who has a selection of well-behaved convicts ready for them to choose from; and each girl may consult her own fancy within certain limits, for the proportion of marriageable men to women is about three to one. Of course, if a girl declares that none of the aspirant bridegrooms submitted to her inspection have met with her approval, the governor can only shrug his shoulders in the usual French way. It has happened more than once that pretty girls have been wooed by warders, free settlers, or time-expired soldiers and sailors, instead of by convicts. In such cases, the governor can only assent to a marriage on condition that the female convict's free lover shall place himself in the position of a ticket-of-leave man, and undertake never to leave the colony. Love works wonders; and there is no instance on record of a man having refused to comply with these conditions when once he had fallen in love. There are some instances, though, of the authorities having declined to let a female convict marry a free man, when they were not convinced that the latter was a person of firm character and kindly disposition. For the women's own sakes it is necessary that they should not be married to men who would be likely, in some moment of temper, to fling their disreputable antecedents into their teeth. There is nothing of this kind to fear when a female convict gets wedded to a man whose past life has been as bad as her own.

Why the French government should have saddled itself with the responsibility of promoting marriages among convicts it is difficult to say; but the experiment has, on the whole, yielded very good results. The married couples get huts and free grants of land, and all that they can draw from it by their own labor be-

comes theirs. During five years they are subjected to the obligation of reporting themselves weekly at the district police office; and they are forbidden to enter public houses, and must not be found out of doors at night. This probationary period being satisfactorily passed, they get their full freedom, but subject always to the condition of remaining in the colony. To this rule the law has distinctly forbidden that any exception shall be made. On no account whatever must convicts who have accepted grants of land and contracted "administrative marriages," as they are called, ever return to France. They are at liberty, however, to send their children to France if any respectable person in that country will become answerable for them, and undertake to provide them with a good education. The sons of convicts are born French subjects, and will be required at the age of twenty to draw at the conscription, and serve their appointed terms in the army.

From what precedes it may be inferred that the lot of convicts in New Caledonia is a fairly pleasant one; but we have spoken as yet only of those convicts who have tickets-of-leave, and are more or less free to roam over the whole island. Those who have not earned tickets-of-leave are kept in the penal settlement of the Island of Nou, or are employed on public works, road-making, house-building, etc., in gangs, moving and encamping from place to place during the fine season under military escort. The lot even of these convicts cannot be called a hard one, as compared with that of convicts in other countries, and of French convicts under the old system of *bagues*, or transportation to Cayenne. The climate of Cayenne was so deadly that all the convicts transported there either died or contracted incurable maladies. As for the old *bagues* of Brest and Toulon, they were very hells, where the convicts were kept chained in couples, and were treated pretty much like wild beasts. The climate of New Caledonia, on the contrary, is delightful, and the soil of the different islands composing the colony is so fertile that corn, fruit, and vegetables grow there in abundance, and can be had very cheap. In 1873 an attempt to cultivate vines was commenced; but hitherto the experiment has not met with success. It is said, however, that the difficulties which have beset the vine-growers will be overcome in time.

We are aware that the accounts given of New Caledonia by political convicts like MM. Henri Rochfort and Paschal Grousset, have been unfavorable; but the statements of these gentlemen must be accepted with reserve. The National Assembly in 1872 most unwisely decided that the political convicts—thirteen thousand in number—should not be compelled to work; and the consequence was, that, living in idleness, and being anxious to give the authorities as much trouble as possible, they suffered from the disorder and general squalor which they created. On arriving in the colony they grumbled at find-