

Temperance

Before the Cadi.

(G. Gale Thomas, in the 'Christian World.')

(Concluded.)

'Nothing,' says the man doggedly. 'I'm guilty.'

'But what have you done with it?'

'It's no good my saying anything. It would only drag in other people and do no good,' replies the prisoner. One cannot help feeling very sorry for him. Pressed for debts, probably, until at last in desperation, he took the money, preferring the certain punishment of imprisonment to further misery. There is a touch of chivalry in him which compels admiration and regret. What will he do later when he is released, with his life's character ruined?

The next case is a surprise. A youth of nineteen, with a face indicating character and ability, but he is merely a common burglar, perhaps under pressure of poverty. A respectable laboring man tells the court how 30s. was taken from his clothes in the night at the house in Bethnal-green where he lives with his family. It was the whole week's income of the household, and he owed most of it at the little credit shop. He slowly unfolds a grimy bill and offers it for inspection.

'None of us have had any breakfast this morning,' he says. The 30s. was all that stood between them and hunger. One fancies that the prisoner looks regretful but the money has gone with the confederate who escaped. He is committed for trial at the next sessions.

As the poor workman goes sadly out of the court, the practical sympathy of the Cadi is quietly shown. A word to the clerk, and the court missionary steps up to receive whispered directions to inquire into the case and see if the family is really without means. He hurries out on his errand of mercy as a diminutive schoolboy climbs to the dock. He is charged with receiving betting-slips and money for a book-maker. When a detective, dressed like a navvy, has given his evidence, a flashily-dressed man pushes forward from the back of the court and says he is the boy's father. Stepping into the witness-box, he pleads for mercy for his son.

'It's his first offence, sir. Some bookmaker has got hold of the boy, who didn't know what he was doing. If you'll only let him off this time, sir, I'll see he doesn't get into trouble again.'

The magistrate is about to consider it, when the detective intervenes dramatically:

'Your Worship, "this" is the bookmaker.'

Then he tells how the father, keeping a tailor's shop, has long been carrying on a betting business behind the scenes. They have tried in vain to catch him. He has been too clever for them, but the boy, who was his tool, has fallen into their hands.

The father slinks quickly out of court as the magistrate says, 'Fined ten pounds.' The father will pay.

The next is a civil case. An engineer's fit-

ter is brought to the bar before the dock defendant. A young woman appears to claim a maintenance allowance for her child. The man has been paying for it for two years, but has suddenly stopped the weekly allowance—a pittance of three shillings—and now denies paternity.

A solicitor rises in court on his behalf and begins to browbeat the claimant in a hectoring voice. The helpless woman knows nothing of evidence, and her case is being torn to tatters by direct denial. Fortunately, she has brought with her a motherly woman who has taken care of the child, and affirms that the defendant owned it as his. Still it looks as though the defendant would escape scot-free. He enters the box and makes denial on oath. The poor woman is at a disadvantage and has no one to take her part.

At length the solicitor finishes, and the Cadi takes the man in hand. By two or three keen questions he elicits admissions in complete contradiction of the evidence just given. The solicitor quickly rises to protest, but is put down quietly and firmly.

'It is perfectly clear,' says the Cadi to the defendant, 'that the statements you made previously are false. I make an order for three shillings a week.'

The plaintiff has won, but only by an unguarded admission from the man who betrayed her.

Here is a field where the women's societies might do much useful work. Again and again in the courts friendless girls, having no money to pay for legal help, or knowledge how to present evidence bearing on their case, fail in their attempt to get monetary justice from the fathers of their children, because of solicitors employed by the men.

Cannot some of the leaders of the women's movement take up the matter, and see that applicants who have 'bona fide' cases shall have legal help from a society financed by their richer sisters? An experience of everyday procedure in the police-courts suggests that this crying evil needs to be met.

Thus the day passes in the quiet court—one long record of drunken violence, sordid crime, sudden yielding to temptation and helpless victims seeking redress for their wrongs. The moral atmosphere saddens the spectator—or hardens him.

The only bright feature is the just and sympathetic judgment of the Cadi. No unprejudiced observer can spend any length of time hearing the cases without recognising that the nation is well served by the administrative officers of the metropolitan police-courts.

Most of the work of the stipendiary magistrates is done quietly and unostentatiously—only a small fraction of the cases are ever reported—but, unlike many of their unpaid brethren in the country, they generally temper justice with mercy, and deserve the confidence and gratitude of the community.

No passengers on board the old ship Zion. All are crew. Every man to his work then.

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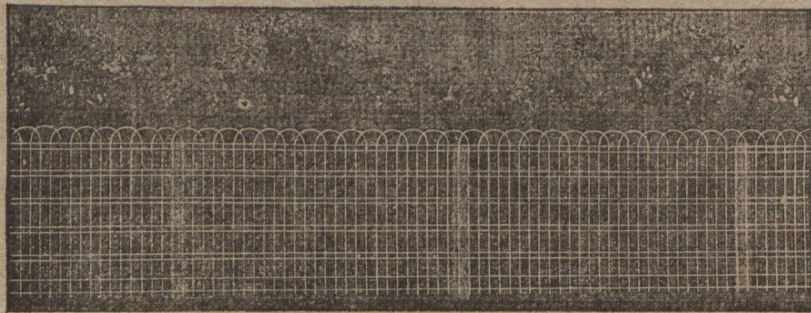
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If you would increase your happiness and prolong your life, forget your neighbor's faults. Forget the slanders you have heard. Forget the temptations. Forget the fault-finding, and give a little thought to the cause which provoked it. Forget the peculiarities of your friends, and only remember the good points which make you fond of them. Forget all personal quarrels or histories you may have heard by accident, and which, if repeated, would seem a thousand times worse than they are. Blot out of memory, as far as possible, all the disagreeable occurrences of life; they will come, but they will grow larger when you remember them, and the constant thought of the acts of meanness, or worse still, malice, will only tend to make you more familiar with them. Obliterate



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