

protected from evil doers. How shall men who are tempted to do wrong be convinced that it is better not to do wrong—persuaded to abandon evil-doing and cultivate habits of virtue and conformity to law? It is in answering this question that the law-makers of the world have graduated their punishment so as fairly to correspond with the gravity of the offences. Thus, on the whole, it is decided by civilized communities that it is better that a murderer should die; not merely because this punishment has a directly deterrent effect, but because the inflicting of a less penalty might indirectly be injurious, by lowering the sense of the value of human life.

One point greatly insisted upon by prison reformers and labourers in the reformation of the criminal, is the importance of discrimination between offenders, the recognition of the differences between one criminal and another. Some of them are almost hopeless, others are far from hopeless. It would be absurd to treat these different classes as though they were all alike; and yet this has been done to a very great extent in our ordinary prisons, and the consequence has been that young lads who have gone into prison with hardly any strong tendency to crime, sometimes scarcely more than unfortunate, have left the prison confirmed criminals. Justice, charity, common sense, the public good, all alike cry aloud against a system so mischievous and so irrational.

The Reformers begin at the beginning—at the sentences, at the punishment inflicted upon the offenders. The ticket of leave system recognizes the principle of shortening the time of confinement, if the conduct of the prisoner has been satisfactory. But it is proposed to carry this principle further, by making the punishments in certain cases indefinite as regards their duration and even their nature. If it can be made fairly clear that it will be, on the whole, better for society, as well as for the prisoner, that his term of confinement should be abridged, then he will be allowed to go free under certain conditions.

Perhaps even more important than this provision is the plan of classifying the prisoners, so as to assign to them the kind of companionship that will be least hurtful to them and the kind of work for which they are best suited. Society has no right to destroy the good which exists in those who have been guilty of a first and perhaps a comparatively slight offence. And yet something like this has continually been done by the herding of different classes promiscuously together. Moreover, a great deal of the work to which prisoners have been set has been of a degrading, depressing and useless character. It is now proposed to make the work of the prisoners a means of education, so that, when they are released, they may not only be able to carry on some trade, but may have been so disciplined in habits of order and regularity that they may have better prospects of success.

If it should seem to any one that this is making prison life too pleasant, a moment's reflection will show that the loss of liberty, the necessity of living under strict rules imposed by authority, the obligation to do stated work at the bidding of others—these and other limitations and restrictions will constitute a penalty of no slight severity for persons who have lived ill-regulated lives. Besides, it is not merely mercy to the fallen, but an enlightened regard for the public good which requires that every effort should be made so to discipline the inmates of our prisons that, at their leaving them, they may be induced to live industrious and respectable lives instead of returning to prey upon society.

By such means as these even the fallen may be convinced that there is still more than a chance, that there is a good hope for them. Nay, even the hardened may be softened and made to feel that it is better to cease to do evil and learn to do well; and it will be no small gain if any small number (and it is believed that the number is not now small) can be brought to resolve, when they regain their liberty, to avoid the kind of life to which, otherwise, they would naturally and almost necessarily have returned.

One other thing is especially contemplated by our prison reformers, and that is the caring for the prisoner after his discharge by providing that he shall have a chance of earning an honest livelihood. It is perfectly well known that this is the greatest difficulty of all in the way of reforming those who have fallen into crime. There have been many most sad and distressing cases of men who have come away from the prison with the earnest desire and purpose to abstain from evil, and honestly to labour for their maintenance. But they had no character, and no opportunity of acquiring one. People were afraid to employ them when they either knew nothing about them or else were acquainted with their antecedents. No one could be blamed for such a refusal. And therefore it becomes necessary that some arrangement should be made by which the discharged prisoner should be looked after without feeling that he was an object of suspicion, and that such measure of confidence should be entrusted to him as should at once be safe for his employers and a means of encouragement to himself.

When we are asked whether Christianity has done anything for the world, and whether we are growing better or worse, there are a great many facts on both sides of the argument which need to be taken into consideration. But at least we may affirm that in respect to our general principles of legislation and in the matter here considered of our dealing with the criminal classes, a more human and a more Christian spirit has begun to penetrate our modes of thought and action. And this, too, as we have pointed out, is a wiser spirit. The old, inhuman, savage way of looking upon an offender—often even an offender against a most unrighteous law—as a being who had no rights, who might not only be deprived indefinitely of his liberty, but might be brutally treated, tortured and killed—this spirit has almost passed away; and the spirit of Him who giveth liberty to the captives has come in its place. To every association and to every effort originated for the purpose of promoting this spirit, we cannot but wish God speed.

THE PROMISED LAND.

O'er wastes of sand,
With lagging steps, and straining eyeballs dim,
That strive to pierce the far horizon's rim,
Into the Promised Land;
Thro' days thirst-haunted, nights of torrid gloom,
Searching the wild where never blossoms bloom,
For the aspiring hand:
Not thus was wont to fall the tropic blaze,
In the glad morn of Time, when hope was young,
And all of fame, and all of future days
Shimmer'd like pearls on strings of errant fancy strung.

Up Arctic steeps,
With curdling blood, and feeble limbs that flag,
Feet heavy as the throbbing hearts they drag
O'er frozen-furrow'd deeps;
Thro' days of snow and frost-tormented nights,
Under the pulsing play of Northern Lights,
The life-drop chilling creeps:
Not thus was noon, not thus the golden morn,
Not thus the silver eve to buoyant youth,
Ah, me! The promised rose without the thorn!
Ah, me! The lie she reaps, where Promise scatter'd truth

Avernus dread
Yawns up for ever from the vales below,
Untouched by e'en the sunset's roseate glow;
Parnassus rears its head
Far, far above the purpling mists of night,
Reflecting yet the morning's beams of light,
Faint flushed with rosy red:—
Earth swung between—whereon the dreamers stand,
Weaving the warp and weft of fabric fair,
Fair fancy's web around the Promised Land,
Foredoom'd, too soon, alas! to fade in outer air.

Down-fallen hopes—
Mistaken youth—deluded hours of trust,
That took the shade for shine, that treasur'd rust,
Despairing manhood copes
With days, faint-hearted, nights of broken rest,
Ever the sunset in the paling west;
From dark to dark he gropes,
But not across the Promised Land of Spring,
Sweet idle wild of leaf when life was brave,
And all the birds were larks upon the wing,
That since have piped their lay o'er Fame's untimely grave.
Brantford. W. H. MORRISON.

LONDON LETTER.

FROM among my letters of this morning this one from Scotland may interest you:—

"Heather and brown rushing burns, blue hills and bright sunshine," writes E. K. P., "lovely lochs with strange birds hovering about them; little ragamuffins in the roads without shoes and stockings, and girls with red plaids over their shoulders and bare heads. Here and there a good collie and some capital Skye terriers with blue-grey coats, and in the shops huge packets of Dundee Rock. This country is supposed to be that of the scene of the terrific battle of Mons Grampius, between the Romans and the Caledonians ages ago. Every place is a blair or a cairn, the one word meaning battle, the other burial place; and Stormont, the little loch nearest here is the place of the stour or foray. They found a Roman soldier in full armour in the bog about sixty years ago, and there is a craig called Craig Roman to this day. Yesterday I went to see a curious old castle, not a big one, called Newton Castle, belonging to the Macphersons, with the oddest rooms, and a secret staircase down which a green lady moans and glides. There's a ghost in this house where I am staying, the ghost of an old gentleman in a red coat. I've seen his portrait, but as yet have caught no sight of him. A White Lady haunts Ardblair, and not far off there is a glen boasting the spectre of a black dog. Years ago it appeared to a farmer, tugged at his coat, and said 'follow me.' It ran before the farmer till it came to a skeleton. 'I murdered that man, and must run like a dog till he is buried,' said the black dog, so the ministers and elders of the kirk went out from here, took up the skeleton and put it decently into the graveyard, since which occurrence the ghost has ceased to appear. At Clunie Loch lived the Admirable Crichton, and here is another romantic place called Craighall, the Rathays' house, built on the top of a rock rising 214 feet above the Erich river, and to which you can only approach by the land side. When we went out on the drawing-room balcony we looked straight down on the river dashing along in a sort of rocky chasm. It is the *Tully Veolan* of Sir Walter Scott, wise folk say; anyhow here he used to stay. The Lansdownes have a celebrated beech hedge at Meikleour, the highest in Europe: it is cut straight; the foliage is as thick and even as a wall, and I drove yesterday to see it, feeling like a dwarf as I stood beside it. How the rain came down in the Trosachs! I stopped at Inverness and went to Culloden Moor, where they've marked out the graves of the clans, but have put one stone only to mark the English graves, and