

man can bear without having his intellectual faculties impaired for life. Men of very excitable temperament, and who have been accustomed to work out of doors, often fall into a decline after two years' confinement, and die before completing their third year. Those who remain eight or ten years in *reclusion* sink into something like imbecility, and seldom live long after their discharge. Advocates of the cellular system point to Belgium, where there is no transportation, and where every man sentenced to penal servitude serves his time in solitary confinement; but the Belgian system is much mitigated by the system of marks. To begin with, every Belgian convict has two-fifths of his sentence struck off at once, simply because he is supposed to adopt cellular punishment from choice, though, since the old *bagnes* have been abolished, the option which convicts formerly had no longer exists. In the next place, the Belgian convict knows that by unremitting industry and good conduct he can earn marks enough to reduce the remainder of his sentence by half, and he has thus the most powerful incentive to good behaviour and hopefulness. There is no possibility of cheating the man out of the liberty he earns. On entering the prison he gets a balance-sheet, upon which he enters a regular debtor and creditor account with the government: so many marks earned represent so many days of liberty won. Thus, a man sentenced to twenty years sees his sentence at once reduced by eight years on account of the cellular system; and it then becomes his own business to reduce the remaining term of twelve years to six. At this rate it will be seen that a Belgian sentence of five years is no very terrible matter, especially when it is remembered that by a merciful provision of the code the time which a convict has spent in prison before his sentence is deducted from the term of that sentence. Therefore, supposing a five year man had been three months in gaol before sentence, and both worked and behaved extremely well after his conviction, he might be out in fifteen months.

There is a short cut out of French penitentiaries too; but it is such a dirty one that the authorities ought to be ashamed of themselves for encouraging men to take it. A moderately intelligent *réclusionnaire* who has served half his time, or even less sometimes, may, on his

private demand, become a *moulton*, or spy-prisoner. He is subjected to certain tests, with a view to ascertaining whether he is sharp, and whether he can be depended upon; and if he successfully passes through these ordeals (to which he is put without being aware of it) he is forwarded to some house of detention, or to the Préfecture de Police in Paris, where he is employed to worm secrets out of prisoners awaiting trial. To do this he must assume all sorts of parts, and sometimes assume disguises; and he carries his life in his hands, for he occasionally has to deal with desperadoes who would show him no mercy if they suspected his true character. All this unsavory work does not give the man his full liberty; but he may range freely within the prison boundaries. He is well paid, and he is generally allowed to go out on parole for a couple of hours every week. In the end, he gets a year or two struck off his sentence; but after his discharge he generally remains an informal spy and hanger-on of the police, and it need scarcely be said that of all spies he is generally the most rascally and dangerous. It is fellows of this kind who lead men into planning burglaries so as to earn a premium for denouncing them. They are foremost in all street brawls and seditions, playing the part of *agents provocateurs*, and privately noting down the names of victims whom they will get arrested by-and-by. They are, in fact a detestable race, and it cannot be wondered at that when detected by the *pals* whom they dupe they should be killed like vermin.

IV.

French female prisoners and convicts are treated with more kindness, on the whole, than persons of their class are in England. Their matrons and warderesses are Augustine nuns, whose rule, though firm, is gentler, more merciful, and more steadfastly equitable than that of laywomen could be. The female convicts are allowed the same privileges as the men in the matter of earning money and buying things at the canteen. Those of them who are young also enjoy a privilege not granted to female convicts in other countries—that of having husbands provided for them by the State.

Only these husbands must be convicts. Every six months a notice is circulated in female penitentiaries calling on all women who feel minded