

PUNISHMENT OR REFORMATION?

In these days, when a religious opinion or an adverse criticism of the Government's policy may bring the dire penalty of imprisonment, the question of prison administration is an important one.

Recent complaints with regard to conditions in the Auckland Prison make us question whether the reforms wrought by John Howard and Elizabeth Fry have in any way been extended and amplified, or whether we have been lethargic and allowed the system to become retrograde.

Bad light, dampness, imperfect sanitation, and proximity of healthy and diseased prisoners through the absence of any system of classification, are conditions that must tend to lower the physical, mental, and moral tone of the inmates.

We wonder whether the case of the women prisoners is the same, if so, we can imagine the permanent evil effects of the impress of such an experience.

It is well to remember that the ultimate aim of all punishment should be the restoration of the offender to society through his reformation, and as so much attention is being given now-a-days to the study of the principles of general education, I would enter a plea for the study of those principles in their ethical relationship to the mental and moral needs of prisoners. If such were undertaken by all who have the control and administration of prisons, the personal qualifications of humaneness and sympathy, so necessary to all who undertake reformatory work, would have some chance of cultivation and expression.

The late W. T. Stead advocated that all magistrates and judges should fit themselves for their office by actual experience—as prisoners—of prison life. Some such experience on the part of jailers and warders would undoubtedly make for sympathy, and quicken the imagination of those who at present may be mere officials carrying out the letter of an antiquated penal system in a more or less perfunctory manner.

The present system by all its negations—its silence, its absence of beauty, its restriction of many forms of wholesome self-expression—all tending to atrophy of the will, must be productive of the "corrosive evils" of brooding and hopelessness which de-

prive the unfortunate individuals of the chance of re-establishing their own self-respect, or of practising those virtues which might have so strengthened their character that they would resolve to wrestle anew with their particular besetment, and thus be restored to their place in the social world.

A prison system, which physically or morally devitalises, imposes disabilities that may long outlast the term of the sentence, and so, like Shylock, it has taken the life-blood as well as the pound of flesh.

Of the prisoners, as well as of those who have never seen inside prison walls, it should be true that they might rise

"On stepping stones
Of their dead selves, to higher things."

Shall we not by infusing sympathy into all our penal systems help towards this end?

E. P. CATO.

GROWING OLD.

A little more tired at close of day;
A little less anxious to have our way;
A little less ready to scold and blame;
A little more careful for a brother's name;
And so we are nearing the journey's end,
Where time and eternity meet and blend.

A little less care for bonds and gold;
A little more zest in the days of old;
A broader view and a saner mind,
And a little more love for all mankind;
And so we are faring a-down the way
That leads to the gates of a better way.

IS THERE ONE IN NEW ZEALAND?

The research department of the Methodist Episcopal Temperance Society reported early in the year that they had records of 840 daily papers in the United States that declined all liquor advertisements. Since this announcement some notable additions have been made to the list, in such journals as the "New York Tribune," "Indianapolis News," and "New Orleans Picayune."

In a decree posted in Nancy, General Joffre has absolutely forbidden the sale of intoxicants to troops, or the treating of them to drinks, under penalty of court-martial.

ONLY THE CHILDREN.

Beneath an ancient, widespread tree,
Which cast a pleasant shade,
Five children, full of mirth and glee,
One sunny morning played.
Loud were the sounds of merriment
Which o'er that daisy'd field they sent;
For their's were hearts untouched
by care,

And eyes that seldom owned a tear,
"What are these sounds," asked one,
"I hear?"

Only the children playing there!

Only the children! Years have flown
Since that bright summer day,
And those have men and women
grown

Who then were at their play.
The eldest of that little band,
Who threw the ball with skilful hand,
And rolled the hoop by far the best,
His country now attempts to guide
And fashion laws, which when applied
Shall aid and succour the distress.

The next—a gay, laughing girl,
With blue and sparkling eye,
Whose hair was always out of curl,
Whose frock was oft awry—
Is now a lady full of grace,
In whom you scarcely now can trace
The want of care that marked her youth;

And to whose gifted pen we owe
Some sweet and simple tales, which
show
How lovely is the way of truth.

The youngest—gentle as a dove,
As sweet as she was fair,
Who gave her doll such words of love,
And nursed it with such care,—
Far from the scenes of early life,
Is now a missionary's wife,
And oft her wearied husband cheers,
Together patiently they toil,
And hope to reap, on Indian soil,
The seed which they have sown in tears.

Only the children! Yes, they seem
But ciphers unto some,
But I, who often sit and dream
Of things that are to come,
In children, full of healthful glee,
Our future generation see,
Mighty for good, or else for ill!
God bless and guide them, so that
they
May scatter blessings o'er life's way,
And all His wise behests obey!

WE MUST DO OUR BEST.

The day has gone by when alcohol could be defended. No man who knows the truth about it now takes it for his health; science has proved beyond doubt that alcohol has no good thing to give a man, woman, or child. Even a moderate use of it dims the vision, impairs the judgment, reduces strength, hastens fatigue, and weakens the body's power of resistance. The man who takes it is putting only a part of himself into his work, and is holding back his best. Arthur Mee, in "The Little Paper."