

THE PRISON'S EVIL.



xxx, 13, "The hour of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it."

By this homely but expressive figure David sets forth the bad influences which in olden time broke in upon God's heritage, as with swine's snout tramping and as with swine's snout uprooting the vineyards of prosperity. What was true then is true now. There have been enough trees of righteousness planted to overshadow the whole earth had it not been for the axmen who hewed them down. The temple of truth would long ago have been completed had it not been for the iconoclasts who defaced the walls and battered down the pillars. The whole earth would have been an Eschol of ripened clusters had it not been that "the hour has wasted it and the wild beast of the field devoured it."

I propose to point out to you those whom I consider to be the destructive classes of society. First, the public criminals. You ought not to be surprised that these people make up a large proportion of many communities. In 1899 of the 49,000 people who were incarcerated in the prisons of the country 32,000 were of foreign birth. Many of them were the very desperadoes of society, oozing into the slums of our cities, waiting for an opportunity to riot and steal and debauch, joining the large gang of American thugs and cutthroats. There are in our cities people whose entire business in life is to commit crime. That is as much their business as jurisprudence or medicine or merchandise is your business. To it they bring all their energies of body, mind and soul, and they look upon the interregnums which they spend in prison as so much unfortunate loss of time, just as you look upon an attack of influenza or rheumatism which fastens you in the house for a few days. It is their lifetime business to pick pockets, and blow up safes, and shoplift, and ply the panel game, and they have as much pride of skill in their business as you have in yours when you upset the argument of an opposing counsel, or cure a gunshot fracture which other surgeons have given up, or foresee a turn in the market just before they go up 20 per cent. It is their business to commit crime, and I do not suppose that once in a year the thought of the immorality strikes them. Added to these professional criminals, American and foreign, there is a large class of men who are more or less industrious in crime. Drunkenness is responsible for much of the theft, since it confuses a man's ideas of property, and he gets his hands on things that do not belong to him. Rum is responsible for much of the assault and battery, inspiring men to sudden bravery, which they must demonstrate, though it be on the face of the next gentleman.

You help to pay the board of every criminal, from the sneak thief who snatches a spool of cotton up to some man who enacts a "Black Friday." More than that, it touches your heart in the moral depression of the community. You might as well think to stand in a closely confined room where there are 50 people and yet not breathe the vitiated air as to stand in a community where there are so many of the depraved without somewhat being contaminated. What is the fire that burns your store down compared with the congregation which consumes your profits? What is the theft of the gold and silver from your money safe compared with the theft of your children's virtue? We are all ready to arraign criminals. We shout at the top of our voices, "Stop thief!" and when the police get on the track we come out hatters and in our slippers and assist in the arrest. We come round the bawling ruffian and hustle him off to justice, and when he gets in prison what do we do for him? With great gusto we put on the handcuffs and the hop ples, but what preparation are we making for the day when the handcuffs and hoppers come off? Society seems to say to these criminals, "Villain, get in there and rot!" when it ought to say: "You are an offender against the law, but we mean to give you an opportunity to repent; we mean to help you. Here are Bibles and tracts and Christian influences. Christ died for you, look and live." Vast improvements have been made by introducing industry into the prison, but we want something more than hammers and chisels to reclaim these people. Aye, we want more than sermons on the Sabbath day. Society must impress these men with the fact that it does not enjoy their suffering and that it is attempting to reform and elevate them. The majority of criminals suppose that society has a grudge against them, and they in turn have a grudge against society.

I stepped into one of the prisons of one of our great cities and the air was like that of the Black Hole of Calcutta. As the air swept through the wicket I almost knocked me down. No sun light. Young men who had committed their first crime crowded in among old offenders. I saw there one woman with a child almost blind, who had been arrested for the crime of poverty who was waiting until the slow lav could take her to the almshouse, where she rightfully belonged, but she was thrust in there with her child, among

the most abandoned wretches of the town. Many of the offenders in that prison sleeping on the floor, with nothing but a vermin covered blanket over them. Those people, crowded, and wan, and wasted, and half suffocated, and infuriated. I said to the men, "How do you stand it here?" "God knows," said one man. "We have to stand it." Oh, they will pay you when they get out! Where they burned down one house, they will burn three. They will strike deeper the assassin's knife. They are this minute plotting worse burglaries. Many of the jails are the best place I know of to manufacture footpads, vagabonds and cutthroats.

Among the uprooting and devouring classes in our midst are the idle. Of course I do not refer to the people who are getting old or to the sick or to those who cannot get work, but I tell you to look out for those athletic men and women who will not work. When the French nobleman was asked why he kept busy when he had so large a property, he said, "I keep on engraving so I may not hang myself." I do not care who the man is, he cannot afford to be idle. It is from the idle classes that the criminal classes are made up. Character, like water, gets putrid if it stands still too long. Who can wonder that in this world, where there is so much to do and all the hosts of earth and heaven and hell are plunging into the conflict and angels are flying and God is at work and the universe is a-quake with the marching and countermarching, God lets his indignation fall upon a man who chooses idleness? I have watched these do-nothings who spend their time stroking their beard and retouching their toilet and criticizing industrious people and pass their days and nights in barrooms and clubhouses, lounging and smoking and chewing and card playing. They are not only useless, but they are dangerous. How hard it is for them to while away the hours!

Alas, for them! If they do not know how to while away an hour, what will they do when they have all eternity on their hands? These men for awhile smoke the best cigars and wear the best broadcloth and move in the highest spheres, but I have noticed that very soon they come down to the prison, the almshouse or stop at the galloons.

They are the pest of society, and they stand in the way of the Lord's poor, who ought to be helped, and will be helped. While there are thousands of industrious men who cannot get any work, these men who do not want any work come in and make that plea. Sleeping at night at public expense in the station house, during the day, getting their food at your doorstep. Imprisonment does not scare them. They would like it. Blackwell's Island or any penitentiary would be a comfortable home for them. They would have no objection to the almshouse, for they like thin soup, if they cannot get mock turtle.

I like for that class of people the scant bill of fare that Paul wrote out for the Thessalonian lazers, "If any work not, neither should he eat." By what law of God or man is it right that you and I should toil day in and day out until our hands are blistered and our arms ache and our brain gets numb, and then be called upon to support what in the United States are about 2,000,000 loafers? They are a very dangerous class. Let the public authorities keep their eyes on them.

Among the uprooting classes I place the oppressed poor. Poverty to a certain extent is chastening. But after that, when it drives a man to the wall and he hears his children cry in vain for bread, it sometimes makes him desperate. I think that there are thousands of honest men lacerated into vagabondism. There are men crushed under burdens for which they are not half paid. While there is no excuse for criminality, even in oppression, I state it as a simple fact that much of the scoundrelism of the community is consequent upon ill treatment. There are many men and women battered and bruised and stung until the hour of despair has come, and they sound with the ferocity of a wild beast, which pursued until it can run no longer, turns round, foaming and bleeding, to fight the hounds.

There is a vast underground city life that is appalling and shameful. It wallows and steams with putrefaction. You go down the stairs, which are wet and decayed with filth, and at the bottom you find the poor victims on the floor cold, sick, three-fourths dead, sinking into a still darker corner under the gleam of the lantern of the police. There has not been a breath of fresh air in that room for five years literally. There they are—men, women, children; blacks, whites; Mary Magdalene without her repentance and Lazarus without his God. These are the "dives" into which the pickpockets and the thieves go, as well as a great many who would like a different life, but cannot get it. These places are the sores of the city which bleed perpetual corruption. They are the underlying volcano that threatens us with a Caracac earthquake. It rolls and roars and surges and heaves and rocks and blasphemes and dies. And there are only two outlets for it—the police court and the potter's field. In other words, they must either go to prison or to hell. Oh, you never saw it, you say! You never will see it until on the day when these staggering wretches shall come up in the light of the judgment throne and while all hearts are being revealed God will ask you what you did to help them.

There is another layer of poverty and destitution—not so squalid, but almost as helpless. You hear their in-

cessant wailing for bread and clothes and fire. Their eyes are sunken. Their cheekbones stand out. Their hands are damp with slow consumption. Their flesh is puffed up with tropics. Their breath is like that of a charnel house. They hear the roar of the wheels of fashion overhead and the gay laughter of men and maidens and wonder why God gave to others so much and to them so little; some of them thrust into an infidelity like that of the poor German girl, who, when 'old in the midst of her wretchedness' that God was good, she said: "No; no good God. Just look at me. No good God."

In these American cities, whose cry of want I interpret, there are hundreds of thousands of honest poor who are dependent upon individual, city and state charities. If all their voices could come up at once, it would be a groan that would shake the foundation of the city and bring all earth and heaven to the rescue. But, for the most part, it suffers unexpressed. It sits in silence, gnashing its teeth and sucking the blood of its own arteries, waiting for the judgment day. Oh, I should not wonder if on that day it would be found out that some of us had some things that belonged to them; some extra garments which might have made them comfortable on cold days; some bread thrust into the ash barrel that might have appeased their hunger for a little while; some wasted candle or gas jet that might have killed up their darkness; some fresco ceiling that would have given them a roof; some jewel which, brought to that orphan girl in time, might have kept her from being crowded off the precipices of an unclean life; some New Testament that would have told them of him who "came to seek and to save that which was lost!" Oh, this wave of vagrancy and hunger and nakedness that dashes against our front doorsteps. I wonder if you hear it and see it as much as I hear it and see it! I have been almost frenzied with the perpetual cry for help from all classes and from all nations, knocking, knocking, ringing, ringing. If the roofs of all the houses of destitution could be lifted so we could look down into them just as God looks, whose nerves would be strong enough to stand it? And yet there they are.

The sewing women, some of them in hunger and cold, working night after night, sometimes until the blood spurts from nostril and lip—how well their grief was voiced by that despairing woman who stood by her invalid husband and invalid child and said to the city missionary: "I am downhearted. Everything's against us, and then there are other things." "What other things?" said the missionary. "Oh," she replied, "my sin." "What do you mean by that?" "Well," she said, "I never hear or see anything good. It's work from Monday morning to Saturday night, and then when Sunday comes I can't go out, and I walk the floor, and it makes me tremble to think that I have to meet God. Oh, sir, it's so hard for us. We have to work so, and then we have so much trouble, and then we are getting along so poorly, and see this wee little thing growing weaker and weaker, and then to think we are getting no nearer to God, but floating away from him—oh, sir, I do wish I was ready to die!"

I should not wonder if they had a good deal better time than we in the future to make up for the fact that they had such a bad time here. It would be just like Jesus to say: "Come up and take the highest seats. You suffered with me on earth. Now be glorified with me in heaven." Oh, thou weeping One of Bethany! O thou dying One of the cross! Have mercy on the starving, freezing, homeless poor of these great cities!

I want you to know who are the uprooting classes of society. I want you to be more discriminating in your charities. I want your hearts open with generosity and your hands open with charity. I want you to be made the sworn friends of all city evangelization, and all newsboys' lodging houses, and all children's aid societies. Aye, I want you to send the Dorcas society all the cast off clothing, that under the skillful manipulation of the wives and mothers and sisters and daughters these garments may be fitted to the cold, bare feet and on the shivering limbs of the destitute. I should not wonder if that hat that you give should come back a jeweled coronet, or that garment that you this week hand out from your wardrobe should mysteriously be whitened and somehow wrought into the Saviour's own robe, so in the last day he would run his hand over it and say, "I was naked and ye clothed me." That would be putting your garments to glorious uses.

Besides all this, I want you to appreciate in the contrast how very kindly God has dealt with you in your comfortable homes, at your well filled tables, and at the warm registers, and to have you look at the round faces of your children and then at the review of God's goodness to you go to your room and lock the door and kneel down and say: "O Lord, I have been an ingrate! Make me thy child. O Lord, there are so many hungry and unclad and unsheltered to-day, I thank thee that all my life thou hast taken such good care of me! O Lord, there are so many sick and crippled children to-day, I thank thee mine are well, some of them on earth, some of them in heaven! Thy goodness, O Lord, breaks me down! Take me once and forever. Sprinkled as I was many years ago at the altar, while my mother held me, now I consecrate my soul to thee in a holier baptism of repentant tears.

FOND OF FANCY WORK.

Mrs. McKinley Delights in Making Pretty Table Mats. In the Washington set Mrs. McKinley is known for her clever crochet work. As she is not strong enough to be an athletic woman she has time to get up many new designs of fancy work, all of which are eagerly copied by the people who are privileged to drop in the white house of a morning when the president's wife is at leisure. It is said that Mrs. McKinley has a new design for each new caller to see, and that each one is a little prettier than the last. While she was away last summer she learned to make a kind of table mat to be used upon a bare table at luncheon.



MRS. MCKINLEY AT WORK. (The Latest Mat Designed by the President's Wife.)

It is heavy enough for the hot dishes to rest upon and yet it has a very lacey look. It is made of butter-colored cotton, very coarse and of the dye that washes. The design is a small round-and-round crochet stitch, which forms a scallop. As the pattern is carried around the mat a stitch is taken from the middle of the scallop, underneath, instead of in the end, as is the common way. This allows a little overlapping shell which is very pretty.

Mrs. McKinley makes the mats different sizes and allows an oval design for the meat platter.

MASQUERADING DOGS.

Ventriloquist in France Uses Animals in Place of Dummies.

Prelle is a ventriloquist who is exciting considerable attention abroad on account of his original methods. The average dummies do not satisfy him.

His puppets come merrily on the stage; one sits in a small chariot, apparently a lady of high degree; another draws the carriage with the air of a thoroughbred horse; a third stands up behind the carriage, a footman in splendid livery. There is but one hint of deception; like Hamlet's father's ghost, each of these puppets can a tail unfold—the ever wagging appendage soon reveals to the careful observer the fact that the puppets are puppets. Were any proof needed, Prelle discounts the necessity by pulling the heads off his company before they leave the stage. The preceding sounds cruel, and yet it is the kindest part of the business, for the dogs have apparently grown so



PRELLE AND HIS DOGS. (Well-Trained Animals Take the Place of Dummies.)

accustomed to the heads with which they come into the world that they are scarcely enthusiastic about the additional ones that the thought of Prelle has provided for them.

At this juncture of the performance they made their bow and departed to the wings for fresh heads and postures new. One came back as a racheorse or a hunter; on his back sat a real dummy with an enviable expression. The dog horse galloped around, went over high hurdles, treated all obstacles as though they did not exist, and the rider simply sat on and smiled like a born foxhunter. Prelle stood round with a long whip, and was content to smile and look beautiful. Prelle says that he has been at the business many years, that the dogs were not easily trained and that he treats them well.

Parasites in Ants' Nests.

It is certain that ants intentionally sanction the residence of certain insects in their nests. This is the case, for instance, with the curious blind beetle, claviger, which is absolutely dependent upon ants, as Muller first pointed out. It even seems to have lost the power of feeding itself; at any rate it is habitually fed by the ants, who supply it with nourishment, as they do one another.

A Specific for Burns.

A Parisian doctor has discovered that a solution of one part of plicric acid to 75 parts of water will surely and speedily cure the most terrible burns and scalds, and recommends that barrels of the solution be kept in foundries, etc., in which workmen could be immersed. The pain is instantly removed, sores and blisters prevented and a cure completed in four or five days.

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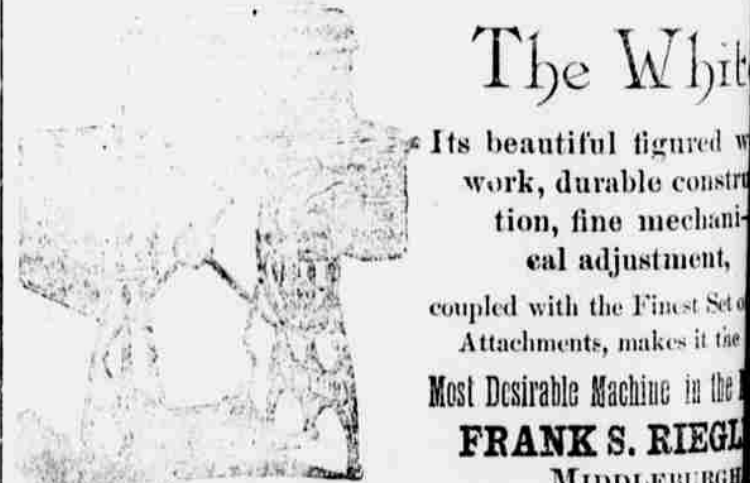
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