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PRISON CHARACTERS

DRAWN FROM LIFE

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRISON GOVERNMENT.

BY

A PRISON MATRON,

AUTHOR OF

"FEMALE LIFE IN PRISON,"

&c. &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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CHAPTER I.

PRISONERS' CRAFT.

WITH time to spare, and inclination for the task, a volume that would not be uninteresting, in its way, might be written concerning the duplicity of prisoners, and the numerous schemes to secure their selfish ends in view.

Schemes to gain admittance into the infirmary by feigning diseases, and even producing diseases, have been alluded to in "Female Life in Prison;" but the schemes to elude a matron's vigilance, to get the better of the doctor or the deputy, to communicate with a pal, to obtain a little extra advantage in one way or another that is against the rules, are manifold, and afford a glimpse of

character deserving of the passing attention of the reader.

The female convict is intensely artful, and is ever on the watch to gain an advantage. She will allow no opportunity to slip which an incautious step on the official side may offer to her.

The first appearance—or rather the reappearance—of an old offender in prison, is often marked by an effort to get the matron into trouble. I have known women maintain to the lady-superintendent that they have never been searched, and produce articles which they have contrived to conceal in some way as proof positive of the fact, and the officer in charge of her has often had a difficulty to make a satisfactory defence. The new matron—the officer on probation—is often deceived by the duplicity of a prisoner, and she must be a quick-witted woman and eternally on her guard who is not overreached in some way before the expiration of her first week in service.

In previous volumes, and in a preceding page of this book, I have directed attention to the cunning manifested on all occasions by Emily Lawrence, the diamond robber; a woman who had lived by the credulity of jewellers, and once succeeded in robbing the principal London and Parisian firms of several thousands of pounds' worth of diamonds, &c., and who, despite all rigorous search, was cunning enough to secure some jewels which were discovered upon her after several months of prison service. This Emily Lawrence was probably the most designing prisoner who was ever incarcerated for the public good: there was a studied attempt to deceive all with whom she came in contact.

In my first book I mentioned a report that was in circulation concerning her tampering with the honesty of her matron. That report has, since the publication of my book, resolved itself into a story which I give as simple hearsay, but which, I fear, now verges upon truth. Lawrence it was thought had other diamonds in her pos-

session, after the discovery of those jewels to which allusion has been made, and it is supposed that a weak officer proved herself open to temptation, and either for a large bribe, or led away by the promise of one, took the remaining diamonds to Lawrence's friends, or at all events opened a communication with people beyond the prison who were known to Lawrence. The story adds, that through the matron's indiscretion the facts came to light, and led to the summary dismissal of the treacherous servant; but the whole facts are enveloped in so much mystery, and such an evident desire has been shown to keep the truth back from the officers in service, and from the world outside, that all that is known of the fact is that there was a stir in prison, a meeting of directors, a summons to Parliament-street, and the departure, sudden and mysterious, of an officer who had fulfilled her duties for two or three years without a suspicion against her good faith.

Emily Lawrence was sent back to Millbank,

and there, it was asserted, she began her schemes once more—this time it was supposed for no other purpose than to arouse suspicions against matrons who were not to be tempted from their allegiance. She had an artful habit of mentioning as if unintentionally the names of her officers, and feigning a confusion when pressed to explain, which practice kept Millbank in hot water, until her character was more thoroughly elucidated. But her insinuations, her plausible statements, her feigned confessions were all regarded warily at last, and there are many who suppose that the first matron was a victim rather than an accomplice of Lawrence, and that the word of the prisoner was taken too readily as evidence against the officer.

But as a prisoner's word is never taken without strong proof to back her statement, I cannot think that any matron would have been dismissed on such paltry grounds as those alleged.

All this is somewhat of a prison mystery, and might have found a fitting place in that future

chapter in which I shall direct attention to the few mysteries that have been connected with the service, and set matrons wondering in their time.

The craft appertaining to prisoners is, as a rule, of a lower class than Emily Lawrence's—not so elaborated, or calculated to do much mischief. It is a cunning that springs more from passing events, and has its ludicrous side occasionally.

What will my readers think of four prisoners at Millbank possessing sufficient ingenuity to *get drunk*, which they did, to the astonishment of the whole prison, several years ago!

It was in the cholera season—or when rumours of a fresh outbreak of cholera had alarmed the nation, and when symptoms calculated to cause alarm to prison doctors, had begun to appear in the wards of Millbank.

The late lamented Dr. Baly was consulted on the subject, and he recommended that a gill of rum and water—or half a gill, I am not certain as to the proper quantity—should be served to each prisoner once a day. This variation of the diet

rules was generally appreciated, but the good intentions of the physician were imposed upon as usual.

Four women contrived to save their modicum of rum and water for three days—storing it up carefully in their pints until there was "a good drink," as they termed it. The good drink acting upon the system of women who had not touched spirits for years exercised an effect unprepared for by them, and was particularly startling to the authorities. They were found in their cells wholly intoxicated—mad drunk, in fact. One had taken to dancing in an insane manner about her cell; another to thumping upon her Bible, and singing ribald ditties; whilst the third and fourth contented themselves with defying authority in general, and "smashing" right and left in their excitement.

The reason of this sudden subversion of all decorum did not strike the resident surgeon—or *would* not suggest itself to that gentleman, dare I insinuate?—on the instant, and "stark staring

mad" was the verdict passed upon these refractories. It was a case of sudden frenzy, to be subdued as speedily as possible, and upon the intoxicated women coming to their senses, their amazement may be imagined at finding that their heads had all been carefully shaved!

So startling a remedy for eccentricity of conduct certainly checked any attempt in future to save up the rum and water for a "good drink." That the mixture was taken medicinally from that day forth, it is almost needless to assert.

The following instance of prison cunning, stimulated by an excess of vanity, has not found its way into print before. A woman, whom I will describe by the name of Robins, had contrived to loosen by degrees, and finally to dislodge, a complete square of glass from her cell in the old prison, which square she had backed or lined with a piece of brown serge from her dress, forming in this manner one of the completest and largest looking-glasses in the convict service. Small triangular bits of glass, highly

polished bits of dinner cans, &c., were in stock, as a matter of course, all over the prison, but a woman with a large looking-glass—a glass wherein one might see oneself comfortably!—was a woman to be envied by her compeers.

The absence of the glass in the cell window was not noticed by the matron—the abstraction was complete, and fortunately no particular draught was to be distinguished upon opening the cell.

There was a difficulty at night, for the woman was delicate, and sleeping with an open window was objectionable, more especially in the winter time. But Robins put up with the inconveniences attached to her position, and clung tenaciously to her looking-glass, keeping it under the mattress of her bed when settled for the night, and on other occasions carrying it to work and to chapel between her shoulders, with her dress carefully fastened over it. A delicate woman at all times, her peculiar shrinking manner when any one approached her

too closely, or a prison friend patted her familiarly on the back, was not considered out of character, therefore Robins kept her glass for a considerable period.

Once in the airing-ground, a woman behind her, knowing her secret, and envying her the possession of so great a treasure, annoyed her very much by rapping with her knuckles on the cloak and underneath the cloak, an indignity which Robins bore with as much philosophy as possible, contenting herself with whispering vehement oaths.

But no prisoner betrayed the woman's secret to the officers, and it was finally her own ebullition of temper, or the exercise of her cunning in another direction, which led to the discovery of her secret.

Robins lost her temper one day completely—offended the officers, disobeyed orders, and was generally abusive. This at the time when the prison was suffering from a disorderly fit, and prisoners were reckless and excitable; Robins

was aware of the demand for space upon the dark cells, and had calculated unwisely, as it transpired—on the available space left at the disposal of the authorities.

She had had faith in all the dark cells being engaged, and at the worst of finding company therein. She was led off very quietly to the "dark,"—finding to her discomfiture that a cell totally unoccupied was about to be placed at her disposal.

"I wont stop here," she cried; "see if I do."

The officers could see no valid reason to the contrary, and were prosecuting the usual search,* when a crash of glass was heard on the floor of the cell. A look of consternation between the officers, and then the discovery of the place strewn with pieces of glass—dangerous weapons at all times in the hands of desperate prisoners. The woman had taken the square of glass from her back, and demolished it at her feet.

There was no resource but to *move* the pri-

* All prisoners are searched before being left in "refractory."

soner. The rules are stringent about glass, and one piece overlooked is to place at the disposal of a half-mad woman the temptation to destroy herself. Robins was removed to another cell—placed, I believe, in temporary association with another refractory—a situation for which it was supposed that she had ingeniously schemed.

Female prisoners are singularly adroit at all times in concealing Government property. The slightest error on the part of a matron is sure to be taken advantage of; there are a hundred lynx-eyed women waiting for an opportunity to appropriate spoil unto themselves.

On one occasion at Millbank, when steel knives were in use amongst the prisoners at meal times, it was discovered, upon examination, that there were four of those dangerous articles missing, although the collection had been made as usual with considerable care. How the abstraction had been made was perfectly unaccountable; each woman had given up her knife at the officer's demand, but in the sum total there was a difference of

four between the numbers given out and returned.

This discovery created no little consternation amongst the matrons, who were liable to heavy penalties, and whose lives were also at the mercy of the first armed woman who considered herself injured. A secret council was held, and means adopted to remedy the mistake. It was resolved that no notice should be taken of the missing knives to the prisoners, that it should be imagined by the women that the absence of four articles from the aggregate had not been noticed, and the business of the prison went on as sedately as usual. The women did their work, had their gruel—there is no tea at Millbank, the reader is aware—and went to bed at the proper time.

Then when all seemed quiet for the night, cell after cell was opened by the matrons in full force; the woman roused, her clothes, her cell, and her bed thoroughly searched—and in the case of the innocent and unsuspecting, greatly to her

amazement. By these means three out of the four knives were discovered, one ingeniously sewn in the mattress itself, but what became of the fourth remains a prison mystery to this day.

In one of the cleaning times at Millbank, when the wards were undergoing a general renovation and purification, and the female convicts were employed at whitewashing in the wards, one of those large unwieldy articles called plasterers' trowels disappeared mysteriously. It had been in use throughout the morning, but when the labour-women were filed into their cells one of these articles was gone. This entailed another rigorous search, and proved, I think I am right in saying, entirely fruitless. Since that period the female convicts have not been allowed to assist in the whitewashing of the wards. Acts perpetrated by one woman often lead to the total abolition of certain classes of work, and one untrustworthy and crafty prisoner will at times wholly change the nature of prison occupation.

Mat-making was at one period a work in de-

mand at Millbank, but very large knives were used for the operation, and when one of these disappeared after the old fashion, the work was stopped for good. This was an excess of caution on the part of the directors it may be thought, although, Millbank prison being the first stage and a storehouse for women returned from other prisons for insubordination, extreme caution is necessary in every particular.

Mat-making was fair labour for a solitary; a work easily taught, and one in which a woman grew interested. This system of labour is still carried on in full force at our Scotch prison at Perth, for instance, where there is quite a warehouse of mats of all descriptions, shapes and colours, admirably made, and in many instances displaying taste of no common order. Still mat-making is a trade competing with honest hard-working men and women beyond the prison, and it is against *my* system when wholesale firms contract for prison work, and the struggling poor compete with Government for prices.

Women in upper wards have ingenious means of discovering if the cells immediately beneath them are occupied or not. These means constitute a prison "dodge" more in vogue in the male prison than the female however, for the male convict is concentrative and will labour hard even for months in the hope of effecting an escape; whilst a woman, with less strength and less perseverance, will give up at the first difficulty in the way.

The plan mentioned is to spill the water on the floor of the cell, leaving the water to find its level through the cracks and to penetrate through the ceiling of the floor beneath. Should this cell beneath be an empty cell, no notice will be taken of the circumstance; if a cell that is occupied by a good prisoner, a complaint against the occupant of the floor above is very likely to be lodged. In the former case, and after repeated experiments, a wily male prisoner will set to work at once to burrow his way by degrees to an empty cell, whence he may effect his escape—with good luck on his side.

An instance once occurred in our female prisons—this in the whitewashing era, too—where a malicious woman contrived to dislodge a brick from the cell that she was whitewashing, and to cover the aperture made by a piece of paper that she found means to secure. This being done, and the paper whitewashed with the rest of the wall, detection was almost impossible; and had it not been for the discovery of the brick itself, there is very little doubt that on some unlucky occasion it would have been launched with all the fury of a demoniac, at the head of an unfortunate officer.

Prison service, it may be seen, is not a safe service; and a matron must be eternally on guard against cunning and desperate women. It is not a fancy service; it requires patience, forethought, and ready tact, and all three may fail—all three have failed—against the settled and deeply-hidden malice of the convict.

Our prisoners—our penal-class women above all—are terribly ignorant, and seem more akin

to the animal than the human world; they are generally helpless for all good; stolid, vague, unreasoning, obstinate, dull, or desperate women; but they are all possessed of faculties to scheme, rob, and destroy, and these are sharpened by their past career of infamy to a preternatural acuteness.

Such women as these are ever on the look-out; and woe to the matron off her guard; they are never blind to a trick that can be played, or an advantage that it is possible to seize. Their vigilance lasts all their prison-lives, and one must not nod at the post whilst watching them.

CHAPTER II.

CAROLINE REPLOW.

CAROLINE REPLOW may be termed a flighty prisoner—one of a number neither few nor far between before the institution of the lunatic prison at Broadmoor.

She affords a fair instance of the lowering character of crime, of the tendency which ignorance and crime have to reduce and narrow the intellect of the criminal.

There are many professional thieves whose minds seem wavering in our prisons—on whom an existence apart from the life wherein there was nothing pure and elevating seems to tell at last. Caroline Replow was one of these women.

I believe that her life was a reflex of the lives of hundreds of women about her: brought up in ignorance, thrown wild upon the streets, a girl with no one to care for her, and who was expected by those with whom she lived to get her own living in any way and shape most convenient to herself. So from bad to worse, step by step downward, from prison to prison, until overtaken by that long sentence to which women like her generally arrive.

Replow was a strange-looking woman, a thick-set woman, with a heavy, lumpish face, and with that peculiar expression in the eyes by which flighty prisoners are readily distinguished. She had suffered from disobedience to orders in her early days, but it had become pretty generally known at last, that Replow was scarcely accountable for her actions, although her eccentricities did not warrant the medical authorities in ordering her removal to Fisherton Asylum. She was a woman who went through the prison routine as well as the majority of her contemporaries—had

an excellent memory, and could by judicious management be made to do her work in an exemplary way. But it was understood at last that Replow had a licence to go a little out of the common way without receiving a report—and Replow was not mad enough to be blind to the advantages which that licence afforded her. She was crotchety, not to say stubborn, at times—never to be frightened out of her crotchets by reproof; but to be turned from them, and into a good humour now and then, by persuasion.

She was conscious herself when her "vagaries" were in the ascendant, and generally gave warning of their advent.

"Please give me plenty to do—plenty of things to scrub—and I shall keep straight," she would say to her matron; and an extra allowance of hard work given her forthwith would result in Replow's better behaviour.

She was a terrible woman to talk—in a high key, and with an important air—an over-sensible air, that was amusing to notice for a while.

Everything she detailed to her fellow-prisoners was in the strictest confidence; and her imagination led her to exaggerate small facts with so much minuteness of detail, that manifold were the disagreements that would occur in consequence. Stories of "pals," not founded on the slightest substratum of fact, but which set women quarrelling, were her staple commodity, her chief idiosyncrasy, followed by stories of herself—wonderful adventures which she had encountered in real life, and in which at least she implicitly believed.

She was consistent in her narratives, which became stories ten and twenty times told during her prison career and which possessed a charm for prisoners more matter-of-fact than she.

She was conscious of her own mental weakness, and used to fret about it at times, and lay the blame in all cases on a large eagle which she had seen once at sea! It was a long roundabout story of a voyage back from America, and of her looking up one afternoon at the sky and

seeing a great brown eagle flapping about over-head.

"I was never right after that eagle," she insisted, at every fresh repetition of the story; "directly I saw it, I felt something crack in my head, and I've never been myself since."

The eagle was an especial grievance, and when in a sullen or peevish mood, her anathemas on that royal bird were strong and loud, and incessant.

For Replow was not choice in her language, or at all refined in her ideas. There were times very frequent when she betrayed the lowness of her origin, and the evils of her past companionship, by horrible words and oaths that froze the blood of her listeners. She was easily checked by an officer—although the remonstrance of a prisoner better ordered than herself invariably failed in its effect. With a clever matron she was tractable enough, or easily rendered tractable; but in the wards or the airing-yard at Brixton, she proved herself a terrible bully, and even

forced a few meek-spirited prisoners to succumb to her.

"Don't let me have any sarce," she was heard saying one day, to one of this little section of rare prisoners, "or I'll shake the very life out of your poor little body."

After words akin to these she would turn to her matron with a bland smile, and say, "Yes, Miss A——," to the most stringent directions, carrying them out cheerfully afterwards.

She preferred to jog on in her prison-life without any reproofs addressed to herself; and she was always ready to cry bitterly over "the hard words" that had been bestowed upon her—generally within a quarter of an hour after the reproof.

On one occasion Replow was chattering away in association in the old yard of Brixton Prison—talking at the top of her voice, and laughing in an idiotic fashion at every alternate word, with her cell-door ajar also, which was contrary to rule in that part of the establishment.

"Shut that door!" cried the matron, very peremptorily, as she passed.

There was a pause, and then *Replow* was heard to spring from her seat and fling herself passionately against the door, shutting herself and "associate" in with a noisy slam that spoke ill for Replow's temper. A break-out was anticipated after this; but before an hour had passed, the woman was heard sobbing convulsively in her cell.

"I can't do a mite of good with her, Miss," her companion said, upon the matron looking in upon them; "she keeps a busting out like this every minute. It's awful!"

"What's the matter, Replow?"

"Oh! you are so very haughty, Miss—you're so dreadfully haughty to me, I don't know what I shall do," cried Replow. This protest against the "haughtiness" of her officers was a favourite complaint of Replow's. "She couldn't abide a haughty woman; nothink tried her like haughtiness," she was in the habit of declaring, and she

continued to declare during the whole term of her imprisonment at Brixton.

At the opening of Broadmoor, I believe it was decided not to send Replow there; but this I am not in a position to set down as authentic.

Broadmoor was instituted for all degrees of criminal lunatics, and this woman, with judicious treatment and careful watching, might have been brought back more "to herself."

She was not of the shamming class, and "shams" are frequent enough at Millbank and Brixton, puzzling the doctors where to draw the line sometimes.

Replow continued to complain of her eagle, and of the haughty manner of her various officers, to the last day of my acquaintance with her.

CHAPTER III.

PRISON KITCHENS.

IT is in the kitchens attached to our great Government prisons, as well as in the laundry, that the prison-life seems less distinct, and more analogous to the busy every-day existence of the honest working-classes.

Here, in these huge kitchens, there are no signs of the fetters to be seen—no rattle, rattle of the matron's keys to be heard—all is bustle, with a method in the bustle; and the women working cheerfully and industriously, might be a fair sample of the outer world, were it not for the hard expression of their features. The kitchen service is perhaps best exemplified at

Brixton Prison, and with the reader's permission we will escort him thither as a witness to a day's routine.

The kitchen at Brixton Prison, be it said by one prone to grumble now and then, is a great credit to all connected with its management. With a slight alteration—to be hereafter gently suggested to the "rulers and masters"—the machinery would be perfect in this portion of the prison. Everything is well ordered and well managed; the staff of good-conduct women is admirably chosen on the whole. The prison cooks, the prison bakers—all the convicts drafted from their various cells—are industrious, cheerful, and willing. The routine is good, and there are no complaints from prisoners or officers.

The cookery is effected by steam at this establishment, and as there are many mouths to feed, and delays in feeding them would be dangerous, the business of the kitchen begins early in the day. At six o'clock in the morning,

the Number One women are at their post, ready to boil the cocoa and prepare all things for the prison breakfast, under the superintendence of bustling Mrs. Mant, whose duties are strictly confined to this portion of the prison, and who may be considered a prison "housekeeper," rather than a matron.

At the end of the long stone room where all this cooking goes on, day after day, for six hundred women, or thereabouts, may be seen another division of kitchen-women, making bread for the establishment, and directed in their labours by Mr. Mant, baker to the prison, and the only male officer allowed therein; and as energetic and honest a subordinate as any in Government service, let me add.

Flitting to and fro, from the bakers to the cooks, is one "disciplined officer" only, not finding her task very onerous upon the whole—the women, as before remarked, being well-behaved and obedient. In fact, the female bakers at Brixton have quite a reputation for

good conduct, and are proud of the name which they have earned for themselves.

Breakfast ready and cells supplied, the preparations for dinner commence forthwith, and *at a quarter to nine* in the morning the meat is ready for the quarter-to-one dinners. The dinner-cans—small oblong dishes, in two divisions and with a flap to each—are ranged in rows along the boards, and the cook or housekeeper proceeds at that early hour of the morning to cut from the joints of beef or mutton, and to weigh each piece in the scales before her. Into one division of each dinner-can is placed the portion of meat allowed by law, whilst the other is furnished with the potatoes; and this carving and weighing continues incessantly from a quarter to nine till half-past twelve, and is no light task for the victualling-officer, it may be seen.

It is this hitch in the machinery to which I desire to direct a little attention. It appears to me that there should be more hands employed in the carving and weighing, so that the task

might be got over in less time, and the prisoners have a chance of obtaining meat with a degree more warmth in it. It can be readily seen that no able-bodied prisoner gets a hot meal under this arrangement, and, therefore, the energetic protests against furnishing our prisoners with well-cooked hot meats, &c., have not been based upon the true facts of the case. No female convict obtains a hot dinner, unless she is in the infirmary and on convalescent diet, and then the meat is not ready till half-past twelve, and is served with soup as well.

I think all the prisoners should have their meat given to them hot; and an extra hand or two at the carving would enable that advantage to be conceded. Such a favour would be very gratefully received by the women, and might be bestowed solely upon those who are well-behaved and obedient to the rules.

At half-past twelve the cans are placed in various trays, similar in construction to those wooden receptacles for pewter pots which pub-

licans were formerly in the habit of sending out with their customers' fluids, but furnished in these instances with a double shelf. At a quarter to one all the kitchen-women are escorted back to their cells in the various wings, excepting those drafted for porters. Grace is sung forth very monotonously by the principal matron, the cans are given in to the prisoners, and the dinner hour commences.

After dinner the kitchen-women are free again to return to their duties—to dinner-can cleaning, with much rattling and clattering of the flaps in the process, and then there ensue preparations for the tea and gruel. After tea, a general clean up, and the kitchen world quiet at last—quiet till half-past eight, when the bakers march back again to their old quarters, and Mr. Mant reappears to see "the sponge" set properly, and the matron waits as attendant upon them all till the work is done, and the kitchen is left to the beetles and crickets for the night.

Concerning these beetles and crickets, which

are in no great numbers here, owing to those specimens of entomology objecting to prison-life, perhaps—it may be remarked, that the women are as nervous and excitable about them as are women of feelings more refined.

Almost all prisoners—I will say all that I have known, with one exception—are particularly wary of the beetles, ready to scream with affright at the idea of one intruding upon their dress, and proceeding about their business in a gingerly, cautious manner, which indicates that sponge-setting is not a favourite occupation. Women in prison for robbery with violence, for infanticide, and who have worked their way to this position in the prison, are unnerved at once by the sudden appearance of beetles and crickets amongst them.

The exception that I have mentioned was a quiet little woman, with a fancy for catching a cricket at any available opportunity and bearing it off to her cell—possibly for company's sake—where it generally died from change of

atmosphere, or hopped its way beneath the door in search of its old quarters.

"Have you got that beastly thing safe now?" a woman asked her as they were preparing to depart one evening after the capture of a choice specimen of the cricket tribe; "because if it jumps upon me, I must skreek, Sarah."

"It's all right, the dear."

"How you can demean yourself to take up with crickets," muttered another, of a higher order of ideas, "I can't make out."

"Don't say any more, or I'll shy it at you."

"Oh, lor! don't do that!" was the entreaty gasped forth after this threat.

A sensation incident occurred in the prison kitchen at Brixton once, and is one of those incidents likely to occur again in due course. The huge boiler that stands as centre ornament in that part of the premises betrayed suddenly, whilst the women were at work, signs of explosion. The water had run short, the regular supply had failed in some way, and the boiler

having become over-heated, began to betray those symptoms of eccentricity to which boilers are prone under similar circumstances.

There was a quantity of quicksilver blown out of what I believe is termed the "test-tube," shrill whistlings and ominous rumblings and hissings which arrested the progress of kitchen business on the instant, and turned a number of pale faces in the direction of this new "refractory."

A pause of an instant to realize the position of affairs, and then baker, cook, matron, and prisoners, all running helter-skelter out of the kitchen for their lives, the prisoners into the court-yard, screaming out that the "biler had bust," and that they should all be blown to atoms before an escape could be made, the officers in search of the engineer attached to the establishment, and the prison thrown into inextricable confusion by the panic.

When presence of mind had been obtained, it was found that one of the kitchen-women — greatly to her credit be it added—had remained

behind at her post, taken the ladder which was always there for the convenience of the engineer, and gone up it to remedy the deficiency of the water supply for herself; turning on the water with more zeal than discretion, and rendering it a doubtful point, perhaps, whether the omission would be rectified, or she blown to pieces with the boiler and kitchen appurtenances.

This is a striking instance of courage and coolness in a female convict, and is worthy of notice in this place.

CHAPTER IV.

HONOR MATTHEWS.

THOSE who have perused "Female Life in Prison" may remember one or two allusions in its pages to the woman whose name I have placed at the head of this article.

She was a "prison character" of the most desperate class, and would have been sketched at length in my first book, had it not been for the similarity of character between her and the prisoners Towers and Copes. In the present pages, and as a foil to the lighter figures which have been enumerated herein, she affords a contrast and a moral. I do not think that any matron of past or present service can point to a prisoner

of a more callous, stubborn character—a woman so difficult to impress or to subdue.

She stands first on the list of "black sheep;" a professional thief, who had spent more of her life in prison than out of it, and who defied all prison rules with the same bravado as she defied all rules of decent life.

Honor Matthews was a young woman when she first became known, and feared, at Millbank—a powerful woman, with a face that was scarcely English in its colour or expression. It was a regular gipsy face—although Matthews had had nothing to do with gipsies during her life—a bronzed face, fierce and forbidding, despite a certain claim that it had to good-looks, and lit up by two piercing black eyes, which certainly flashed fire in her paroxysms of rage.

It was this woman, of whom mention has been made as the inveigler of a favourite prison kitten into the dark cell, and the destroyer of it for the mere sake of killing something, in a passion which days of solitary confinement had not tended to abate.

Never was a proof more positive of the inefficiency of the dark-cell mode of punishment than in the case of Honor Matthews. There was no dark cell in the prison world that had terrors for this woman—that could bridle her tongue or check her stormy nature. There were seldom fits of passion that lasted so long as those of Honor's, born of a determined nature which warred upon herself as well as upon others.

Once "put out," set upon resistance which nothing could check after her mind was made up, Honor Matthews fought like a man and bit like a wild beast the male officers who were called in to carry her away. She would rave wildly and blasphemously against all who had helped to subdue her, continuing her denunciations hour after hour incessantly until she became speechless, when she would drop on to the floor, and beat her head, and feet, and hands upon her wooden bed.

Food she would always refuse in these passions; hunger and thirst had not power to tempt her to eat and drink; and it was a matter of wonderment to the officers how she could endure so long and

keep so strong. It became a duty to compel her to drink and eat to save her life at times, for she never gave way herself—she held out till the last with all the force of her indomitable will.

It was Honor Matthews, the reader may remember, who refused to leave the dark cell at Millbank, wherein she had remained for punishment for as long a time as the laws of the prison, and the laws of health, allowed. Her time was up, but she was unsubdued, and she clung to her dark quarters as other women cling to the cells where there are light, and work, and the faces of their kind.

She was strong and unsubdued; and the determination to break out again the moment that she was transferred to a more eligible spot, scarcely needed the evidence of her word, backed as it was by her oaths, terrible and appalling. Here Matthews was left to herself, and in the dark she remained, until induced by kind words and long arguments of the officials to return to her old cell.

There were times when Honor Matthews could behave herself; when a change for the better appeared to come over her, and some little effort was made by her to conform to prison rules. But the effort soon slackened; she was watching for an affront keenly and jealously; and the fancied injury once committed against her dignity, away went all restraint, and she was transformed into a tigress that for weeks afterwards neither kindness nor force could tame.

She treasured up also the names of the matrons who had reported her for her various offences; one name in particular she was constantly referring to with a demoniacal satisfaction as the name of the officer whom she intended to kill.

"I shall have her life!" she asserted to the prisoners, calmly and confidently; "as God's my judge I shall have Miss ——'s life! I'm waiting for it every day, and I'm sure to get a chance in time."

This threat she never forgot; she clung to it

with a confirmed tenacity that rendered every-one—the officer who had been marked out in particular—watchful of Matthew's every move-ment, just as Matthews was watchful of the object of her hate.

I believe that had the opportunity presented itself, the attempt would surely have been made, for no fears of ulterior consequences would have checked her for an instant. She brooded upon the thought of murder with an intensity that was too fixed—too concentrative, as it were—to be the ebullition of an idle threat. Moreover, she was constantly on the watch; the matron never appeared in the ward or the airing-ground without the black eyes of Honor Matthews turn-ing in her direction; and months afterwards, when wards had been exchanged and the prisoner was separated from the object of her aversion, a chance glimpse of the matron in the distance—at chapel, for instance—would change the whole expression of Honor Matthews' countenance.

She was clever, too, at hiding sharp pieces of

stone, scissors, &c., about her cell or dress; she treasured anything that might be rendered into a weapon of offence, or could be easily carried in her pocket. She was sent to Brixton prison by a *stretch* of kindness rather than for any *merit of her* own, where the change did her good for a time, until her sensitive nature was wounded by a reprimand, when her passions flared up with an intensity that dismayed the inmates of a prison more quiet and orderly in its character than Millbank. Honor Matthews was "returned," and almost her first inquiry was as to the whereabouts of the matron who had long ago offended her.

"I mean to kill her! I've made up my mind to that!" she said, with one of her old oaths; but the chance never came in her way, and Honor Matthews to this day has been balked in her evil intentions.

She returned to Brixton Prison again, where she remained for a period; always a trouble to her officers, never to be trusted for an instant;

a dangerous and a designing woman, whose very peace was treacherous. There was joy in prison when Honor Matthews' time was up, although it was thought that the nature of the woman would soon bring her back to her old sphere, but weeks and months went by, and it was hoped at last that she would return no more.

In the slight allusion to this woman in my former book, I say that, contrary to the prophecies of the matrons, this prisoner came not back to penal servitude.

But changes happen every day in prison service, and the gates of the prison-house are ever on the swing.

Not a very long time since a prisoner arrived to begin her term at Millbank; a woman who had been tried and committed in the country for robbery with violence, I believe, and who received a lighter sentence than is ordinarily given in such cases on account of there being no grim antecedents against her.

Harriet Macgregor, the new prisoner, arrived

under escort to Millbank, where *the reception-matron* met her, looked hard at her, and inwardly collapsed, at the stern, forbidding face which confronted her—the face of the incorrigible, untameable Honor Matthews again!

CHAPTER V.

PRISON MYSTERIES.

FEW and far between are the mysteries that arise in the course of prisoners and matrons' lives; but we are not free from them entirely, however close may be the watch on prisoners' actions, or regular and machine-like the order of the wards.

Occasionally there will arise a something that puzzles the matron, that becomes the more perplexing the greater the effort made to throw a light upon the mystery, and that remains for ever afterwards a something to talk about at mess-room dinners, and a something that has been left, as it was found, wholly unaccountable.

These are the little romances of prison-life, having no sequel, but worthy of perusal from their very contrast to the every-day existence of the gaol; the sequel may be guessed at wildly, but the guess may be, nevertheless, far from the truth.

I purpose in the present chapter to offer the few enigmas belonging to my own time, saying nothing of the records which have been handed down and magnified by transfer. For all that follows, the writer can honestly vouch at least.

In my first book I called attention to one mystery, the meeting planned between a prisoner and her husband—an honest working man—without any possible means, as it seemed, of communication with one another. The reader may remember that this occurred in the old transport days, when a woman was being escorted from Millbank to the boat which was to take her to the ship waiting in the Pool, and that the husband suddenly appeared at the stairs to the exact minute of time, and, in defiance of all ob-

stacles, embraced his wife for the last time, I believe, in life.* This story, the details of which I need not recapitulate here, but which belongs to my little catalogue of prison mysteries, is worth attempting a solution of, and might form a fair sensation incident in a novel.

Minor mysteries, but nevertheless mysteries, occur in prison-life—the mystery of money most frequently of all. It is worthy of record that, despite the absence of all metallic currency, the care of the officers, and the frequent searchings of prisoners, a woman will become, now and then, suddenly possessed of money—silver occasionally, in one or two instances of gold. The woman offers no reason for the acquisition, unless "Picked it up in the airing-ground," be taken as a fair answer to all inquiries. There is the money, however—sewed up in a corner of the apron, or in the stays—evidence of something wrong which nobody can set right. Jewelled rings have also been found upon pri-

* "Female Life in Prison," vol. i. pp. 296–298.

soners who have been two or three years in prison, and passed from place to place, and ward to ward—rings that have belonged to the matrons at times, and the loss of which—as rings are illegal ornaments to display—has never been made known—a ring which no one owns, and which the prisoner declares, perhaps, to have been "her dear mother's," and begs that it may be restored to her with her gratuity when she goes away for good.

I remember one prisoner who had the mysterious but handy faculty of letting herself out of her cell, however securely she might have been locked up for the night. Report says, upon the woman's own confession, that the operation was done with her needle, but as lock-picking with needles seems to make a greater mystery of it than before, I am inclined to doubt the solution that was offered in this case. But certain it is that the woman could suddenly appear in the ward after every one had been locked up for the night, smiling at her own triumph and

at the mystification of her officer. She was a good-tempered and quiet woman, or she might have seriously disturbed the discipline of the prison by her vagaries; she was content to show that the ordinary cell-lock could be picked at any rate, and that it depended entirely upon herself as to whether she should remain in her cell all night or not.

There are many prisoners who, taking advantage of the general closing movement following the matron's cry of "Shut your doors," after association hours, are artful enough to wedge a piece of paper in the lock, thereby affording a means of opening the cell and stepping into a neighbour's, if the matron be not vigilant; but there was no foreign material left in the lock on these occasions, and it was attributable entirely to the mechanical skill of the prisoner. It is needless to say, that after the report had gained ground that the woman had left her cell and knocked at other women's, &c.—a report that was not believed until the prisoner had been

flattered into showing a specimen of her cleverness—the lock was changed for one more elaborate in its construction; and it is even asserted that that was not wholly effectual when the woman had made up her mind to "take a little change."

Mysteries concerning prisoners' past lives, and prison visitors are subject-matter for thought, now and then. Here is a mystery that has never been cleared up.

Some years ago an order arrived that a magistrate, who had committed a prisoner for trial—a trial that had ended in a long sentence of penal servitude—was to be allowed, by special commission, to interrogate the woman as to a few facts connected with her case which had since come to light. It was supposed that there had been a mistake in the evidence, and the request coming from official quarters, and appearing a very natural one to make, was granted, with the extra privilege conceded, out of respect to the

status of the visitor, that the interview should take place in the board-room of the establishment.

The day was appointed, and the visitor arrived, an elderly, grey-haired man, who was escorted to the board-room, and who spoke for a few minutes with the deputy-superintendent on matters connected with the weather, with his journey to London, &c, and who was evidently what he appeared to be—a perfect gentleman.

In due course the prisoner appeared—a young and remarkably pretty woman, it may be added—and the visitor looked from the deputy-superintendent to matron and back again, anticipating probably that they would both withdraw, and leave him with the prisoner.

But this was a concession not likely to be granted, even to a visitor with a special order like his own, and it appeared at last to strike him also, for he urged no request that the officers should withdraw, though it was remembered afterwards that for the first time during the interview he

showed considerable embarrassment. The deputy-superintendent did not quit the room, leaving the matron in charge, according to rule, in this instance, but remained out of courtesy to the social position of her visitor. The facts of the case, as related many times afterwards, were these:—

The gentleman walked up and down that part of the room behind the table which separated him from the prisoner, with his hands behind him, and his gaze directed very thoughtfully to the carpet. Suddenly he paused and confronted the prisoner, looking very hard at her, and his whole face betraying emotion—his lips almost white, and his hands shaking with repressed excitement.

The woman looked back at him without evincing a sign of recognition, or of excitement akin to his own.

So far as it is possible to detail word for word the whole dialogue that ensued—and I can trust in this case to the keen memory of my

narrator—this was the conversation between prisoner and visitor.

"You did not take my advice, then?"

"No."

"Why didn't you?"

"Because I couldn't."

"You see what you have come to through not taking it," he said, with still more agitation.

"Yes; but I couldn't help it."

"What have you done with the box and the things in it?"

"Burnt everything."

"Honour!—is this really true?"

"Yes," *replied the woman.*

The matron and the deputy-superintendent looked from one to the other, thunderstruck at these odd questions, and aroused to a sense of something new and strange that verged upon suspicion. The visitor saw that the auditors to this mysterious conference were interested in the dialogue, and suddenly stopped, betraying an

amount of discomfiture that he could not at once disguise. There was an awkward pause, then he remarked that he had no more questions to ask, that everything was as he had imagined, and that he need not detain the prisoner longer from her cell.

He went away without—to the best of my belief—having put one question to the woman as to her trial or the evidence for her defence, which he had ostensibly come there to sift, unless it may be taken for granted that the interrogatories above set down bore upon her case—a fact the eye-witnesses to the interview maintained that they never believed for one instant.

No report of this meeting was furnished to Parliament Street, for it seemed scarcely worthy of a report at the time. The visitor's position was a high one, he had permission to put any questions he liked, and after all they might have borne upon the case.

It became a matter for more wonderment after

weeks had passed, and when one matron, more curious than the rest, had discovered the trial in back newspapers, and found that there was no box connected with the affair; but then it was too late to revive the subject, and nobody's especial business to draw attention to it.

Very probably the matter, after all, allows of an easy solution, but to the matrons it has been a mystery to this day.

A mystery more startling, that is, more sensational, happened to a friend of the writer's—a friend in office—at Brixton Prison.

The general reader is not aware that a long and shady lane forms the approach to the prison on Brixton Hill, and that the depth and darkness of the place in winter time is not much mitigated by the feeble glimmer of a gas-lamp at the extremity, until the officers coming home on "off-duty nights" are close upon the great gates of the prison. On the left of this lane is the high prison wall; on the right a lower wall, separating the lane from some garden-ground

belonging to the householders thereabouts. Half way down are two large gates that are always open and are supported by massive brick columns; a hundred or two hundred feet further on, on the left also, are the prison gates themselves, always stoutly barred and bolted.

One winter's night, a matron, returning at an earlier hour than the rest, was startled by a woman standing in the footpath near to these brickwork columns—standing very motionless *until the officer was close upon her, when she started and moved away towards the* prison; altering her mind the instant afterwards and veering round the brickwork in order to pass the matron, if possible, without recognition. This action, of course, aroused the matron's curiosity, although novel and startling enough to elicit, also, a certain amount of nervousness.

The matron increased her pace, and reached the column at the same time as the stranger, who was in the road and hurrying now towards the main thoroughfare. The night was too dark

for recognition of the features of the woman, but there was sufficient light from the lamp to make out that she was a discharged prisoner—a woman in the bonnet and liberty dress with which she had quitted prison. There was no mistaking the well-known cotton print, and the matron, alarmed at the discovery and fearing a plot against the prison peace, ran hurriedly to the gates, whilst the *ci-devant* convict, as fearful as herself, broke into a run and went swiftly the rest of the way down the lane.

This motive for a woman returning to the old prison home has never been cleared up. The matron was not one likely to have been the victim of hallucination, and there is left a wide field for conjecture as to the object of this sudden appearance of a liberty woman so close to the sphere of her past labours.

Some shrewd officials have been disposed to think that a wild plan of escape had been arranged, in which the discharged prisoner was to assist; others that there had been a desire to

see a particular matron or officer who might have won upon the affections of the prisoner; and others, less charitable, suppose that an officer, false to her duties, was to have been communicated with on that particular night —to be made, perhaps, the bearer of a message to a favourite pal.

It is just possible that the restless nature of the discharged prisoner had lured her to the old battle-ground where she had fought against all the efforts to amend her, and that there had been a morbid satisfaction in walking back to the prison with the consciousness that she possessed the power to leave its precincts again; and it is more than possible that a grudge, long treasured up against an officer, was about to be paid off by violence, had not she been startled by the sudden propinquity of a prison matron, before it was anticipated.

To render the matter a trifle less clear, no woman had left the prison for weeks, so the mystery remained impenetrable, and for a short

time afterwards the matrons returning to their duties on "off-nights" were somewhat nervous coming "home," and looked carefully to the right and left of them when unaccompanied by their friends to the gates.

The last mystery to which I shall advert has occurred more than once in prison, and remains still insolvable. It is the mystery of the money over again, *"with a difference," and seems to indicate that there must be now and then a false servant in the midst, for there is no rational* solution to the enigma otherwise.

A prisoner very often has a store of possessions which is not allowed by the rules, and to which I shall devote a little attention presently, and these stores are not always interfered with or too closely looked into. The articles are carefully hidden, very frequently in the gutter running outside the prisoners' windows, and which gutter can be reached by the prisoner's hand when the window is opened. One of these treasure troves was confiscated some time since, and amongst a

mass of heterogeneous material was discovered a small bottle of gin!

The woman refused to account in any way for the possession of the spirit—a spirit never seen in any part of the prison, not even in the infirmary or surgery, I believe; and how it came within the walls in defiance of the great printed board that enumerates all the lawful punishments for bringing in spirits, tobacco, or anything else belonging to the world without, has never been satisfactorily explained. The gin was in the prison, and had been at the disposal of the prisoner, previous to the discovery of her store.

Millbank and Brixton prisons can both furnish parallel cases of this description. Potent fluids find their way to the prisoners now and then, and the process is as undiscoverable as though fairy hands had brought them.

Everything is not cleared up, then, it may be seen, in a service where mystery is objectionable, and everything should be measured by the square

and rule. *Here and there the secret which no one divulges—the action for which there seems no motive—the inner wheel within the wheel,* and no one understanding how it works or who works it.

CHAPTER VI.

WINCHCLIFFE.

SARAH WINCHCLIFFE affords a fair contrast to my last prison character, for on the whole she was a well-behaved woman, and an object of interest to prisoners and matrons.

Winchcliffe was one of the few women who could read and write well before incarceration—a woman who had received a tolerable education, it was supposed, and who certainly appeared at times to feel the ignominy of her position, which rendered her at once an exceptional prisoner.

A four-years' woman was Winchcliffe, and never poor prisoner counted more eagerly the days before her liberty than she did. She was always studying the time that she had to serve,

sighing over her time-ticket, generally inclined to consider that there had been a mistake in the calculations, and becoming more despondent, more inclined to fret at the duration of her sentence as the days grew less and less between herself and freedom.

"Oh! dear, Miss," she would sigh to her officer—and Winchcliffe had a favourite officer to whom she always showed great respect, even devotion—"*I shall never get out; I shall never see any of my people again; they've all gone away to* America, and I shall die in this place quite alone!"

Winchcliffe was a prisoner very proud of her relations, who had been poor but respectable people, and had by honesty and industry, it was said, risen in the world. Winchcliffe's friends, it was asserted, had been careful of her moral training until the mother had become an invalid, and the attention directed to her had left Winchcliffe to follow more surely the bent of her own evil inclinations.

They were very poor people, these Winchcliffes, at this period, and the daughter went away from home and procured a situation as factory-girl in one of the large cotton-houses in Liverpool. Here she made bad acquaintances, who took her into worse company than her own, and when her mother died Winchcliffe went wholly wrong.

After a fierce fight or two against the paternal efforts to restrain her, Sarah Winchcliffe ran away *from home and added one more to the list of* "unfortunates"*—one more chapter to the old,* old story.

When she was first imprisoned, her family—that was, her father and her brother—had resolved to leave England for America; and when a second sentence brought Winchcliffe to Millbank and Brixton, the two emigrants had settled down in America, had achieved a certain position in the New World, and wrote with every post to the prisoner, begging her to amend, and offering her a home again after her term had expired. This offer Winchcliffe used to consider in her

cell—used to brood over in her better moments, with her father's letter spread out before her. She took counsel of her matron at last, and asked if her officer "really" thought that she would be able to amend and keep at home once more.

Winchcliffe was a prisoner of about twenty-one years of age, and possessed of a fair amount of good looks. Somewhat of a cheerful, bright-looking countenance, unshadowed by that convict brand, which, as I have already said, distinguishes so many. She appeared brighter and more cheerful after her foreign letters—letters in her case not so much exciting her and rendering her restless (a constant complaint on letter-days with prisoners), as encouraging her in the determination to seek the shelter of her father's home.

The story runs that there came a letter at last, stating that if she would let them know in America the day on which she would receive her liberty, the father would make sure of her by coming across the Atlantic for her himself.

Winchcliffe betrayed more excitement at this, but it was a joyous excitement, that promised well for the future; she obtained permission to answer the letter at once, and in her confusion and awkwardness made a mistake in the last figure of her year, as it afterwards transpired, and mentioned a date fully twelve months before the expiration of her time.

Winchcliffe knew nothing of this grave error, until she was startled by the information of her father's arrival in England a year too soon to admit of her return. It is somewhat remarkable that the father never visited his child in prison; that he could not overcome his reluctance to see his daughter for the first time in her prison dress on visiting days. He remained a couple of days in London and then went back to America in the first outward-bound ship in which he could procure a berth.

Winchcliffe broke out once after this—a mild break-out, in which one window was smashed, and a mild sentence of a few hours in the dark

incurred thereby; but she lost the badge that she had acquired, and it was feared by her old officer that after that she would degenerate into the usual stock prisoner. She took a greater interest in securing a "pal" for a time than in working her way back to her old position: but fortunately there came another turn for the better, and Winchcliffe, step by step, toiled up to her old place in the wing—her old interest in the matron.

Twelve months afterwards Winchcliffe in her liberty-dress was ready to depart. She was cheerful and confident; she was going to America: and this time her brother had come across to escort her to an honest home, the father being too weak and old to undertake a second journey.

"I'll nurse him when I get home, Miss," she said, in allusion to her father; "nurse him back to his old self—see if I don't!"

She went away with many promises to amend, cheered by the stanch friends she had still, and by the prospect of the home that was awaiting

her. She would write many letters to her matron when she got abroad, she promised, and she prayed very heartily that God might bless that matron as she went away for good.

These goings away are few and far between, and from the few who make such promises as Winchcliffe, there is a sad per-centage of returns. But it is a consolation to all earnest hearts in prison service that every promise is not broken—that every effort to amend the future condition of the criminal has not been attended with a disheartening result.

There are times when the prisoner goes away really FOR GOOD! Not to disappear and leave one doubtful as to her future fate—as to the result of the first faltering steps away from evil—but to afford in the future some glimpses of a career of which she is not ashamed; some proofs that the good seed has not been all cast away upon the barren soil. Here and there, thank God, a prison flower that turns towards the light in lieu of withering in the darkness—a something

to revive the flagging spirits of an earnest, thoughtful officer, and to cheer in his labours the minister of the Gospel.

Many months afterwards, when Winchcliffe's officer was inclined to fear that she should hear *no more of this prisoner, and that the American story was from beginning to end a fiction, a letter from New York reached her, written in a strange* hand.

It proved to be a letter from Winchcliffe's brother, stating that he had written it at his sister's request, to thank her in his own name and hers for all the kindness and interest that had been shown the penitent. He attributed his sister's better life entirely to the matron's influence over her, and he was very grateful for all past interest. This letter concluded with the news that the old father had died a fortnight after Winchcliffe's return, and that his sister was thankful that the opportunity to see him again and ask his forgiveness for her errors had not been lost to her.

Sister and brother were keeping house together in a principal street in New York then, and, for what I know to the contrary, may be still prospering in the same locality.

CHAPTER VII.

PRISONERS' PROPERTY.

IN *the fifth chapter of the present volume I* alluded cursorily to the prisoners' hoards—the little illegal savings which a prisoner acquires, and which at times form one of the minor mysteries of the service. I return to the subject in this place to dwell a little more on the details connected with prisoners' property, and the rules and regulations respecting it in force amongst the prisoners themselves, and kept with as much exactitude as the rules issued from the Home Office.

The subject is interesting and curious, and will help to fill in the canvas of what is probably

the last book that the writer will present to the public.

Prisoners of all degrees possess a faculty for acquiring prison material, and the variety in the articles put by surreptitiously often affords a test of character.

One woman will be fond of miscellaneous products—kitchen products, bits of soap, scraps of candle, corners of loaves for the birds; another has scraps of ribbon, remnants of prison work, quite a rag-shop variety of goods, treasured with vast care, and hidden in her bed, or in that gutter above the window, to which reference has already been made; a third is "literary," and preserves her prison "stiffs," the letters that have been sent her, and the odd pages from books; whilst a fourth, with more vanity in her method, will hoard up pieces of glass, and modicums of castor-oil obtained from the doctor, under false pretences, and put by for the "hair," on some fine day, when it becomes necessary to make a decent appearance in prison society.

At times, and by means of furtive correspondence, a regular exchange occurs; and questions are asked as to who holds soap, or oil, and who is disposed to exchange either commodity for port-wine, filched from infirmary quarters, and to be duly delivered to order, whenever terms of agreement are finally arranged. Some women in the infirmary are adepts in saving their wine, and in redeeming their word to pass it on to the parties to whom it is promised. The wine is presented to them, for instance, at the regular time ordered by the doctor, and the woman feigns sickness, or disinclination for the restorative.

The infirmary matron, as a rule, sees that the wine is taken, but she is very often put off by the woman's specious manner.

"I'll take the wine presently, Miss ——; I'm not at all in the humour for it now. If you'll leave it there, please."

When the matron returns, the glass is empty, and its contents are naturally supposed to have

been drunk, when, in fact, the wine has been tilted into an empty medicine phial, which has been treasured with much care for that purpose beforehand, is properly corked and wrapped in a prison stiff, on which is written possibly: "Pass this on to Mary ——, in the wing," or wherever Mary —— may happen to be.

The means of delivery are complicated, and require care; but though Mary —— may have to wait two days for her wine, it will arrive in due course, she may depend upon it.

The process of transit is varied, but from the infirmary to another part of the prison it is often arranged in this way: supposing, for example's sake, that Brixton Prison is the sphere of action. The infirmary airing-yard is bounded on one side by a wing of the prison, and the lower windows of the first row of cells are easily reached by a woman of middle height. In the exercise of these patients, the woman who has her wine to send, for instance, plods round turn after turn, looking out for the window that

is open, and keeping her gaze directed to the officer on duty at the same time. An opportunity invariably presents itself to distract the matron's attention; indeed, a diversion for that purpose is very often created by those who are in the secret, and have, of course, a natural interest in what is termed "doing the matron;" and the woman approaches the open window suddenly, and pitches in the phial, which is carefully surrounded by paper wrapping, to save it from the dangers of collision with the floor.

The inmate of the cell takes up the phial, and reads the directions wrapped round it, and then in the wards, the laundry, the general airing-ground, anywhere, the phial is passed from hand to hand, until the party for whom it is destined receives it "safe and sound."

There is a wonderful honour amongst thieves with respect to passing on these presents, or articles of barter; the wine is never drunk by the way, or the article confiscated by greedy hands; it is really a point of honour to deliver

goods free of all expense, in defiance of the risk of discovery, and amongst five or six hundred women there are not half-a-dozen, perhaps—half a-dozen Mary Ann Smiths for example—who would appropriate the contents of the parcel entrusted to their charge. This small minority is known, also, and is not trusted with anything; and so the discovery of the transit of stolen goods is seldom made by the officers, although "stores" are continually varying in their contents—increasing or diminishing according to the nature — generous or collective—of the storer.

Again, when a prisoner in the wing, a Number One woman, breaks out, or anticipates a report, a drop in the world, and a return to the old part of the prison, she bequeaths her goods to a favourite pal, to be held in trust until they can be forwarded to her with safety in her new quarters.

And in the course of a few days the whole of the store has arrived to the prisoner's hands — either by moderate instalments or in the

whole lump, according to the chances that have presented themselves for the dispatch of "goods."

The gutters and ventilators, the inside of the mattress carefully ripped up and re-sewed for the purpose, form the principal receptacles for these miscellaneous items of prison property. It is not always convenient or practicable to carry articles in corners of the prison dress and apron; and if a storehouse can be extemporized without detection, it is done. Of course, a little extra vigilance might clear off a considerable portion of this *débris;* and it depends a great deal upon the character of the officer in charge, whether the odds and ends of prison property remain or not.

Where the collection simply consists of shreds of wearing apparel, scraps of paper, &c., it is seldom interfered with, the confiscation not being considered worth the uproar which it would engender on the part of the late proprietors. The rules of the prison may order the raid, but

the matron knows better than the rules sometimes.

A glance through the "inspection," when the woman is absorbed in the display of her collection, would afford amusement to a casual observer;—the miser-like fondness for the rubbish that has been accumulated, the interest in every scrap upon the table, the study of the various ways to make these odd articles useful or ornamental, and the ingenious manner in which they are rendered one or the other at times, are all exemplified in turn. What is made from these collections, and how they are made—the dolls, patchwork, pen-wipers, &c.—has been sufficiently detailed in my chapter on "Prisoners' Fancies."* I may allude, however, to the elaborate working of a piece of perforated card, with odd bits of coloured cotton and thread that had been garnered up—a card that had been twisted and moulded in some way into the shape of a box, and had the following texts, &c., upon its sides

* "Female Life in Prison," vol. ii., page 94.

and lid, arranged and spelt in the following fashion :—

Yea though I wa .
lk throgh the valley
of the shader of death
I wil fear no evil.

Surly goodnss and
mercy shall follow me all
the days of my life.

I will dwel in the ho
use of the Lord for ev
er . No cros, no crou
n. Jewes wept.

Thou prep
arest a tabel befor
me in the prese
nce of—Jane Brown.

The above lines constitute the correct inscriptions on the four sides. The letters are not ill-formed on the whole, but are of divers sizes, and the odd divisions of words are compelled by the exigencies of space. The last text ends abruptly in one corner, owing to a diffuse occupation of space for the third line, which is

full of the most elaborate capitals, and a little space being necessitated for the name of the author, which was considered in this case of more importance than the completion of the sentence. This box was worked by a "refractory," and a violent woman also, and renders her choice of texts somewhat strange and inconsistent. The article was not confiscated, but slipped into the hands of the matron on one occasion; and, as a curious specimen of prison property, has been preserved, and has found its way into the possession of the writer, who has transcribed the lines from the article itself.

In addition to the gutters and ventilators being constituted receptacles for property, smaller and more valuable articles—that mysterious money, of which prisoners are found to be possessed occasionally—are at times ingeniously concealed behind the plaster of the cell. A small piece of plaster is picked off neatly with a needle or the point of a pair of scissors; the coin, or lock of hair of a "pal"—the latter, a favourite

article, to set store by whilst the girl's affection lasts—is pressed into the hole, and the plaster is fitted back in its place, and made to adhere again.

Elderly prisoners are partial to storing extra clothes, which fall into their possession by favour or exchange; a clean apron, which they can put on before the *proper time* for changing aprons, or a new cap, that has not been allowed by the rules, is a something worth hiding, or worth bidding for.

These are the women who offer the wine in the infirmary for caps and aprons; and as there are plenty of prisoners willing to give aprons and caps for a taste of something stronger than water, so the exchange is made, and the officer is puzzled to account for the smart appearance of certain prisoners.

Possibly castor-oil is at the highest premium on the exchange; the young women with any vanity in their composition—and, as the reader is aware, there are not a few of them in our prisons

—are ready to sacrifice anything, and to bid anything, for the valuable drug.

A prisoner who has been recommended castor-oil by the doctor is an object of envy to her contemporaries; and as the news circulates through the wards, suggestions are made as to the best means of appropriating a portion of the fluid, or of offering an excuse to take it without the matron's superintendence, or of spilling a portion of it on the floor of the cell whilst in the act of tilting it into the mouth.

Though it is scarcely to the purport of the present chapter, I may say here that the prison surgeons are consulted as to the condition of the hair more often than on any other point.

"Can't you recommend me a bit of pomatum, sir?" a young woman will whine forth, "or a drop of castor-oil? I'm getting bald for want of nourishment at the roots, and it's a dreadful thing to think of at my age."

The request is not attended to, and the woman sets to work to obtain the desideratum in a dif-

ferent fashion. Therefore the possessor of oil, or candle, can make her own terms in the prison market, the demand being greater than the supply.

CHAPTER VIII.

AMELIA MOTT.

FOR want of space in my first series of prison records, the names of some nine or ten prisoners, remarkable in their various ways, were mentioned in a supplementary chapter of "Characters." A few lines as to the dispositions of the women were added to each specimen, when I found that I could not complete my grim portrait gallery *in extenso*.

The publication of the present book enables me to turn back to one or two of these prisoners again, and in the present instance I purpose to deal more fully with the woman whose name I have affixed at the head of my chapter.

Amelia Mott was a dwarf be it said again—a woman whom Charles Dickens might have had in view when he drew the character of Miss Moucher in "David Copperfield." A large-headed woman, of an uncertain age, was Amelia Mott; a young woman about three feet nine in height, with an old woman's face, it seemed, until that face was lit up with animation, when she looked little more than her age, which was registered in the prison books, I believe, at twenty-two.

Amelia Mott, beyond the prison walls, had been a woman possessed of a high amount of animal spirits, a reckless, thoughtless, daring, but good-tempered woman. She had been a tramp all her life—wandering about from fair to fair—race-course to race-course—consorting with every gang of thieves or gipsies that she might meet by the way—singing obscene ballads, the words of which she brought unfortunately into prison with her—spending in drink the money that she earned by honest or dishonest means,

and ready in her cups to fight desperately in her own quarrels or in those of others.

A woman well known to the police in whatever part of England she presented herself; a familiar face at all places where feasting and revelry were prominent.

"Why, here's Mott at last!" was the exclamation of the Millbank prisoners, when she appeared for the first time amongst them. "Why you ought to have been here long ago!"

Mott was ready with a quick reply—a sharp, slangy retort, which turned the joke in her favour—and then she entered upon her prison duties with an ease and *sang-froid* that told of considerable experience in matters connected with prisons in general.

She became speedily a prison character—one from whom "fun" might be expected whenever a chance presented itself. She was a coarse and bold woman, whom it became impossible to repress—violent in her manners, still more violent in her language when reproved for her impudence,

and as light of heart and vile of tongue in "the dark" as out of it. She was a woman who gloried in her own impudence—in the laugh which she could arouse amongst the prisoners by her eccentric habits. She was a great dancer in her own opinion, and succeeded Letty Cooper—whom the reader may remember in Prison Life*—as principal *danseuse* to the establishment. The difference between her and her predecessor, however, consisted in Amelia Mott being a bad dancer, and Letty Cooper a good one.

Amelia Mott's style, although not deficient in vigour, was decidedly "lumpish" in execution. She danced heavily, but her powers of endurance were immense. When she was taken to "the dark," which occurred frequently for her various offences, she always danced. This eccentricity mattered not a great deal at Millbank, but was a nuisance at Brixton, where the noise is not so effectually suppressed.

* "Female Life in Prison," page 257, vol. i.

At the latter prison, Mott danced with extra vigour on her sloping wooden bed—her inclined plane—being perfectly aware that it kept others awake as well as herself.

"I'll give it you, my beauties, for putting me in here," she would say sometimes to the matrons; and give it them she did, for she would dance all night, relieving herself one by one of her garments as they became irksome to her, and the heat less endurable. In "the dark," too, she would give voice to all the vile ballads with which she had amused the general public in her freedom—awful and revolting songs, which she pitched in a high falsetto, and which no padded doors could shut in with her.

In "the dark" as out of it, Amelia Mott was proud of her singing and dancing; when an opportunity presented herself she would sing in a low voice to her "pal" in association hour, and even go through her dance as noiselessly as she could, holding up her dress to her knees, that her friend might see the elaborate nature of her

"steps"—steps which were so rapid and grotesque that gravity could be maintained no longer, and shouts of laughter from the observer, echoed by the shrill laughter of the dancer, would suddenly ring out in the wards, and confuse all order.

Amelia Mott was always troublesome in association, and it was considered expedient to keep her without "company" as much as possible—but the result was about the same.

It hurt Mott's feelings to be deprived of association, although she might be heard scuffling about in her cell at all hours of the day and night—"keeping up her practice," as she called it. When the solitary principle became too much for her powers of endurance, she would beat against the walls and door of her cell, and scream forth the name of the next prisoner, overwhelming her with inquiries concerning her health and spirits.

In any fashion, Amelia Mott was unbearable. She possessed a keen sense of the ridiculous, and

was as ready to laugh at her contemporary's jokes as at her own. She could never repress her hilarity within due bounds, however; and the high-pitched shriek in which she indulged was known as "Mott's laugh" all over the prison.

She possessed, too, considerable powers of mimicry, and seized every opportunity of "taking off" everybody—irritating crotchety prisoners beyond measure. The airing-ground was her principal field for this exercise of her powers, and here Mott swaggered and strutted, finding in every one something to hold up to ridicule in turn. Comments in return upon her own diminutive stature and unfavourable countenance did not put her out; she laughed at all personalities discharged against herself, and grimaced at her vilifiers till they laughed themselves.

She was "everything by turns, and nothing long." Sometimes she would maintain all day a stolid and important aspect, holding her chin high in the air, regarding every one whom she

met with a supercilious air, and in a dignified under-tone reprimanding the prisoners for not keeping proper silence. This was considered as "taking off the matrons," and only on those occasions would Mott refrain from laughing for twenty-four consecutive hours.

At other periods she would feign to have caught a desperate cold, and cough and wheeze about the wards with a naturalness that was difficult to think was feigned, and that only proved itself to be a deception when any interest was really awakened in her ailments, when a broad grin would gradually spread itself over her countenance.

She was a woman who gloried in her impudence—in her bravado.

"She was fond of a row," she asserted; and she made a "row" to please herself, rather than to annoy other people. She did not break out because she was offended,—"Lor' bless yer! nothink ever offends me," she asserted once—but simply by way of distraction and as the only

means in her power to relieve the tedium of prison life.

"If you can't be jolly when you like, it's no good living at all!" was her favourite maxim; and to this she kept with admirable pertinacity.

Twenty women like her in a prison would have rendered nugatory any system in the world —for they would have had strength to defy all punishments, high spirits and recklessness to regard them as trifles in their way, and they would have been for ever dead to any good impressions.

Amelia Mott knew nothing that was good, and believed in nothing. She was more thoroughly animal than any woman it has been my unfortunate lot to meet. There was not a spark of modesty in her nature, and she was impervious to any sense of shame.

Bestial in her thoughts and in her language, she was called "The Beast" at last, by the better class of women; and a matron of the prison would have rather had the responsibility of keep-

ing in her charge a dozen "refractories," such as Armstrong and Evans, than have had to encounter day after day this degraded nature.

It would be impossible to put into print one-half the actions of this woman. They are revolting and hideous, and belong to the darkness. Her one redeeming point of character was her good nature; her willingness to receive her punishment, take her bread and water, go to the dark—anything to oblige anybody!

Let her have her "bit of dance," and she preferred the "dark" to anywhere else; she came out of the "dark" smiling at everybody *en route*, and the paucity of diet which she might have received for a week or ten days did not make the slightest difference in her spirits, which were as high and uncontrollable after solitary as before.

"I know half-a-dozen new 'cuts,'" she said once, upon coming from the "dark;" "and I've been practising all the time, and shall astonish my friends when I get out of this. Blest if

they won't be glad to get me at a theyater presently, if I keeps on at this rate!"

Whether Mott, the dwarf, was waited upon with terms for an engagement after her prison life was at an end, I have not been able to ascertain.

CHAPTER IX.

ON LADY SUPERINTENDENTS AND DEPUTIES.

A FEW lines on the duties of Lady Superintendents and Deputy Superintendents will not be out of place in this volume. The duties are not light in any position connected with prison service, and on the highest as well as lowest officer there rests the weight of a great responsibility.

I have before this spoken in no measured terms of the arduous duties exacted from the matrons—the constant wear and tear of mind and body, and the long weary fourteen hours a day, and no rest; but I do not know that, upon consideration, a lady superintendent's post is not

almost as arduous. If a lady-superintendent is her own mistress in some respects, and can put herself "off duty" when it pleases her, still the responsibility is greater, and can never leave her night or day, in or out of prison.

Should a prisoner escape, the whole weight of the Government reproof would fall upon her, and a fine, I believe, of a hundred pounds would be exacted from her. Then she is responsible for the good behaviour of the matrons as well as the prisoners; and matrons have their jealousies and "tiffs," and seek assistance, support, and redress from the Principal at times. I can imagine no post more trying and more difficult to an earnest woman than that of a lady-superintendent's; and I repeat here that it is a credit to the Board at Parliament-street that so judicious a selection of Principals has been made during the last twelve years. I can imagine none more fitted for the posts they occupy and grace, than the impartial, kind-hearted ladies who are still, I believe, at the head of affairs at Brixton and Parkhurst prisons;

I remember none more calculated to carry out the discipline of a prison than the late deputy-superintendents of Brixton and Millbank—two officers now separated from the service, one by death and the other by marriage.

Let me, in the first place, sketch briefly the duties of a lady-superintendent. She appears at chapel at the nine o'clock service, and then leaves chapel for her own special office, at which she is expected to remain—that is, to be on duty—till four in the afternoon. Here she settles all the reports of the preceding day—reports which have been made on prisoners, and occasionally on matrons, and have been sent in to the deputy-superintendent, for her first inspection, at ten o'clock on the preceding evening—reports for "breaking-out," insubordination of all kinds and of all degrees, on the part of prisoners—for losing keys, leaving a door unlocked, omitting to search a woman proceeding to "the refractory," &c. &c., on the part of matrons.

These reports are carefully studied by the

Principal, and the punishments for one, and the fines for the other, are settled in most cases before the appearance of the delinquents. That part of the business arranged, the women who have been guilty of the infringement of the rules are brought in by their respective matrons one by one; whilst, for protection's sake, and in case of any sudden and desperate act on the part of the prisoner, a male officer stands, grim and watchful, in the office.

Here the woman pleads her own cause, in most cases with considerable ingenuity of defence, invariably endeavouring to prove what an injured creature she is, and how put upon! Here the temper of the defendant gives way at times, and the lady-superintendent comes in occasionally for a storm of vituperation that is cut short by an ejectment by force from the office.

The power of punishment by a lady-superintendent is not illimitable, and, in fact, she is only a judge in minor cases. The greatest punishment which it is in her power to award is three

days bread and water, and "the dark." Graver penalties for greater offences are left to the judgment of the directors on the next visiting day.

The minor offences are therefore adjudicated upon at once, and the offender is immediately marched away to her lower estate—whatever it may be—proceeding to punishment at once from the office, and afforded no opportunity of returning to her old quarters to create a final disturbance in revenge for her disgrace. A woman condemned to bread and water, takes her sentence with equanimity as a rule—with bravado as an exception. But a woman condemned to lose her badge—her No. 1 or No. 2, and to return to the old prison, where there are less association, less exercise, and gruel for tea—goes away very downcast and sad. For she is a woman who *has* made an effort to raise herself to a better position, and the fit of passion is over which has incurred the forfeiture.

The lady-superintendent is expected also to

see all prisoners who have on the preceding night expressed a wish for an interview. After the reports have been settled, the women who have complaints to make, or a favour to urge, are filed in, in their turn—and here a great deal of the time of the Principal is taken up with frivolous requests.

One woman wants to change her cell, another her associate. A third is anxious about her time, and thinks that there has been a mistake in the "reckoning;" a fourth would feel obliged by change of work, "as she's got so sick of it she must smash, if it isn't altered shortly!" a fifth considers that her matron is too sharp upon her, and that Miss —— ought to be reprimanded for an excess of vigilance; a sixth will inquire when she may expect her badge back again if she behaves herself; a seventh has a grave and serious charge to make against the cocoa, "which is not so good as it used to be, and that's a fact, mum;" whilst an eighth has been a Protestant, in the hope that it would

advance her interests, and finding her mistake, avows herself to be a Roman Catholic, and expresses a wish to see the holy father before the day is out, if possible, because her conscience troubles her. These pleas, and a hundred others, heard and answered—the matron's cases, if there be any on the books, settled in a fair and friendly spirit—and then a pause in the affairs of state, and the day's bustle at an end, unless there be a general disturbance in the wards, and the machinery out of gear for a while, when the superintendent's duties are manifold, and there is hard work, much excitement, and no rest.

The lady-superintendent has also at her leisure to write out various orders for the better conduct of the women, and the stricter discipline of her staff, in the great volume called the "Order Book." Any new regulation about the prisoners' dress, the wearing of colours by the matrons, &c. &c., are written in the order book, and read out in due course by the principal matron of each ward.

The lady-superintendent attends chapel at four o'clock again, and then her duties may be considered over for the day. But in addition to those duties which I have already enumerated, there is the constant visiting of the prison itself at all times—the seeing for herself that the prisoners are obedient, and the officers faithful to their work.

A prisoner is not allowed to speak to the superintendent in her visits to the prison, unless she is addressed in the first instance; therefore the Principal is not retarded in her progress from ward to ward, from refractory to "the dark," from the kitchen to the infirmary. The lady-superintendents are stanch to their duties, and incessant in their visits. In the middle of the night, when the prison is still, prisoners are sleeping, and the night-officer only on duty in the wards, frequently have the locks of the great doors *clicked*, and the Principal appeared with her light and pass-keys, going her rounds as though the responsibility of her post had "murdered

sleep," and she must be watchful and wakeful till the morning.

Even now, I have not enumerated all the duties of the lady-superintendent; there is extra work attendant upon extra events which happen during the year. There are reports to be sent to Parliament-street, and visits to the Directors there on special occasions; above all, there is the preparation of the Annual Report—to be carefully studied and digested, as it will be criticized by the Board of Directors in full conclave, and be printed *in extenso*. I have no doubt even that a lady-superintendent has now and then *her* reports to make also, her little differences to detail between doctor, chaplain, and priest who may have exceeded their provinces, and entrenched too much upon the power and dignity which appertained to her position. Affairs of state will not always flow on smoothly; opinions differ, and troubles will arise.

The post of lady-superintendent the reader can see is an onerous one, requires considerable

knowledge of human nature, much tact and delicacy, keen insight into motives, forethought, discretion, courage, judgment, and presence of mind. An unqualified superintendent would be the subversion of all prison discipline; a Principal must gain the respect of the women, and the respect and *affection* of her officers, or the machinery will not work well, in the great house where her will is law.

The salary attached to the position is not a large one for a lady, who has an establishment to keep up at her own expense, and might be increased with advantage. She must be single, or a widow, to be fitted for the post; and generally it is a widow with a large family to maintain from her income. The salary is 300*l.* per annum, rising 10*l.* a year; but it is in the power of the Directors—I do not know that it has ever been exercised—to make an occasional grant to the ladies at the head of prison affairs.

A deputy's salary commences at 120*l.* per annum, and rises in an equal proportion. The

duties of a deputy are not unlike those of the lady-superintendent in the aggregate—in fact, they may be considered as a highly-aggravated edition of the superior officer's duties. She saves a great deal of extra work to the Principal; reviews the report-book in the evening preceding the day on which it is submitted to the superintendent, and makes her comments thereon; it is her province to make sure that the discipline of the prison is carried out in every direction, so far as it is possible. She does not attend divine service in the chapel regularly, but is generally on duty in the wards when the prisoners are at their prayers. It is part of her task to visit every cell on these occasions, and see that all is well in every particular; to cast a glance at the Roman Catholic prisoners, &c. A deputy-superintendent is possessed by a restless spirit; those whom I have known have been indefatigable in their exertions to promote the interests of every one—they have been women ever on the watch, knowing little rest, working late at night in

their special offices, and up early in the morning, seeing that the women who carry coals to the kitchen and laundry are properly looked after by the assistant-matrons.

It is a strange fact that, so far as female prisoners are concerned, there seems to grow upon the officers, from the lady-superintendent to the assistant-matron, that sense of responsibility heretofore remarked. With all there appears to be a nervous watchfulness that increases with the length of service, rather than is subdued by the routine of the prison. The duties prey upon the mind to a certain extent, I am convinced; one thinks of little else save the prison; talks of little else in or out of office; dreams of it night after night, or cannot sleep for it at all, in times of general unsettlement.

A deputy-superintendent, of course, acts as lady-superintendent when the latter is away; but I cannot call an instance to mind where deputy-superintendents have ever risen to the higher rank. In fact, *they wear out first*, for their

holidays are fewer, their responsibility almost as great, and their hours of duty approximate more to the matrons' than the Principal's.

I question even if the institution of two chief matrons would not be an improvement to the staff, in lieu of one deputy. The duties are too heavy for the deputy, and opinions of deputy and lady-superintendent not unfrequently clash.

Add to this, that the deputy is thrown into more frequent contact with the prisoners, where her knowledge of prison character is less than that of the matrons, and where she is occasionally deceived in consequence. As the appointments become vacant, it would be worth the experiment to institute the office of chief-matron in lieu of that of deputy. It would render the post of lady-superintendent more distinct, and give the Principal a greater degree of influence with her staff.

If it be considered necessary that a lady-superintendent should be a lady by birth and position, I think that the principal matrons

might have the chance offered them of working up to a chief-matronship, at a deputy-superintendent's salary. A chief-matron would always be more tractable in the hands of the lady-superintendent.

CHAPTER X.

JANE WHITE.

THE Jane White of my present chapter is the woman concerning whom an incident is related in "Female Life in Prison." It may be remembered that, in a fit of eccentricity, she endeavoured to climb over the chapel gallery, and lower herself amongst her compeers on the ground-floor amidst a scene of uproar and confusion not often witnessed during divine service in or out of prison.*

This is the only incident detailed concerning Jane White in my first book; but as a prison character above the dead level—as the heroine of

* "Female Life in Prison," vol. ii. page 278.

more than one prison burlesque—I think that she is worthy of a special chapter to herself.

Jane White was a ten years woman—a woman from Staffordshire, whence used to be drafted, in old times, the vilest and most refractory of prisoners. A prisoner arriving from Stafford was looked upon as a black sheep at once—a person to be particularly watchful of, and on one's guard against. Jane White arrived with a bad character at the outset, then, and certainly did not belie the appellative; although, for Stafford, she might have been considered rather a better sample of prison stock than was generally forwarded. A violent woman, as a matter of course—a woman who had stabbed her paramour in a fit of jealousy, and who brought her wrongs to prison with her, and brooded upon them till it was thought by the late good and wise Dr. Baly, that it was not safe to trust her by herself. This decision was a subject of discussion amongst the matrons at times, the majority being inclined to regard

White's muttered threats and innuendoes as a *ruse* to get into an association cell. But there was a doubt, and Jane White received the benefit of it; and to look into Jane White's face, and note the peculiar expression of the eyes, was to believe it necessary to keep a watch upon her, although the woman served her time, and went her way, without any increase of eccentricity in her conduct. A very broad-faced and plain woman was Jane White, so broad from ear to ear that the cognomen of "Platter chops" was immediately bestowed upon her by the prisoners, and led to immediate quarrelling between her and her christeners.

She was a terrible woman to quarrel; and when the fiat went forth that Jane White was to be placed in association, and that Jane White was exempt from all punishment by "solitary," &c., she became more quarrelsome and insulting than ever. A dull woman in most respects, she was quick enough to perceive the advantages which she had gained, and to make the most of them.

As it was not in the rules to prevent her, so her insults became highly developed, and her remarks on passing events frequent and strong.

The judicious matrons made the best of their charge, and rendered her tractable now and then; but the poor women placed in association with her—the best and most quiet women to be found—had a hard time of it, and were continually praying the authorities to save them from Jane White.

Jane insulted them grievously and at every turn: she tyrannized over them in a hundred ways; she would allow them little rest night or day; and it was supposed by a few that her object was to be driven to solitary, in order that she might seize the opportunity to take her life, of which she expressed herself completely tired. The association cells in the E. ward at Millbank prison—where White was placed—are as large as ordinary rooms, and contain accommodation for three women; therefore, Jane White had always two unfortunates to quarrel with.

"I should like to know why I'm compelled to put up with such a set as you," she would say, with the most cutting contempt; "a lot of trumpery thieves."

Here her prison pride would assert itself.

"I'm in for trying to murder a man; and precious sorry I am I did not do it, the vagabond. What have I to do with a parcel of petty thieves—the low creatures. It's a disgusting shame that I should be made to mix with such a 'set' against my will. Why can't I have a cell to myself, like other people?"

Sensitive prisoners—and there are a few of this class—have been overwhelmed by these reproaches from White, and have been found crying very bitterly at Jane's unkindness. One old woman began to fret about it, and was removed in consequence, and another swore that she would have a fight with White, big as she was, if they didn't stop her goings on. And White was always "going on." She would suddenly sit up in bed in the middle of the night

and commence her catalogue of wrongs, despite all the protests of the two women sleeping in their cribs beside her. She would express her dislike to their society in the most eloquent but forcible terms, and inform them contemptuously, for about the twentieth time that day, that they were nothing but a set of thieves, and not fit company for her—remarks which would be mildly protested against by sleepy women, who would be heard to say—"Do be quiet, White, till the morning, there's a good soul," as they turned and plunged restlessly in their beds. White classed everything into sets. There were, in her opinion, sets of thieves, sets of sneaks, and sets of fools.

The doctor, the chaplain, and the Directors were "sets of men hired to wait upon us—that's all they were," she said one day, disparagingly, to her associates. As for the matrons, deputy-superintendent, &c., well, take them for all in all, they were "a set of bad uns!"

Whether her desire for solitary was real or

feigned, certain it is that she advocated it with persistency, taking every opportunity to urge her claim for a little quietness, and protesting against "the set" into whose company she was thrust against her will. Not attaining this object, White was prone to indulge in personalities, and it may be imagined that the task of keeping a ward in subjection, with White rampant and defiant in the midst, was neither a light nor an enviable one.

Remonstrances could only be urged with White against her conduct, and White would turn her broad face to the speaker and listen very patiently till the eloquence of the officer was exhausted.

"It's impossible to put up with the annoyance, something must be done," a matron said once, by way of conclusion to her appeal.

"I'll tell you what can be done," said White, very seriously.

"What?"

"Why, if I annoy you very much, you'd

better let me out! That's the best plan that I can see."

This might have been a joke of White's, but it was made with an unmoved countenance, and White went away to her cell to expatiate to her associates with the same gravity on the new idea that had seized her as to keeping the ward in better order.

Jane White had a good appetite, and was constantly complaining of the scanty allowance that had fallen to her share. She was a greedy woman, and levied a black mail on the food of her companions in association. Objecting to thieves as she did, she was not slow to avail herself of anything that was eatable in her way; and in the matrons' mess-room she was constantly on the look-out for something to appropriate. An amusing anecdote of Jane White's habits in this respect may be related.

Jane White was useful as a labour-woman under proper supervision, and it happened that Jane was on duty with a staff of labour-women in

the work-room, at a time when a general turn-out had been made of the officers' quarters in the tower.*

There was in course of progression a general cleaning and whitewashing of the officers' rooms, and the furniture of the place had been removed to the work-room during the renovation, and here the matrons took their meals for a time. One matron, disturbed in her housekeeping arrangements by these alterations, had been at a loss where to put some Yarmouth bloaters which were in request at the officers' breakfast, and for coolness had hung them by a string from the bars of the work-room window, where Jane White, prowling about as usual in search of extra diet, had finally discovered them.

There were other prisoners in the work-room, and Jane White did not confiscate the matron's property at once, lest she should be called upon to give them up or share the spoil. She wanted

* Each pentagon at Millbank has a round tower at its extremity for the officers.

the herrings all to herself, and, therefore, she watched her opportunity to make off with them unknown to the rest.

Jane White bustled to and fro with great energy, doing her allotted share of work with cheerfulness and despatch, and finally made a dash at the herrings, snapped the string, and tucked the coveted prize carefully under her apron, congratulating herself upon having succeeded in her felonious intention without any suspicion being directed towards her. But there had been jealous eyes observant of Jane White's movements, for she must be a cunning prisoner indeed who deceives one of her own class.

A woman named Cawthorne had seen the theft, and resolved to call White to account for it. As the prisoners were marching down the ward towards their cells, Cawthorne suddenly touched White on the shoulder—

"I say, what are you going to do with *them?*" was the quiet question in her contemporary's ear.

"Them what?" White innocently inquired.

"Why, them herrings."

"I ain't got any herrings," said White, sharply.

"Why, I seed you take them!" cried Cawthorne at the top of her voice, roused to virtuous indignation at the denial.

"Take herrings! take herrings!" shrieked White in reply; "I'm sure you didn't."

"Why, they're under your apron now."

"No, they aint."

Cawthorne, a powerful woman in her way, wasted no more time in fruitless argument, but flung her arms round White and struggled with her for the herrings, White kicking and screaming at the liberty taken with her. Then ensued a fierce struggle for the bloaters, the rest of the prisoners participating in the contest until a general *mêlée* was the result, from which Cawthorne emerged triumphant, holding the Yarmouth bloaters at arm's-length in the air.

"I told you I knew you did it!" she screamed,

and then in a fit of rage at the trouble that had been given her to prove her word, she swung the herrings in the air and brought them down with all her force on the head of Jane White.

"I'll learn you to steal the hofficers' herrings!" she yelled, beating the fish at the same time over White's head and shoulders till the "real Yarmouths" were broken into pieces and scattered about the flag-stones of the ward, wherein a scramble ensued for the *débris*, creating still greater confusion, that took no small time to quell.

Jane White was a bully, but not a woman possessed of a great amount of real courage. She succumbed to Cawthorne after one effort to stand her ground, and was taken away sobbing to her cell. The woman Cawthorne was considered to have acted as well as could be expected under the circumstances, and although the "hofficers' herrings" were demolished in the fray, it was thought that she had done her best to restore them to their rightful owners.

Jane White was somewhat crestfallen for the next few days, more especially as in her struggle for the herrings she had contrived to obtain a very unbecoming black eye; but she rallied after a while, and was soon heard protesting against the "set of thieves" whose company she was compelled to share.

At Millbank she also signalized herself, as detailed in my first book, by creating an excitement in chapel; and at Millbank or Brixton, it may be said, a prisoner much harder to manage was difficult to discover.

She was allowed an undue share of liberty in all places, and she went away at the end of her ten years rejoicing at last she was about to be rid of all "the sets" that had vexed her for so long a period.

CHAPTER XI.

"INFIRMARY TOM."

WHILST sketching prison characters, I do not think it fair to omit one "character" connected with Millbank Prison, more especially as he was the cause—for the time—of as great an excitement as has ever disturbed the decorum of prison life. As he serves as an illustration to female convict character, and elicited some instances of good feeling amongst hardened natures, I give him here a place.

"Infirmary Tom" was a black cat of considerable proportions—a feline that had strayed through the gates at one time or another, and taken to prison life from choice rather than necessity.

He had found a patroness in the infirmary nurse, and therefore he had settled down as a member of the infirmary ward, and was generally to be found seated before the fire in a ruminative mood.

Tom was a great favourite with the sick prisoners, and came in for choice scraps of infirmary diet, on which he grew fat and sleek; he was partial to taking up his position at the head of the bed of one of his favourites, where, crouched close to the ear of the invalid, he would purr away to his heart's content, if the nurse did not consider it her duty to disturb him.

Now and then Tom would deign to visit other portions of the prison, and by chance get shut up for the night in a cell, where a woman would lavish upon him all that affection which is bestowed upon anything living that intrudes upon the every-day existence of the "solitary."

At the mess-room table, and generally about dinner-time, Tom would also appear, and solicit voluntary contributions—but immediately after

dinner he found his way back to infirmary quarters, where he felt himself more at home and among friends.

He earned for himself the name of "Infirmary Tom," and amongst the women became as great an object of interest as the governor or the doctor.

"Infirmary Tom's" curiosity, or love of research, brought him at last into trouble, and elicited that prison incident to which I have thought it worth while to direct the reader's attention. One fine morning Tom was missed, and all inquiries concerning him were unavailing; no one had seen Tom for two days, and it was supposed that he had grown tired of convict service and departed to a more social sphere, when a woman gave out the startling information that she had seen "Infirmary Tom" from the window of her cell, walking on the roof of the opposite pentagon.

The news spread, and was found to be correct. From the cell windows of that particular

pentagon, Tom was to be seen wandering restlessly up and down the roof at a loss to account for his own appearance there, and more thoroughly at a loss how to effect a descent. The roof was a great height from the airing-yard, and the women in exercise hour used to look up and call Tom in defiance of all rule, and Tom would come to the edge and mew piteously at his old friends.

Tom remained thus four-and-twenty hours, during which time he became a great object of thought and interest. It was difficult to suggest a means for rescuing the cat from his unpleasant position, without putting ladders into request, and enlisting male officers into the service; suggestions which no one cared to make to the governor, who had, it was known, a decided objection to cats, which, at nightfall, were the curse of the airing-yards—wild, hirsute strays, that came, no one knew whence, and were uncharitably supposed to be brought in by matrons under their cloaks on off-duty nights, though

why so much trouble should have been taken for so poor a result was not readily apparent.

Early in the morning of the second day after the discovery of "Infirmary Tom" on the roof of a pentagon, the faces of the prisoners were seen at all the cell windows along the three long lines of casements which give light to the same number of wards. Was Tom still there? Had no one taken Tom down from the roof?

Tom was in his old position—presenting rather a lank and miserable appearance, as a mouser up all night would naturally do. The excitement on the second day grew more intense—was nothing to be done—was everybody going to let Tom die up there! Tom's case reached the ears of the governor at last—the governor who at that time had the supreme control of the female, as well as the male prison, the principal female authority being vested in a deputy-superintendent. As had been anticipated, the governor saw no reason for any great exertions to be made to secure Tom's safety.

"You had better shoot it, the first chance you get," was the order issued forth to the warders; and Tom's life was in danger from the moment that fiat had been issued. The matrons became interested in securing Tom's safety after this, and a secret committee was held to determine as to the best means of rescuing him from his perilous position.

It was found that Tom had strayed into an empty room on the top floor of the prison—an officer's room—and either from fright or choice had clambered up the chimney to the roof, but no shouting up the chimney could prevail upon the cat to return the way he had ascended, although he once looked down the chimney pot at his infirmary nurse, who was using her most persuasive accents to induce him to attempt the descent.

The secret committee passed its resolution, which was carried without a dissentient voice. The windows of the third row of cells were immediately beneath the roof, and when the

governor was supposed to be at home for the evening, and the warders had not yet come on duty with their guns, two long broom-handles were passed through the bars, and after them a mat, which was unrolled and tied, not without difficulty, across the broomsticks.

The excitement in the opposite pentagon became intense. At every window appeared once more a white face full of eagerness and of interest in the experiment, which seemed likely to succeed, as "Infirmary Tom" crept cautiously to the very edge of the roof, and made two or three feints of springing on the mat, altering his mind at the last moment, and withdrawing with a long, low wail.

"Look out—look out!" was shouted from the open windows of the opposite pentagon more than once, "he's going to jump now! Tom's coming, Miss!"

But Tom never ventured, and finally crouched down at last, and looked sedately at the preparations that had been made to facilitate his descent.

Time was valuable, if Tom's life was to be saved, and a new idea suggested itself to an officer of the establishment. An umbrella was obtained, passed through the bars, opened parachute fashion, and placed across the sticks, but to no avail; Tom would not risk his life on so rickety a contrivance for saving it. Lastly, the umbrella was inverted, and lifted up in true umbrella fashion to a level with the roof—a strong-armed labour-woman volunteering to support the extra weight, should Tom feel inclined to accept this last tempting offer for his liberty.

No sooner was the umbrella raised than a general shout arose from the opposite side of the pentagon—such a shout as had not been heard from a prison for "many a long day."

"He's coming—he's coming!"

And sure enough the cat put out one paw to feel the nature of the contrivance used to expedite his descent, and then a second, pausing after this to reflect upon the risk to life and limb perhaps.

"Are you sure you can bear him?" asked an anxious officer of the prisoner.

"Trust me," said the woman; "he isn't much weight, I know."

Infirmary Tom had resolved by this time to "chance it," and drew his hind legs cautiously after the front ones, quitting at last the roof of the prison.

But the woman with the umbrella had unfortunately miscalculated the weight of "Infirmary Tom," held aloft at the top of an umbrella, and began to turn red in the face with her ineffectual efforts to uphold him.

"Oh! good Lord! he's going, Miss," she screamed. "I can't keep him steady—he's too much for me—I must drop him!"

And going Tom was. The umbrella swerved to the right and left, and finally dropped sideways, shooting poor Tom from the top ward to the airing-ground, amidst a general shriek of consternation from the prisoners in the opposite cells.

Tom came heavily to the ground, but still,

cat-like, upon his feet, where he remained standing for a moment, and then slowly and deliberately commenced walking to the door of the prison, finishing off with a brisk trot upstairs to the infirmary quarters as though nothing particular had resulted from his fall.

He was received with open arms by all his old friends, and ate a very hearty dinner after his long fast. He was the object of innumerable inquiries from all parts of the prison the following day, and the news that he appeared as well as ever was received with considerable satisfaction from the women interested in his welfare.

But "Infirmary Tom" never recovered from the effects of his fall, which told upon him after a few days, and reduced him to a forlorn and miserable cat indeed. Though he had broken no bones, he had ruined his constitution for ever, and one morning poor Tom was found dead before the infirmary fire, the victim of misplaced confidence in an old friend, and in the stability of umbrellas.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. DOWLAS.

THE history of the woman whom I call Mrs. Dowlas in this book is a sad history enough, and, in the main facts, I think to be believed. Before my entrance into prison service, Mrs. Dowlas, or Ellen Maynard, as I may call her then, had been tried for shoplifting, found guilty, and sentenced to seven years' transportation. The crime was committed under very peculiar temptation—the temptation of a young woman left alone in the world, and struggling in vain to earn her own living honestly. She had never known a thief, or done a wrong action in her life, before the heavy sentence

of seven years' transportation was passed upon her, she used to say, and the woman's assertion was probably true.

She went to Van Dieman's Land, served her time, received her ticket-of-leave, and obtained service in one of the towns as a domestic servant.

This is her story, related by her own lips in association time—related to her officer even, with many tears that were not forced or false, for she was one of the best-conducted, as she was one of the most really penitent prisoners whom I have ever encountered. At the time of my knowledge of her she was not quite forty years of age, and possessed even at that time, and after much trouble, a certain claim to good looks. In her youth she had evidently been a very pretty woman.

Ellen Maynard at this period, then, had settled down to service in Van Dieman's Land; she was prepared to live honestly and soberly, and she set to work to fulfil the promise that

she had made herself, flinching not at the obstacles that encountered her by the way.

It became her mischance—certainly to be considered a mischance now—to meet with a mechanic who was earning a fair living in the town where she worked, and who was struck with the woman's good looks and industry. He made her an offer of marriage, which was declined; after six months' silence he made her a second offer, which was accepted.

The marriage was performed in Van Dieman's Land, and then husband and wife, after a sojourn of a few more months in the settlement, took passages once more for England, and finally settled down in the city of York. Here one might imagine a fair ending to a life that had been stormy and dark; there had been no secret between husband and wife concerning the antecedents of the latter—everything had been told concerning her past career, and the story had even helped to win the lover.

They settled down in York, then, where the

husband was fortunate enough to find employment, and where they remained together for the space of six or seven years. Four children were born to their union, and everything seemed to augur a happy career in the future, the husband, to the last minute of his stay with her, being kind and considerate—a good husband and a good father. Then he suddenly deserted her—casting her down to the lowest depths of despair, at a time when she believed that her life had brightened for ever.

When inquiries were made, it was discovered that he had taken all their little horde from the savings' bank, wherein they had managed to invest upwards of fifty pounds for a rainy day, and that a shopwoman of the town was the companion of his flight.

"I would not have cared much—not *so* much," she said, when detailing the story, "if he hadn't taken the woman with him. That cut at me most!"

The neighbours took pity on Mrs. Dowlas's

misfortune, and helped her so far as they were able for awhile, but incessant misfortune palls upon generous givers, and then came hard winter times, when the poor were compelled to shift for themselves, and not study other people's troubles.

Mrs. Dowlas fell back in her rent, and found it a difficult task to support her four children; debts accumulated on all sides, and finally the broker's man came and swept away all her furniture, "every stick of it," as she said.

Mrs. Dowlas clung to York still, and found for herself and little ones a poorly-furnished room, in which it was scarcely possible to exist. She secured work for herself, and left the eldest child—five years old!—in charge of the rest, until she could return tired and exhausted to her family.

"Then I fell ill,"—I quote her own words—"and the children would have starved, if it hadn't been for the lodgers and the parish allowance, which they told me they'd take away if I didn't come into the house—and that I couldn't bear,

Miss. And one day, when the children were all crying for bread, I couldn't stand it any longer, and I took the blankets off the bed, and sold them to support the five of us. I hoped that it would not be found out till luck came in some way, and gave me a chance of restoring them, and as it was not found out at once, and the money soon went, I sold something else, and then it was all over; for the landlady gave me in charge to the police, and I was taken from the children, and got my four years."

It was while Dowlas was working off her four years' sentence that she became an inmate of Millbank and Brixton. She was one of the women whom I have mentioned as having been put in association with Jane White, and on whom Jane White launched all her virtuous indignation. She was one of the "set of thieves," and not fit for Jane White's society! Dowlas could not bear the appellative of thief, and petitioned very hard to be released from association with White, gaining her end at last.

She was a quiet prisoner in every respect, and only anxious to be let alone. She worked her way upwards steadily and industriously, and, I believe, was not the subject of one report in her whole four years' service.

The cause of her second incarceration was a great grief to her, which she could not overcome.

"To think that I should have stolen again after all my better life. I don't understand now how I came to do it," she said once; "I suppose it was for the children!"

The children oppressed her mind in prison. She could not make out what was to become of them when she was free again. They were in the workhouse at that time, and her one fear was that the eldest girl would find a situation somewhere, and perhaps be lost to her for ever. Nearly all her prison letters were to this girl, enjoining her not to forget to write if the authorities should move her from the workhouse and apprentice her, or make a servant of her. "She was always handy,

and they'll find that out quick enough and get a place for her."

Her husband was still a source of trouble to her, and there were a few letters sent off at odd times to a woman with whom she had lodged, asking if anything had been heard of him since his desertion.

"I wouldn't mind him coming back, and I'd look over everything," she said, mournfully; "for he was a good man to me, and no one could have fancied that there was any harm in him."

Dowlas was a religious woman in prison—one of the few who are truly religious, and who have no desire to deceive the chaplain by their affectation of penitence. I have never looked through "the inspection" without finding her reading her Bible—taking that comfort from the Holy Book which had been denied her in her eventful life. She looked forward very eagerly for her freedom, although her future seemed dark enough and her chance of success in it but faint.

She was a sanguine woman, and her *Bible* gave her strength to look forward.

"Oh! I shall be all right when I get out again," she affirmed; "it isn't as if I was going to turn a bad one. I fancy that I shall be very happy with the young ones, and get plenty to do in York."

She clung to the thought of York, although it was not her birthplace, and was full of grim associations. Her husband had lived in York, and was known so well there! He might come back when he was tired of "that woman!"

Towards the end of her time she began to think that he was sure to come back—a wild idea which it was hard to destroy, but vain to suppose likely to occur in so hard-hearted a wretch as he must have been.

"There's all the children—why he'll want to see 'em some day, surely!" she argued once. "I've been away four years from 'em, and I know what never seeing them for all that time is like."

She judged his feelings by her own, poor woman. She worked her time and went away—went away cheerfully, and full of hope in the new life beyond the prison cell.

"Whatever happens, no one will catch me in prison again," she said, stoutly, the day before her liberty—and certain it is that the face of Ellen Dowlas has been seen no more by the matrons.

CHAPTER XIII.

SCRIPTURE-READERS.

I HAVE omitted to direct attention until the present time to a very praiseworthy and deserving class of Government *employés*—viz., the Scripture-readers attached to our principal prisons. The staff is not a large one—numbering only two to each prison—and might be increased with advantage to the women perhaps, although there are a certain class of prisoners who are not too delighted to receive them into their cells.

The Scripture-readers are naturally young women of high character, who have been known as a rule, before prison service, as workers in God's cause, district visitors in their immediate

neighbourhood, &c. They are religious young women, and they hold a position in our prisons which I can compare only to that of supplements to the chaplain of the establishment.

Like the chaplain, they are always seeking for the moral advancement of the prisoners, endeavouring to attain that great end by reading the Scriptures to them day after day, and by conversing with them as to the best means in the future by which they may begin life anew and honestly. I cannot but think on the whole that they are too religious, and that a little more worldly talk, seasoned with less Scriptural quotations, would work a greater change with well-disposed women. Prisoners object to constant lecturing, and to being prayed for constantly; they respect the motives and the mission of the readers, but they are rather afraid of these ladies, and will very frequently do their best to evade them.

Scripture-readers, however, obtain in many places a certain amount of influence over the women—in a few cases, and with the best

class of prisoners, a fair amount of true affection; and partly for this reason, and seeing that even with the worst of women there is no attempt made to laugh at their efforts, or decry their works, I have urged the institution of a new class of public servants—a medium between the matron and the Scripture-reader, less official than the former, and less formally devout than the latter.

The Scripture-readers are not provided with accommodation in the prison; they are out-door officers, whose duties commence at nine in the morning, and terminate at four in the afternoon. The salary is fifty pounds per annum, rising five pounds each year.

The duties of a Scripture-reader vary somewhat; indeed a great deal is left to the discretion of that officer. As a rule, the Scripture-reader proceeds at once to the infirmary, where are the prisoners too sick and weak to attend divine service in chapel. Here the ceremony is gone through of reading the morning prayers, the Litany, I believe, excepted.

After this has been done the are at liberty to proceed to any portion of the prison they please, to select any prisoner, and to enter any cell. There are no rules as to the method of their attendance, except those which they may arrange between themselves in order to save traversing the same ground.

The prisoner in solitary welcomes the reader with a smile; the prisoners in association are not always so pleased to see this officer. There are a few civilities exchanged, as though the reader were a visitor; a little talk about the weather and the prisoner's health, and then the Bible is opened and a chapter read therefrom which the officer may consider appropriate to the time and place, and calculated to impress the woman to whom it is read.

Different women have different ways of listening to the reader; but it is pitiable to notice the blank stupefaction—the utter ignorance which understands nothing that is read, and scarcely what it is read for—on the faces of those women

unable to read for themselves, and whom past neglect has brutalized. Some of them endeavour to understand and ask a few questions of the reader; but many give up the attempt, and to any question that may be put to them, reply that they understand it all, which is an easy way of saving trouble to themselves.

Women will be critical in their remarks, and puzzle the Scripture-readers, at times; some are wicked enough to turn the whole matter into burlesque with their companions afterwards, although they have listened throughout with a respectful and deceptive gravity.

It is difficult for a Scripture-reader and a chaplain to arrive at a prisoner's right character, or make quite sure of the moral advancement of any one in whom they are interested. The prisoners are on their guard in the presence of any one whose vocation is indisputably religious; for they believe that, if they act thus, they are reported to head-quarters as good and deserving women, worthy of all the honours that a prison has

to bestow on its denizens of the best character. But there is still no doubt that the Scripture-reader works a certain amount of good out of this unmalleable material, and is occasionally the humble instrument of a woman's genuine repentance.

One of the best Scripture-readers in the service, a woman with great judgment as to the best time for reading, and the best time to leave it alone—the latter a most important qualification for service in this direction—has lately been promoted to the post of deputy-superintendent at Brixton Prison. She will wear her new honours gracefully and well, I feel assured.

A thoughtful Scripture-reader will not insist upon reading the Bible to a woman whose manner betrays an objection to it. There are many women, be it observed, who express a wish to hear the Bible read when the question is put to them, and yet who answer in the affirmative purely out of compliment. Such women's real wishes are readily to be seen, and I have known

a good Scripture-reader make no attempt to open her Bible, but sit and converse freely with the woman about home-matters—her own home and friends perhaps, or the prisoner's home, which may be equally dear to the lower character—until the woman has seen with regret the officer rise to take her leave.

"I'd wish you'd come more often and see me, for *a talk*," was the hint conveyed once; "*that* does seem to do me good!"

A Scripture-reader is a terrible officer to many women, despite all their "best manners" in her presence. To be read to out of "that dreadful Bible"—as it was called once by a nervous prisoner—to be told of the error of one's ways continually; to be preached at as the chaplain preaches, but in a milder tone, and with less confidence; to be called continually a sinner, exasperates the feelings of many prisoners.

There are women who will use every means at their disposal to escape the Scripture-reader, but there is seldom, if ever, a flat denial

made to receive her visit to them. They will evade her as gracefully as they can, but they will not have her and her Bible-readings. I remember one labour-woman hiding in an empty cell adjacent to her own, in order that she might be spared the ordeal of a visit.

"It's very kind, but I can't bear it," the woman said, with a shudder, when called upon for an explanation; "I have heard all that *she* can tell me in chapel, and I don't want to hear it again just now."

It may be seen by this that great care should be exercised in not "over-preaching" to the women. Female convicts are very much like children, when of the tractable order; they are very childish, easily pleased, sometimes easily talked over to remain good and not break out, but they are not proof against too much religion, delivered in and out of season. You cannot preach a prisoner into a moral condition.

Some Scripture-readers prefer reading the tracts issued by the "Religious Tract Society" to

that of the Bible to the lower class—that is, the more ignorant class—of prisoners. The effect is good in many cases, and the prisoner wakes up to an interest in the story, until the texts crop out too frequently, when she sees the application and shuts her eye to it as not her affair, or anything to do with *her*.

A woman will never take the case to herself, unless parallel circumstances are directly pointed out.

"You see," said a Scripture-reader once, "that it was drink that led this poor girl to ruin. You told me that drink was the cause of your past sins."

"Yes," answered the woman, confidently; "but I never drank *gin!*"

Gin being the temptation in the story, and therefore in the prisoner's idea totally altering the circumstances of the case.

Tracts that relate to criminal life, and show, however faintly, the thief's career before her reformation, are listened to with greater in-

terest, although a slip or two in the consistency of the early portion of the narrative is very quickly perceived, and at times pointed out.

"I don't believe that he could have done it," may be the flat assertion made at a certain part of the story; or, "I don't believe no parson ever came down *that* street—I never knowed a parson try it on in my time!"

The Scripture-reader is at her best when she gives advice to the woman about her future means of living. The matron has not time to make this a study, and would be considered exceeding her province if she did; the chaplain is not always made a confidant; and a womanly adviser is more natural, and likely to be listened to with greater confidence.

Much good advice—practical advice as to the right way of getting work, of benefiting by the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, of seeking a lodging amongst the really respectable poor—known no more than the rich are to many of these prisoners—is offered and thankfully received

by one really going away with a little thought as to giving up the past career.

They make excellent advisers, these Scripture-readers, and they are full of womanly sympathy with the prisoner, and ready also to exert the little influence that they may have to promote the efforts of any one in whom they feel they are not likely to be deceived.

If now and then there appear in our sphere Scripture-readers who will have the Bible at all times and seasons, and nothing but the Bible, I do not know that any harm is done save to make the prisoners afraid of them. All the Scripture-readers whom I have known have been industrious, energetic, and pious women; and the exertions of such women must have a certain effect for good, in the aggregate.

They have always been respected by the convicts; in many instances treated with all that reverence with which a bad prisoner will regard a woman who has led an exemplary life. In no instance has a Scripture-reader been insulted in

my experience, even by the worst and most re-fractory of the penal class; there is a respect for the mission of these bearers of good tidings, even if the heart be hardened enough to reject all good advice.

CHAPTER XIV.

"MAD KEATING."

CATHERINE KEATING was one of a class of prisoners not uncommon two or three years since at Brixton and Millbank — prisoners that now appertain exclusively to Broadmoor.

A mad prisoner, with enough method in her madness to keep her for a time from a lunatic asylum—doing her work well and regularly for months, and then suddenly developing a fierceness or an eccentricity that rendered it a matter of doubt for a while whether her vagaries were studied in order to deceive, or but natural ebullitions of a demented brain.

Keating was a gipsy, or at least had a considerable portion of gipsy blood in her veins. The third gipsy whom I remember in penal servitude, and, like the others who have already been enumerated, a woman who gave way very rapidly beneath the discipline of a prison, and subjection to a prison atmosphere.

The Zingari certainly sicken, and generally die, when shut away from their tribe and their usual habits of life; the women, at least, are not strong or patient in our prisons. A long sentence to them seems a sentence of death.

Keating had not been with her tribe for two or three years when she was arrested on a charge, I believe, of robbery and violence. She had not agreed with her mother and brothers, and there had been much quarrelling in their midst, until Keating had stolen forth from her tent one night and gone her own way in the world.

"I thought they didn't treat me well," she said once, in explanation of her conduct; "they were always watching me, and giving me the

worst and hardest work to do—and so I ran away from them."

The gipsy girl wandered from Buckinghamshire to London, pilfering and fortune-telling by turns, and finally located herself in a low lodging-house in Tothill Fields.

She had a country girl's yearning for London rather than a gipsy's objection thereto, and she took to London life with a zest and energy seldom exhibited by gipsy blood.

Hers had been a pilfering tribe—more daring, and less scrupulous, than are gipsy tribes in general—but Keating always considered that she left the track of virtue when she abandoned it.

"I fell into low company," she explained; "got amongst the pickpockets and the downright bad 'uns, and then I went wrong altogether."

She went wrong sufficiently to render herself amenable to the law, poor girl!—and I do not think that she was more than nineteen or twenty

years of age when she made her first appearance at Millbank Prison.

"Gracious! it's a dark and awful place," she exclaimed, as she looked round the prison for the first time; "it's enough to break one's heart to look at it."

She fell into prison ways very well at first passing her time in solitary with more patience than is generally exhibited, but finally breaking out with a force and pressure all the greater for a long restraint.

She was one of the number who broke out without any system—the system of carefully avoiding personal damage and smashing windows, for instance, with bottoms of "pints" or broom handles; she went like a maniac at *her* glass, dashing it into fragments with her clenched hands, and calling down denunciations on the heads of all who had subjected her to imprisonment.

The judge, the jury, and the counsel for the prosecution were cursed with greater vehe-

mence than her officers, although they came in for a fair degree of vituperation in their turn.

Keating objected to "the dark," however—it was a punishment that at least had terror for her, and she prayed hard to be released therefrom, after her own actions had placed her in that odious cell. In due course she emerged therefrom, a grave and stolid-looking girl, for a while wholly subdued by the darkness and the scanty diet.

Though a woman always difficult to manage from the first to the last day of her stay, she was not naturally a violent tempered woman; she was more eccentric in her actions, and vexatious in her doggedness, than prone to exhibit her rage on all occasions.

After a while, she became a despondent woman, inclined to brood over her work, to sink into deep fits of thought, from which it was not easy to rouse her. Before twelve months of her time had expired Keating was a thoroughly despondent woman—a woman whom

the doctor began to observe attentively, and to whisper instructions concerning, to the officer in charge of her.

Now and then the association of the prisoners had its effect in raising her spirits; and Keating's laugh—and a very wild and hysterical laugh it was—rang out in the wards with a peculiar effect.

There came a sudden gleam of sunlight across the path of Keating: her mother was coming to see her! The gipsy-mother, from whom she had run away, and of whom she had heard nothing until a letter was sent to her at Millbank, and read to her by an officer of the establishment.

The news of Ann Keating's imprisonment had found its way to the gipsies; and Mrs. Keating had resolved to see her child. The prisoner looked forward to this meeting with considerable exultation; her hysterical laugh became frequent in the cell; and the night officer going her rounds would be startled at times by Keating's mutterings and little joyful exclamations.

"To think that the old mother is coming to see me, Miss," she said one night, when she was too restless to sleep, and was walking up and down her cell in her night-dress. "I wonder what she'll say, and do. I wonder, now, whether she will see any change in me?"

Keating continued restless and excitable till visiting-day came round; and the mother, punctual to her appointment, appeared behind the wire grating, and found her daughter at last. She was far from an old woman herself, a woman of the true gipsy cast, of a deep olive-brown complexion, with those sharp black eyes that seem common to gipsies, and which were a distinguishing feature in her daughter.

Mother and daughter stood and stared at each other for some minutes without speaking at all; and then the former burst into a dialect totally unknown to the matron on duty, and went on rapidly and vehemently, and with considerable gesticulation, Keating replying in the same tongue, and with the same degree of animation.

The officer was taken aback at first, and then the rules of the prison rose before her, and her outraged dignity asserted itself. She called for silence at once; but the two women, full of their own discourse, rattled away with their Romany, and took no heed of her—I believe, in the excitement of their meeting, were entirely unconscious of her presence.

Still there are rules of the prison that must be obeyed, and the matron issued at once her order to take Keating back to her cell, and remove the prisoner's mother to the outer gates.

"Go back, Miss——!" cried Keating, brought suddenly to herself; "what, already?"

"You have infringed the rules," said the stern officer; and it was considered afterwards, in conversation at the mess-room table, that she had been too stern considering all circumstances.

"I can't understand you," said the mother.

"But my mother don't know English—not twenty words of English, Miss!" pleaded Keating.

The matron did not believe this at the time; and as Mrs. Keating continued to talk Romany her hardest behind the fence, she was unceremoniously shown out of the prison, and poor Keating conducted back to her cell, where she was found crying very bitterly by her own matron shortly afterwards.

"Why, whatever made you break the visiting rules like that?" asked the officer, on this occasion.

"It was only the Romany, Miss," she explained; "and mother can't make herself underderstood in any other way. Oh! it was only the Romany, nothing else; and she was telling me to bear up, and save my strength all I could, and that when I came out they would be waiting for me! Oh! it was only the Romany," she continued to repeat, as though no possible objection could be urged in any quarter against that dialect, or as though every matron in the service had been a disciple of George Borrow.

It was feared that Keating's bitter disappoint-

ment would be followed by a "break-out," and the ward officers were on the *qui vive* for a few hours afterwards; but the gipsy girl continued only to sorrow over the cruelty that had separated her from her mother in the first few minutes of the long looked-for interview.

Keating had no more visitors to see her, I believe, in the whole course of her time. Whether Mrs. Keating applied for permission or not I am uncertain, but had she done so, I fear that her last infringement of the statutes concerning visitors would have barred her entrance into Millbank.

The gipsy girl fell into her old track the next day, although she muttered many a protest during the week against the "hard lines" that she had had to endure; but she did not "break out." In association, her companions found great difficulty in eliciting a word from her; and it was noticed that Keating became more eccentric every day, earning about this time that

appellation which I have placed at the head of the present chapter.

She made one attempt to take away her life, I believe, and she was kept in the association-ward until the time came round for her removal to Brixton Prison.

In this latter prison, Keating's despondent moods vanished in a great degree; although her madness became certainly more developed in consequence. At Brixton, she took a "flighty" turn, and was disposed at times—and always at objectionable times, silence hours, and the like—to fits of hysterical laughter, which had been few and far between at Millbank.

It is said of her at Brixton, that she would suddenly pause in her exercise in the airing-yard, confront her officer, and commence a rapid kind of double shuffle with her feet, screaming with laughter the while—a laughter that aroused considerable hilarity amongst the more hardened of the prisoners. Still she re-

mained a prisoner not mad enough to send away till some months afterwards—a woman who could work well at odd times and seasons, and did not flinch from work when the inclination was on her.

She brooded no more over the past or the future, or whatever it might have been that deadened her faculties, and rendered it difficult to arouse her; she seemed anxious for association, and was friendly to all with whom she was brought in contact.

She talked a great deal of her gipsy life again, as though the free habits of her tribe had new charms for her by contrast with her prison life; and spoke of giving up London for good, and joining her mother and "the rest of them," whenever the time came for her to be free of the ward.

"I hadn't a right to go bad when I was comfortable, and had my own way," she said, then; "and I'll give it all up, and go back to them directly I'm out of this place."

She used to take a pleasure in arranging her plans for the future and in offering invitations to all the prisoners, whose time expired near to that of her own, to her mother's quarters in the country.

But the story goes, that Catherine Keating went from prison to Fisherton Lunatic Asylum, in company with a matron, to whom she discoursed all the way with the eloquence of an Addison, on "the pleasures of a country life."

I have not heard whether, under a different system of treatment, Keating recovered her sanity and joined the gipsies, or grew more weak with time.

CHAPTER XV.

ON DIRECTORS OF GOVERNMENT PRISONS.

LET me attempt to sketch, in the first place, a model director. He should be a gentleman decidedly, and a philanthropist, if possible. He should not stand too much upon his dignity, or be too anxious to keep down prison expenses; he should be firm, but not severe with the men and women whom he is called upon to punish for insubordination; he should at all times be kind and courteous to the staff, with a smile and a few words for the assistant matron as well as the lady-superintendent. He should show no favouritism, and do his best to check all favouritism in others, selecting his subordi-

nates for their fitness in all respects to the task, rather than on account of the strength of the "recommendations," or the position of the recommendors by whom applicants have been backed. He should not be too tenacious of his system, or too jealous of other people's, and the links that bind him, in his splendid board-room, to the prisoners in their whitewashed cells, should be part of a strong and sympathetic chain. He should be anxious to try all systems that are calculated to rouse the respect of prisoners, or bring them by any means "to think;" he should be watchful and untiring in the service of which he is the head.

Have I, in the above lines, sketched an impossible being? I think not. I believe that on the Board of Direction there are men like this—men of energy and good will, always doing their best for the prison world, and striving to make it do *its* best.

I think that the directors of our Government prisons have been often harshly dealt with by the

press, and that a true respect for their great task —and their Augean task—has not been fairly shown them. Though the late Sir Joshua Jebb was a man of strong opinions, and disposed to cling to them with much pertinacity, still he was a great and original thinker, and he has done much for the proper conduct of our prisons. He was a man who worked hard, and whose zeal was untiring; above all, a man always to be found at his post in Parliament-street, as ready to receive a matron, and give ear to her troubles, as to confer with superintendents or brother directors. I believe that he broke down suddenly from over-work, and that his last days of service were embittered by the sudden and unexpected attack on the English system. Though his reticent manner made him no great favourite with officers of low degree, still he was thoroughly respected, and his loss is irreparable.

The directors are not many in number, and it is an open question whether the selection of the majority from the governors of prisons, is the

wisest and best method of procedure. Governors of prisons have been, in most cases—I believe in all cases—military men, and though a long course of prison rule renders them valuable as referees on prison discipline, still they are not, as a rule, men of great thought, and they are too prone to run in the one groove in which their predecessors have run before them. A military man or two are of use on the board, but why should it not be a mixed board? Why cannot we temper the military ardour with the deliberations of great thinkers—men who have also studied the poor and the criminal, and know the best way to reach their hearts? Discipline is not the one thing, and the sole thing, that should appertain to prisons—it should not be the greatest end in view, in a Christian country.

The duties of directors are onerous and manifold. The inspection of certain prisons is arranged between themselves, and the visits are made with regularity and care; and as our prisons are scattered over various parts of

England, the journies are necessarily long and tedious. Then there are meetings of the Board at Parliament-street—long reports from governors and superintendents to be read; reports to be written for Parliament by themselves; plans to suggest and discuss; a careful survey to be kept up of all that delicate machinery which keeps our prison world in motion; matters of grants to deserving servants to be considered; interviews with principals of prisons—pleasant interviews when praise is to be bestowed, or unpleasant meetings when a stern reprimand has to be given.

A director is always to be found at Parliament-street, or was always to be found in Sir Joshua Jebb and Captain O'Brien's time; I have no doubt that there are stanch and indefatigable men at the helm still.

Here, at 48, Parliament-street, on ordinary days come the humble place-seekers, with fear and trembling; the orphan girl, or the widow, who is burdened with testimonials, and has

heard of prison service, and thinks that it will suit or keep her, and who ventures very nervously into the presence of the head clerk, and still more nervously into the directors' room. Here the assurance is given that there is no chance of a vacancy; that the matron is too young or too old, or evidently too weak; or here the promise is given that her name shall be registered on the list, and the applicant be written to in turn.

Perhaps it is scarcely fair to promise this in many instances; for the names are not taken with any degree of regularity, and there are some who have been anxious for this peculiar service all their lives, and whose names have been on the list, uncalled, for ten years at least. Fortunate this for the place-seekers probably, for there are many better "professions" for well-educated young women, and she who enters the service simply for the money's sake will certainly be sorry that she has not attempted a means of living in another sphere.

A director visits the prison allotted to him once a week—always the same prison, for reasons best known to the Board, although a change from prison to prison would certainly enlarge a director's views of general management and discipline. Once a week, then, there is a bustle at our female prisons—a little suppressed excitement on the part of the officers who are likely to be brought into contact with him, a stir amongst the women who have, by permission of the lady-superintendent, put their names down to see him—every effort made in every direction to promote and maintain order on a director's day.

"Seeing the Director" is a chapter in my first work, and there I have detailed a few instances of the conduct of women in the head officer's presence, and of their eccentricity and odd excuses for the privilege that they have secured.

A few may be added here, by way of keeping up the anecdotical character of these pages.

The diet question, as regards *the prisoners*, is always an anxious subject with the direction, prisoners, on the whole, being better served than prison officers—although more care for the mess-room has latterly been shown, it is fair to add. A prisoner, in one instance, had a complaint to urge against the food with which she had been furnished. The director had expected a general charge, and was prepared to say that the matter should be inquired into, when the prisoner suddenly drew from beneath her apron an incomprehensible mass of something, and extended it towards the director at the table.

"And there's the beef, sir! I've saved it for you to see, ever since last Friday. I couldn't touch a bit of it."

"Take it away—take it away!" cried the astonished and disgusted director—an instruction that was very necessary, considering how long a time the woman had kept in stock the article in question.

Prisoners are obsequious to the directors, and

a fracas before that functionary is of very rare occurrence. One woman who could obtain no redress for fancied injuries however, and who, I believe, was ordered an extra day or two in "the dark cell" for considerable incivility, crossed her arms on her chest, and said—

"Then I shan't go out of the room. You may carry me out, but I shan't move a step!"

And carried out by the men she was in consequence, fighting her hardest meanwhile, and resisting her withdrawal by force with all the strength at her command.

A good director has a heart that sympathizes with prisoners' troubles, and is inclined to look on the best side of the prisoners, and even to lend a generous ear to their complaints. Women who have lost their badges, and are really sorry for the loss—women who have gone from No. 1 to the old prison, for instance, at one fell swoop—are particularly the objects of his clemency. They plead with great eloquence and earnestness

for a return of past favours, and make many promises not to infringe the rules again.

"I worked so hard for my Number One, sir —and I wasn't quite myself at the time I told Miss —— that I shouldn't do my work. I'd been worried. And it really shan't, sir, ever occur again, if you'll only let me have my badge back!"

The woman who is anxious for another chance to show that she is an obedient prisoner, has that chance offered her if she has sinned not too grievously against the rules. She is given a No. 2 badge, and left to work the rest of the way to her old place; seldom a No. 1 is returned unless the woman can prove—as she tries very hard to prove occasionally—that the whole affair has been a mistake, of which she is the victim.

On visiting days a director will now and then go the rounds of the wards—very wisely keeping his intentions back to the last minute, and then starting forth on a journey of inspection for himself. Few and far between are these

visits however; and it would be all the better for the service if they occurred more frequently, or there were inspection days at unlooked-for intervals. But on Wednesday morning at Brixton prison, and at Millbank, the question always arises as to the possibility of a Director coming through the prison, and the matrons are on guard till the cab has borne the "head centre" out of the prison yard.

I believe an instance occurred once of an energetic Director being shown into an empty dark cell at Millbank, and requesting the amazed officer to shut the door and leave him there till he was disposed to emerge from durance vile.

The stay was not long, it is said, and the Director came out with a thoughtful expression of countenance, and blinked at the little daylight that is allowed to enter a refractory ward.

"Hum, I don't much like it," he is reported to have observed, as he went away, after trying this most objectionable portion of the system.

Since the author first put pen to paper there

have been many changes in the Direction—many resignations and new promotions, and but one of the old staff remains, I think, to cheer the matrons at their task with his pleasant smile and kindly words. The prison world is a world of change, and even its rulers know no rest.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARY ANN CLACK.

I MAY mention this prisoner on account of the distinctive feature of her extraordinary vanity under circumstances that were a mystery to all connected with her, but readily apparent to herself.

I think that I may venture to assert that she *was* the vainest of all the vain women who have ever passed through the hands of a reception officer—and the woman with the least amount of personal charms of which to boast.

A thin woman, with almost a distorted face, which had not in any way diminished the admiration of its possessor for it.

"It's not exactly the face, but the expression, which shows me off," she maintained; "and besides, people are nothing without a figure to back 'em!"

And Mary Ann Clack possessed a figure, and —though I would not let this reach her ears for the world—certainly a figure of fair proportions, together with a remarkably small waist. Clack's tight waist was a feature in the prison during the time of her incarceration; and Clack struggled hard for that distinctive feature, girding herself in with considerable ingenuity, and getting her companion, when in association — which was seldom the case, she not being a well-behaved prisoner—to tug and strain at her laces for her.

"What's a woman without a waist?" she was in the habit of inquiring; and prisoners inclined to enter into competition with her for slimness of figure, regarded with jealous or supercilious eyes her *contour*.

"She do make herself awful ridiculous!" remarked an ignorant prisoner, with pride in her

own personal appearance. "Any one would think that she was a girl—and she's forty, if she's a day, the fright!"

But Mary Ann Clack was probably not more than thirty years of age, and did not own to more than one-and-twenty.

"One-and-twenty next July," she persisted in maintaining during every year of her prison service.

"Why, you said one-and-twenty afore!" a woman might remonstrate.

"No—twenty. How could I say twenty-one, do you think? I was not much more than a child when I came in. Why, mine isn't a woman's figure now! Just look at the size of my waist, Jane!"

Her great effort was to direct her officer's attention to the lady-like figure for which, in her own opinion, she was distinguished; and she would have gone mad with ecstacy could she have, directly or indirectly, gained a compliment from a matron. But the matrons would not see

the charms of Mary Ann Clack, although they have been even appealed to, to bear testimony, by much artful manœuvring on the part of the prisoner.

"Such a pain in my side, Miss, to-night—just as if I was coming in half!" she would say, with her hands on her hips, "and that wouldn't be a great wonder either!"

Mary Ann Clack suffered from a pain in her side at times—the victim of tight lacing, as many fairer and better women have been before her—but, of course, tight lacing was never acknowledged as the origin of the disorder.

"I have no occasion to lace *myself* in," she would say, with dignity, when her feelings were hurt by the accusation.

She was very particular also about the set of her prison cap, as are all prisoners with any self-conceit in their compositions; and has on several occasions been ordered back to her cell, to put on her cap in a more becoming fashion, and with less desire to. display any new fashion in hair

that a prisoner more ingenious than herself might have adopted; for Clack was far more imitative than original.

Another trait in her character, but not a very distinctive trait, was her love of gossip—of prison scandal; and here she displayed a fertility of invention and a power of magnifying small matters into great ones, which was somewhat remarkable.

She professed to know the histories of all the matrons, as detailed by the officers to her!—who were the most respectable, and had the best connexions; and who, if it hadn't been for prisons, would have been as bad as she was, poor things; what young lady had a lover and was going to be married presently; who had sent in her resignation, and what she was resigning for; and who was married on the sly, although she didn't wish it generally known, because she could not afford to give up her salary at present.

I mention Mary Ann Clack in these pages for more reasons than already described—principally

for the reason that she exhibited a greater degree of faithfulness as well as demonstrativeness of affection for a "pal" under difficulties than female prisoners are prone to show. In her affection, she was *not* variable; and the object of that affection was a broad-faced, flat-nosed girl, of twenty-five years of age, who seemed to reciprocate her passion with almost as great a degree of ardour.

The odd fancy of these two plain women for each other was, I believe, partly accounted for by the fact that they were both Manchester girls, and had been Manchester thieves of the same "school;" but it was a very odd exhibition of affection for all that, between two women of their respective years. Given the opportunity in the laundry, airing-yard, or elsewhere, and Mary Ann Clack would fly into the arms of her friend and smother her with caresses, to which "My Ellen," as her friend was invariably termed, would not be slow to respond.

This demonstrative affection, accompanied as it was by the continual transfer of prison "stiffs"

—although at first their cells were within a short distance of each other, and they were constantly meeting in the wards—became so great a nuisance to the officers, that it was resolved to separate these women, for the better order of the prison. Mary Ann Clack and her friend Ellen were "old prison women"—that is, as the reader is aware, Brixton women not possessed of badges, or belonging to the "wings," where good prisoners are drafted;—and the matrons going to and fro in the old prison wards were constantly being beset by questions from Mary Ann Clack.

"You're in my Ellen's ward I think, Miss——," Clack would scream forth, in defiance of rules, on the appearance of a particular matron on a special mission to that ward wherein Clack was located; "can you tell me how she is to day? You can't imagine how anxious I am about her now we're separated."

Clack's anxiety for Ellen's health was often simply set down for a peculiar exhibition of her impudence; but Clack meant what she said,

and there was no laughing in her sleeve at the officer.

The prisoners in her ward were equally tormented by questions as to whether they had heard anything of Ellen lately; and although many of them had pals of their own afar off in the wings, &c.; and might have been supposed to sympathize with Clack, still her incessant questioning and the numerous "stiffs" which were imposed upon them every day to pass to Ellen, and which came into their hands from Ellen to be passed to Clack, began to test their good intentions to the utmost.

Clack was continually sending locks of her hair in scraps of gas-paper to Ellen, who forwarded an acknowledgment to each present of the kind, and never seemed to tire of her hirsute collection.

"She's something like a gal to stick to one," Ellen affirmed; and that there wasn't a creature in all the prison equal to "My Ellen," was the firm conviction of Miss Clack.

Once the rumour reached Clack's ear that her Ellen had been taken to the dark for a break-out.

"Poor thing!" said Clack, bursting into tears; "then I must break out too. She'll be very glad to hear it."

Unfortunately, however, the rumour proved to be a false one, conveyed to Clack by a mendacious prisoner; so Clack broke out for nothing, and had bread-and-water diet without due satisfaction for it.

Clack was the cause of considerable excitement in the chapel at Brixton, on one occasion. The chapel at Brixton contains two galleries, which are reserved entirely for the old prison women, who are thus kept apart as much as possible from the wing women, occupying the whole area of the ground floor. In the top gallery was Clack, amongst the women of her particular ward; and in the gallery underneath her was the flat-nosed object of Clack's morbid affections.

The sermon had begun when Clack, looking over the rails, became aware that her Ellen was immediately beneath her; and by coughing and scuffling with her feet, finally contrived to direct the attention of her inamorata to herself; then, despite the vigilance of the officers, and without regard to the service, there ensued the usual nods of recognition, smiles, and dumb motions peculiar to "pals," whom chance brings together again.

But this was not enough for the impulsive and impetuous Clack. Suddenly, to the amazement of the prisoners on each side of her, and to the consternation of the chaplain and his mixed congregation, Clack rose to her feet, and began to make preparations to climb over the gallery rails, in order, if possible, to attempt the dangerous feat of dropping herself into the gallery beneath.

It is supposed from Clack's love and care of herself that this was mere bravado; but, at all events, it elicited a general scream from the

women in the gallery, who rushed upon Clack, upsetting forms, and tumbling one over another in their eagerness to save Clack from a fall into the body of the chapel.

All attention being directed to Clack, the women being excited, and the matrons engaged doing their best to preserve as much order as possible, service was stopped, and the men sent for; whilst the cause of all this irreverent behaviour was still holding on to the rails with one leg crossed over, exhibiting a considerable amount of grey worsted stocking and brown serge petticoat.

"Ellen, my dear," she screamed, when she found her opponents too many for her; "I'll die for you, my Ellen!"

This was too much for the gravity of the prisoners, and a roar of laughter followed this passionate protestation, which was repeated at intervals until Clack was carried out of chapel, and borne to the dark for misbehaviour.

But Clack's affection was proof against all privation and all difficulties; and "My Ellen" was the chief theme to grow eloquent upon until the last day of her time.

CHAPTER XVII.

MATRONS' LITTLE TROUBLES.

IT may be a relief to the reader to dwell for a short time on the troubles to which prison matrons are exposed—the minor sources of anxiety which arise from prison duties. The subject is in keeping with recollections of prison service, and may act as a check to a few enthusiastic souls who think life in the wards a pleasurable vocation. I am told that the result of the publication of my first work, "Female Life in Prison," was to largely increase the numbers of applicants for situations as matrons; if true, I am at a loss to account for this, for I did not dwell in any way upon the advantages to

be derived from the "profession," and I took occasion to detail at full length the hardships to which such officers of the State were necessarily subjected.

I would beg any young woman to pause before she avails herself of her letter of introduction to get placed on the list of candidates, to consider whether she be really qualified for the post—whether her interest in her task will keep her strong beneath the difficulties, the unthankfulness, the sheer hard work which she will have to encounter. It is a vocation not without danger, as I need not point to preceding chapters to prove; it requires strength of mind and body, a good temper, a warm heart, and a cool head; for a delicately-nurtured, or a highly-sensitive young woman, it is no fitting sphere. And though in a preceding page I have recommended to Government to raise the standard of qualification, with a view only to Government requirements, yet let it be understood that, looking at it purely from the matron point of view, I recom-

mend no one to prison service *as it stands.* You may ruin your health there, you may break your heart, or you may become used to the life before you, and proceed steadily onwards to the end of your ten years, but if you are a woman of thought and feeling, you will regret the time spent in Government employ, and think, after all, that you might have done better for yourself.

I purpose to allude in the following pages to a few matrons' troubles to which reference has *not* already been made—to those little "stings and arrows" that are constantly flying through the air, not much in themselves perhaps, but vexatious enough to those on whom they descend. They have their humorous side at times, when regarded from a distance, but there is not much fun in them in reality. For instance, there are the fines—fines for being late home on off-duty nights, for being five minutes behind time after all your exertions to make up for past delay with friends at home; fines for not coming on duty to the minute in the ward;

fines for leaving scissors about, mislaying a key, forgetting to fasten a certain gate behind a certain officer, omitting to put your light out in your room at the regulated hour, and all the other little ills that your prison-life is heir to.

The most serious offence against the by-laws, mentioned above, is naturally that of losing a key; and matrons are unfortunate enough to lose one, now and then. Such an error as that leads to a great stir in the prison, and has been followed before now by dismissal from the service.

Many years ago, when less care was shown in the fitness of matrons for the post, a new officer who appeared amongst the general body was not regarded with so much friendliness or favour by all her sister-officers as a new-comer might have been led to expect. The majority were disposed to welcome her, and to initiate her into all the routine of the establishment, but there were certainly a few wanting in that good feeling which tends so much to reconcile the novice to her new position.

I do not know that there was anything particularly novel in this; men and women entering life and new worlds must expect to encounter a few adversaries by the way, and will have their battles to fight before they settle down in the places allotted to them. This was a world of women, where there is naturally a little jealousy to balance the affection and stanch friendships which evolve from prison service. I may say here that the matron was above the class amidst which she had been placed, and that it was difficult at first to reconcile herself to all the regulations of the mess-room table. But she worked her way steadily upwards; she found many friends to make up for a few who regarded her with jealousy, and she did not trouble herself a great deal about those who did not understand her.

The new matron, as I may call her for the sake of distinction, suddenly lost her key—a pass-key that would have been a valuable agent towards an escape in the hands of a designing prisoner. The

loss of this key was almost tantamount to a dismissal by the Board, and the officer was naturally anxious to discover it, more especially as she was totally unable to account for her loss. She sent in a report against herself to the superintendent, stating at the same time her conviction that the loss had not occurred through any carelessness on her own part, and then waited the result of being summoned to the Board-room on the next visiting day of the Director. Meanwhile, the key was found one morning on the door-step of the superintendent's office, which the matron under report was accustomed to enter with the other officers occasionally.

The loss at this juncture, and the discovery of the key in so conspicuous a place, were the more vexatious to the matron under suspicion as there had been a rumour circulating in the prison that she was about to be promoted by merit in lieu of seniority, and older officers than she had not been able to understand *that* method of promotion at all. The loss of the key had occurred at an inopportune

period for her chances of distinction, and the suspicion certainly crossed her mind that had the story not circulated at the various mess-rooms, her key would never have been missing. She was at least positive that it was not through any mistake of her own, and she went very confidently before the Director to assert that fact, when the visiting day finally arrived.

This was a matron's real trouble, and troubles not unakin to it, although not arising from the same cause, will occur in the course of an officer's time.

The Director, a man of keen perception and knowledge of the world, asked a few questions of the matron and the superintendent, listened attentively to the former's statement, and inquired concerning the rumour of promotion which had been lately a subject of conversation at the mess-room tables.

"Miss ——," he said, suddenly, "your name is struck off the report, and we believe that you are not to blame. We will advise you to be

careful, for it is possible that you have an enemy in the service."

I mention this occurrence to show the fairness with which a Director will adjudicate on delicate matters of controversy—on the troubles of the officers, for instance. The matron departed, shortly received her promotion, and some time afterwards was enabled to form a very shrewd guess as to who had been her enemy and tried to "work her out." It is satisfactory to add that this is an exceptional incident connected with the service, and that matrons are far more disposed in all cases to work together amicably, than to let difference of opinion, or petty jealousies, mar the good feeling that is existent amongst them. Bad matrons—women wholly unfit for their posts—have stolen into the service, I repeat, and been dismissed for incapacity; but they belong to the old times, and the present staff, I will venture to assert, has never been more complete, or of greater value as a working body.

Then there are troubles in prison between

a matron and the principal matron—a doubt whether the women have been fairly allotted to the share of the former, or whether a certain disproportion of "refractories" has not been allotted to her jurisdiction—troubles born of a jealous imagination, which will fancy at times that a principal favours Miss A. more than Miss B.

Now and then there are troubles with the lady-superintendent; and regulations added to the order-book; judicious regulations, probably, which affect the dignity of a ward. A remark upon general behaviour, perhaps, and then the little world of matrons is in agitation about its own affairs for a while rather than prison matters. There is the great trouble which *has* happened to the service of the peremptory dismissal of matrons from their post, and that is a trouble in which all the officers share, as though a certain portion of blame were attached to themselves, and there was no shaking it off. More troubles also with the stewards, clerks of

the works, and other "outsiders;" little sparring matches concerning the diet, and the salary, and the money that has been stopped for fines; discussions with the gate-keeper for being too hard upon them, and reporting them without fair warning or a fair allowance of "grace minutes."

Jealousy, of course, exists amongst the officers; not to any extent, and not interfering in any way with the working of the prison, but cropping out here and there unpleasantly, and marring the harmony of meetings after office hours. There are matrons who will see favouritism in every word of principals not addressed to themselves; and matrons who are susceptible to slights, and have their little "tiffs" with other matrons in consequence. It is a regiment of women, and the cynic will understand and readily believe that matrons have the "ruling fault" amongst them. But though they cause a little anxiety to principals, and mar the general harmony occasionally, the "differences" are not insurmountable, and there is always a

good friend in the midst to act as mediatrix.

To the graver trouble in the way of a matron's peace I have called attention on other occasions. The long-concealed hate of a prisoner that may vent itself in an attack from which there is no escape; the assaults to which one is subject from women suddenly angered; the danger that lurks in the wards at all seasons, and however careful the officer may be. The trouble, too, of feeling unfit for the service—of not being strong enough to endure the long, long hours of duty; and then the consciousness that you may be dismissed with a gratuity, and left with shattered health to begin the world afresh. Then ensues the desperate struggle to keep on duty at all hazards, and feign a strength that is not felt, rather than be thrown an invalid upon the world—a struggle which is against too many odds to be successful, and which ends in a complete break down.

I blame the Government for not being liberal

to its matrons in cases of this kind. I think a woman who has served her five or six years in prison, who gives way in the service, and is crushed by the arduous nature of its duties, as fairly entitled to her pension as she who has served her ten years. She has been "wounded in action," and is deserving of something more than the poor gratuity that is awarded her. Again, I think a matron who falls seriously ill, should be allowed a fair time to recover her strength before the summons issues from Parliament street that it has been considered necessary, with many regrets, &c., to recommend her to resign. A fair time is not always allowed, and an extension of a fortnight or a month's leave is given very grudgingly and ungraciously.

That is a sick matron's great trouble; for the matron may be a widow with children to keep beyond the prison, or one entirely dependent upon her salary from Government. The consciousness that there is little care for her after she is once struck down, that every day beyond her "leave"

will be carefully counted up and sit in judgment against her in a dread array of figures at the Board, renders a matron feverish and excitable, and retards recovery.

But *woman* is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upwards; and a matron encounters many barriers in her way before she is inured to her post, or wears the white ribbons.*

* The principal matrons of our Government female prisons are allowed the distinction of white bonnet strings.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SUSAN RICE.

I DO not draw attention to this woman by her real name, although the first few lines of description will readily lead to her recognition by those connected with our prisons. The public will be satisfied to know that there is a reason for altering her cognomen in these pages.

Susan Rice, or Old Rice, as she was generally called by the women, was a woman in "for the term of her natural life;" and there were doubts as to whether any liberty would be granted her at the end of ten years' servitude. It was a difficult question to solve, for Rice's had been a

terrible case of murder, and the first sentence, if my memory does not betray me, had been death.

At the time when she first came under my observation she was a woman of sixty-four or sixty-five years of age, a plain-featured but certainly meek old woman. The strange part of her character is, that Susan Rice who had been singularly desperate, bloody-minded, and heartless, was a model prisoner at Millbank and Brixton.

A quiet, inoffensive, harmless old woman she appeared by contrast with the unruly atoms of social disorder around her; scrupulously clean in her person, neat in her attire, and devoid of all those eccentricities to which so much space has been allotted in these volumes. A grave-faced, grey-haired, and motherly woman, who soon won to herself all the advantages which good behaviour entails — one whom prisoners respected, and whom matrons were assured that they could trust.

It is a singular fact connected with life in prison, that the crime of the prisoner is soon forgotten if the conduct be exemplary. A matron has so many trials with the unruly—feels herself so constantly on her guard against the majority of prisoners, that one who will not take advantage at every opportunity is set down as a "good woman," however villanous may have been the cause which has rendered it necessary to shut her away from decent life.

No one thought anything of Rice's crime after a while. Rice was a No. 1 woman, an infirmary nurse—one who might go whither it pleased her without much questioning, and from whom one was sure of implicit obedience. A cheerful prisoner, too, in her way, and of wonderful help in the infirmary, in soothing the sorrows and pains of the women who were committed to her charge.

There was no one like Rice to make one's bed, smooth one's pillow, apply bandages, and cleanse wounds, in the prisoners' estimation; Rice

was the woman to trust oneself to, and be sure of kindness and gentleness from under every variety of disorder. She became almost an infirmary nurse, and was always ready to respond to the call of the afflicted.

I may say that she was the Gamp of the prison, too, in the time when prisoners who were *enceinte* were drafted to Brixton for their confinement, and "Send for Rice" was the general rule whenever a little prison waif was expected in the world.

Rice was nurse for the occasion, tending upon the mother, and ministering to all her wants with that ease and care born of long practice, and yet which no former life had warranted. She was a woman especially fond of babies, also—washing them and feeding them with an evident delight in her task, and far more gentle in her manner of handling them than many of their rough and callous mothers.

It has always been a strange picture to me,

that of the murderess and the baby—the intense interest of the former in the troubles of the latter, and the extraordinary anxiety to soothe it in its many ailments. It was not possible to watch the woman and believe in her story; and it has struck more than me, that there must have been another version of her crime, which would have set her in a better light had she been so minded. But she was reticent concerning the past; she was a prisoner who seemed to acknowledge the justice of her sentence, by her settled manner of living—her resignation as it were to the inevitable.

She attended chapel regularly, listened very attentively to the sermon, and responded audibly in the prayers. She was a regular communicant, and I believe that she truly repented of her great crime, without making any parole of her penitence to the chaplain.

Such inconsistencies between the criminal and

the crime are not wanting in our prisons, and as a character worth drawing the reader's attention to, and worth reflecting upon, I have attempted this outline sketch.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON PRISON BABIES.

THE mention of Rice's attention to infants, and evident affection for them, in my previous chapter, suggests to me that an article on prison babies may not be considered out of place in this volume.

I do not intend to devote much space to the subject—a great deal that might have found room here having already had its proper space allotted to it in my article on "Prison Children,"* to which this will form a companion sketch.

It is a painful subject in one respect, but it shows at times the better nature of the prisoner,

* See "Female Life in Prison."

and there are little incidents connected with "prison babies" that are necessary to detail to render my book complete.

It is a painful subject, because one pauses to consider what will become of these babies when the mother and child go forth to the world —to count with "bated breath" the terrible odds against each child growing up to man or woman's estate in honesty, sobriety, and chastity —to reflect that it is most likely doomed to be a reflex of the guilty mother's life, and that there is no power to arrest its fall.

Surely better the hospital of *Enfans Trouvés* for such children, or an asylum in which discharged prisoners might be free to leave their offspring, might be even encouraged to leave them—the few who have motherly instincts, and would carry away the child at all hazards to its fate— than that we should deliberately see the young soul borne away to all that is soul-destroying. Thereby, some expense saved to a nation possibly, for there may return also in the course of years a

terrible per-centage of these prison-born to say, "Why, this is the place where I was born, and this is coming back to home!"

It is not every female convict that is fond of its baby, though the instinct is strong, and there is a love for it in most young mothers, that is natural enough. A child has its advantages, for it takes a prisoner out of the way of the rules a great deal—places the parent in the nursery at Brixton, and improves her scale of diet.

Prisoners who are likely to become mothers are now drafted to other places instead of Brixton, and, so far as locality is concerned, I am writing of what has been;—but the character is the same; and the interest that springs from a grave question loses nothing by the change.

The occupants of the Brixton nursery were prisoners too delicate for stone cells, but not weak enough for the infirmary—young mothers and half-witted women—and it was curious to notice the general interest of them all in the new baby when the prison mother came down

from the infirmary for the first time. A baby was a good test of character, for the sullen ones would immediately think of the bad nights that were in store for them when the "young un" was unwell, and the good-tempered and more tender-hearted prisoners would wish to nurse the baby at once, and be full of remarks about its size, weight, and general appearance. It would be a source of wonder for awhile to the prison children of two or three years old—children waiting for the mother's time to expire—and then the baby would become part of the establishment, to be tended carefully by its mother, if a well-behaved prisoner, or to be neglected for the "pal," and thrust upon anybody's kindness, if a bad one.

The christening of the child is the first consideration that is forced upon the prisoner, and a very quiet christening it is, occurring generally on lecture afternoons when there are but few women in the chapel.

The convict mother's first thought before the

christening is the cap for the child—she is anxious that the baby shall make a decent appearance at chapel, and she taxes her ingenuity to secure as smart a cap as possible. The cap itself she is generally fortunate enough to obtain from a matron, who does her best to make it a present for which the mother shall be grateful.

The present is gratefully received, but never *exactly* to the mother's taste—and the mother is found to have materially altered the shape, or the decoration in the ribbon department, before the cap is considered quite *en règle*.

Then, on some quiet afternoon, the strange, dull, almost anomalous christening takes place, and the child has a name as well as a local habitation.

In "Female Life" I have mentioned the fact of one prisoner placing a baby's cap on the fire, because it was a present not good enough for *her* child, and of another callous prisoner who preferred breaking out and going to the

dark to the trouble of nursing her little one. They are incidents that will bear producing again, as instances of the hardness of heart prevalent amongst a few of these mothers.

And what such mothers will do with their children after "liberty day" is a question worth repeating here, and worth a serious thought or two.

CHAPTER XX.

"SUSY DEAR."

IN "Female Life in Prison" attention is drawn to a woman whose peculiar idiosyncrasy was that of blowing out the lights in matrons' hands, whenever an opportunity occurred, and of extinguishing the gas in her cell by covering it with her "pint," and then rousing the prison with her cries that an explosion was imminent.

This young lady was "Susy dear," or Susan Dunn, better known by the former appellative to the prisoners, and latterly to the matrons, as it was found a pass-word to Susy's better qualities, and would at times allay a raging storm of opposition.

Susan Dunn was of a violent temper—a Glasgie woman, before Glasgie women were drafted to Perth, there to serve out long sentences — a long-sentenced woman, and one whose violence had brought her to prison—having struck down and nearly killed a butcher that had "trifled with her affections."

"In for stabbing a fleshman, I am," she said, with no small degree of exultation on one occasion, "and served him right too. I'm only sorry I did not do for him?"

Dunn was a giantess of a woman—a big, broad-shouldered, heavy female, who slouched to and fro in a desultory flat-footed fashion peculiar to herself. If that famous lady of the name of Wragg could have stepped out of Wilkie Collins' novel into F ward of Millbank Prison, there would have been but little difference in outward appearance between her and "Susy dear."

Dunn was a violent woman, I have said; but there was a method in her violence, and she considered that she always had wrongs to avenge

when she indulged in "a break-out." There were times when Dunn was the pattern of all that was amiable and bland, and rare peaceful interregnums they were considered by the matrons, and by those prisoners who were quietly disposed.

"Susy dear" was one of those female convicts whose sanity was not particularly apparent—but whose odd ways rendered it doubtful if it was safe to trust her by herself.

It was considered expedient to place her in one of the large association cells, and allow a little licence in her behaviour on account of the aberrations of her intellect.

This was judicious—for certainly there were times when Dunn was scarcely accountable for her actions, and at all times, in a good humour or a bad one, her eccentricity of conduct was remarkable.

When in association in Millbank Prison, it is the rule to leave the wooden door of the cell open in the ward, and the iron grating only locked

upon those sleeping in the cell. This allows of better ventilation, and this was the rule with Susan Dunn's cell, where two women kept her company, as in Jane White's case.

At this open grating, then, "Susy dear" was accustomed to appear at all hours of the night —turning out of her bed at the time she expected the night-officer in her rounds, and considerably startling that functionary by her gaunt, ghost-like figure close to the lattice door.

Dunn did not present a pleasant appearance at these unnatural hours—for her broad face was always of a ghastly whiteness, and there was a redness about her eye-lids that did not add in any way to her personal charms. In addition to this, she was a red-haired woman, and would frequently take a pleasure on these occasions in setting her short locks bolt-upright, in order to render herself as startling an object as possible to the officer going her rounds.

I have mentioned in my first work women who have begged for a scrap of tallow from the

night-officer's candle* as she passed on *duty, and* women who have invented excuses to get the officer within range and then scraped the melted tallow from the candles with a quick action of the hand, but Susy Dunn was a bolder strategist than this when disposed to set her heart on tallow candles.

A week's peace would be allowed the night-officer, until the appearance of Dunn at the grating was not looked for as a thing of course, and not prepared against. When the officer had become accustomed to the regularity and silence of the ward, Dunn, calculating the time to a nicety, would leave her bed and take her place close against the iron grating, ready to dart one long thin arm out to its fullest extent at the light in the officer's hand. Dunn was very long in the arm, and when the matron inclined more to Dunn's side of the corridor than to the opposite wall, the arm would suddenly dart forwards and

* The matron on night duty at Millbank carries a lighted candle for the purpose of looking through the trap of the dark cell in her hourly visits when a prisoner is under punishment.

the candle be snatched from the night-officer's possession.

"'Scuse me, Miss," Dunn would say, "but I haven't had a bit of fat on my hair for months, and you wont mind me taking a bit, I'm sure."

And here Dunn, not waiting for permission, would help herself, laughing very heartily at the manner in which she had outwitted the night-officer—and waking up her companions by the boisterous nature of her cachinations.

"It's only *me*," she would say to the women sitting up in bed rubbing their eyes, and exceedingly amazed at the light in their cells at that hour of the morning; "Miss —— has been good enough to lend me her candle for a little while."

"Give Miss —— her candle, Dunn," one of her companions would growl forth; whilst the night-officer would threaten all the pains and penalties that were legally justifiable for this gross infringement of the rules.

But Dunn would continue to laugh and help herself to the candle, occasionally returning it—for she was successful in this trick about a dozen times during her sojourn at Millbank—if addressed in a coaxing tone, and called "Susy dear," and at other times fighting with her associates for its possession, when in the scramble the light would be extinguished, and after a while the candle returned, so strangely diminished in size, and its exterior surface so deeply scored with finger-nails, that it was not a great matter for speculation as to the number who had helped themselves in the dark to grease.

"Susy dear" was very clever at blowing the candle out in revenge for its being beyond her reach also. When the matron, on guard against the long arm of Dunn, kept more closely to the other side, Dunn would suddenly give an impetuous "booh" through the grating, and in very many cases the flame would vanish beneath the force of air from the prisoner's lungs. This was a great feat, in Dunn's opinion, and she would

fall back on her bed and crow and shake, and shout with laughter, till half the ward was roused by her unseemly hilarity.

"My eye! she's got to go all the way back and light it again," she would roar forth; "it's out again—I've done it again—blessed if I ain't!"

It was considered necessary to prevent "Susy dear" from these freaks when they became too flagrant; but Susy did not care, in a great degree, for punishment; and as her health very quickly began to suffer in "refractories," it was seldom more than a quarter of her sentence that she was allowed to undergo.

In the dark cell her eccentricity, combined with her impudence, did not leave her for all her failing strength. The night-officer was still the object of her "little jests," and the day-officer also in her visits to the dark.

It is a custom to ask if the prisoner is all right within, and if the voice responds from the dark in the affirmative, the trap is not opened

every hour, but the woman's assurance of her safety taken for granted. But Dunn was never disposed to save anybody trouble, and when the question was put to her if she was all right, no answer was returned, although she was right enough to be on her feet close to the door with her pint of water in her hand ready to launch at the head of the first one who opened the trap. And no answer forthcoming, the trap was opened, and out flew the water, deluging the matron or not, according to her quickness in eluding the stream. If Dunn was in the dark, the matron was generally on guard, however; and therefore a great deal of the prisoner's efforts to annoy her officer was unavailing.

Matrons who knew her best, and who found her railing at every one, and dashing herself about frantically in the dark, would endeavour to reason with her through the trap; and here the difference in Dunn to other refractories would assert itself, and after awhile she would sit up and listen if the argument were gently conveyed,

and "Susy dear" were included now and then in the appeal.

Unlike other prisoners of a mad tendency, Dunn did not betray greater signs of mental weakness as her term of prison life extended. She gave way, perhaps, more in health than in mind, though her strength never wholly failed her, and she always presented the appearance of a robust and powerful woman; there were times in fact when she displayed so great a degree of muscular power, that the idea conveyed itself to the suspicious mind that Dunn had been shamming sickness to get herself into infirmary quarters.

"Susy dear" took a sudden dislike to a certain officer, and with much prodigality of language gave out that it was her intention to smash her, to jump on her, and to take the life of her at the first convenient opportunity. Dunn was in bed at this time in the infirmary ward at the top of the prison, and almost unable to move hand or foot; and there was something

inconsistent and ridiculous in the fierce threats of this invalid as she lay helpless in her bed.

But Susan Dunn was not so helpless as her attendants imagined, and was more methodical in her wrongs than usual. When it was supposed that she was at her worst, Dunn coolly stepped out of bed at about six in the evening, and strode out of the infirmary howling forth her denunciations on the matron who had offended her, and who she knew was on duty in her ward on that particular night.

Dunn took everybody by surprise, and had left the infirmary and found her way into the lower ward, in a manner that has ever remained unaccountable—as the iron gate at the foot of the stairs should have been locked as usual—before an effort was made to arrest her progress.

"Where's Miss ——?" she shouted. "I want to know where the woman is who has been trampling me down!"

Her appearance created considerable surprise amongst officers and women as she stalked along

in her night-dress, and the cry of "Dunn's loose!"—as though Dunn were a wild beast—echoed along the corridors.

Then came officers round her to check her further progress, and Dunn began to resist oppression and make ready for fierce opposition. A scuffle had already commenced, and Dunn's muscular vigour was found not to have deteriorated in any great degree, when the infirmary nurse came hurrying to the scene of conflict. The nurse—a clever nurse, and a woman of no small penetration—seeing the danger that was threatening both Dunn and the officers, flung her arms round the former, and begged her to return with her to the infirmary.

"You'll come with me, Susy dear," she said, to this giantess towering above the rest, with hands clenched and eyes blazing. "There, Susy, I'm sure you'll come with me."

"Susy dear" even received a light kiss on the cheek to add to these entreaties, and the arm fell to the side and the stern expression of the face relaxed.

"Well, if it'll make a *row*, or get *you* into trouble," said Susy, "I'll go back again."

And turning round "Susy dear" and her nurse went away side by side; and in this friendly juxtaposition they proceeded to the infirmary, where Dunn got into bed and began phlegmatically finishing the gruel which she had left at the side of her couch before starting on her errand of vengeance.

Dunn continued eccentric to the end of her sentence, and went away to Glasgow at last, hoping that she should keep out of prison, but doubtful herself how far she could trust her temper with no one to look after her.

The rumour reached the prison that within three weeks after her liberty she had been re-arrested on a new crime, and was a prisoner in Glasgow gaol—a fact which was considered probable though there were no proofs forthcoming, and it was nobody's business to inquire into the case.

But a friend in making the inspection of the

great convict establishment at *Perth*, was shown the subject of my present sketch.

"This is one of our most troublesome women—and not quite right," was added in a lower voice; and, as the door opened, Susan Dunn rose to her full stature and dropped her prison curtsey to the visitor.

CHAPTER XXI.

BEFORE THE PRISON.

AS the opportunity may never present itself again for me to face my readers, as I shall soon have completed my work, and fairly exhausted my subject, I intend to devote the present chapter to a consideration of what happens before the sentence—what are the causes which lead upwards to the prison, and what can be done by earnest thinkers and *workers* to stem the current for ever flowing onwards to the gaol.

I shall take the liberty to repeat myself in some degree, for I can but point again to the old guilt-spots, the black land-marks indicated in my "Memoirs of Jane Cameron;" and I can but

call attention to the books, and articles, and evidences before special commissions, which again and again have shown too clearly what are the causes of crime, and yet which have done so little hitherto to strike at the deadly root of all things evil.

It is not difficult to show how crime begins, and how rapidly it spreads—to point out the foul ulcers on the body of society, and suggest the remedy; better writers, and wiser women than I, have done this over and over again, and still society takes no heed, but pays its quota to the erection of new prisons.

The efforts of the few who are working to stem the tide and throw a light of righteousness into the dark places, are weakened yet by the indifference of the many—even, alas! by the scepticism of the many, doubting to the last if such things really exist—if such hideous descriptions are not the fancy sketches of imaginative writers.

For instance, but a few months since, in the

columns of the *Times*, appeared a letter scoffing at a previous writer's assertion concerning trained thieves, expressing a total disbelief in those dens of infamy where boys and girls are taught the art of thieving, and maintaining that Fagin and his gang, in Dickens' "Oliver Twist," had no foundation in fact, but sprung from the vivid imagination of our novelist. The author of the letter added that he had taxed several of the detective police with the facts, and challenged them to show him one place where crime was made a study, or taught in lessons to its apt disciples, that the challenge had been evaded, and the assertion of "the facts" shifted from the shoulders of one detective to another.

Let me reply here, then, that there are scores of such "schools" in existence in London, Liverpool, Glasgow, Manchester, and, in fact, in all large towns—that thieving *is* a profession, and is taught as a profession, just as Fagin the Jew taught poor Oliver in a house near Field-lane.

The detective police are aware of these schools,

but it cannot be imagined that it is possible even for them to find the academy of the Evil One at full work when they intrude upon the lessons. The police enter a house that is known to be a thieves' resort, and knock at a certain door upon a certain floor for admittance, and when the door is opened a number of men, women, and children are found quietly seated in a room together, talking, singing, laughing, or smoking, and will very naturally continue thus until the police have gone away.

But the prisoners with whom I have conversed in their cells—some of them repentant prisoners, with no object in life to exaggerate—have spoken of their "schools," of the number who preferred Old Jenkinson's teaching to that of Mother Hunt's, of the practice that went on continually in sham pocket-picking, until they were qualified to go forth into the streets and pick pockets in earnest.

Pocket-picking with success, let me add, too, is not a gift spontaneously acquired, and must

have been taught; and there are men and women who are not captured for years, although their nefarious business goes on night after night, and watches, shirt-pins, purses, and pocket-handkerchiefs disappear like magic from the passers-by.

Many prisoners have been brought up to stealing by their mothers, and not put to any especial "school," simply for the reason that the whole family is a school in itself, where mother, father, brothers, and sisters earn their seven or eight hundred a year together, and, if prudent with their earnings, put money in the bank.

The question for us to consider, however, is not, "Can such things be?" but "Can such things be rooted out, or kept from spreading?" Is it an impossible task for the philanthropist to keep the devil at bay?

Crime will exist in great cities, alas! and where there are careless people in the streets, there will follow the stealthy tread of the thief. There are men and women in every "Guilt Garden,"

whom nothing will turn from the error of their ways, and whose fitting place is the gaol; but there are men and women who are led into temptation by the ease with which the trade is taught and made to seem pleasant. I do not understand why thieves—thieves known to the police—should be allowed to consort together night after night, to increase their ranks, mature their plans, pave the way in security to this man's house or that man's property. The answer is, I know, that it is convenient for the police and furthers the ends of justice; that a man under suspicion can be found by those means, and that the thieves once scattered would be difficult of apprehension.

Still, scatter them. Let men who are known to live by stealing find it difficult to meet in any number; let houses where thieves resort be suppressed, crushed out by the strong hand of the law; let the foolish and weak who are on the brink of crime—led away perhaps by Dick Turpin or Jack Sheppard books—not find it an easy

task to meet with men ready to applaud them for giving way to every evil thought by which they are beset.

Let the progress of successful crime be rendered more difficult with old and hardened sinners, and, above all, let honest poverty, I urge, be allowed fair play—fair room to work, and less official interference.

We read in the papers very frequently, and those who are resident in London see more frequently still, that the costermongers and the hawkers in the streets are not allowed much rest in their vocations, lest the regular traffic of the streets should be impeded. This regulation may be necessary in certain thoroughfares, but ask the stall-keepers—and there are many hard-working and industrious people amongst them—whether the orders issued from Scotland-yard, and the peremptory mode in which those orders are carried out, are not hard to bear up against, and do not drive some to dishonesty?

The ranks of the dishonest are often filled by the costermongers whose barrows have been wheeled away to the station-house, or who have been summoned to appear for obstruction of a pathway, or incivility to the police.

"My husband was a costermonger before the police were down upon him," more than one prisoner has said to me. And whether the order be judicious in itself, or that judiciousness belonging to it has been perverted by the method in which it has been carried out, certain it is that harm is done not unfrequently, and that the street-hawker becomes the street-thief, and defies the law which would not let him rest.

Sir Richard Mayne, in 1863, asserted, "that he attributed the great increase of crime to the accumulation of criminals in the metropolis who have not the means of obtaining an honest livelihood."

It was not a great while after this report was printed that Sir Richard Mayne issued his famous

ukase to clear a certain street, Westminster way, of a long line of costermongers, whose stalls had been allowed to skirt the footpath for a considerable number of years!

The order was not rescinded I believe, and the pavement is clear for passers by; but what has become of the men and women from whom an honest livelihood was suddenly snatched away?

Let the philanthropist in seeking for the many causes of crime not forget that to throw difficulties in the way of the huckster is to add to his difficulties of living honestly.

The writer need not point to the gin-shops as another cause of crime; that is apparent enough, and temperance advocates have dwelt sufficiently upon the subject without my interference. It is enough to endorse their verdict, that drink *is* the cause of half the mischief in the world, and that the convicts of our prisons will confess as much.

"I took to drinking, and then I went

wrong!" is an old cry, ringing out from the cells with awful frequency.

But let us consider what makes our thieves, whence they spring, and how is it possible in the early stage, and before the feelings are wholly blunted, to check the progress—yes, the PROGRESS of crime!

Is it possible? By what means?—by what agents?

It is a difficult task, but it does not seem quite impossible, if the number of those fitted to the task were multiplied tenfold, and if the children of the poor were compelled to learn, and neglect and ignorance — parents of crime—were attacked more constantly, and with greater vigour, wherever found. Is there not a law in Germany that the parents shall be compelled to send their children to school to learn their letters and hear the word of God? And what harm—what possible harm—could result from such a law in England, supposing that schools to receive them were ready to the hand?

If there are not enough free schools, we could build them; and surely we had better build schools than prisons now-a-days. That is a grand cry, "The liberty of the subject;" but when liberty results in a terrible ignorance, it is time to think of measures that shall bind a pleasant fetter on the subject, for which in after years he will be grateful.

Take the lodging-houses also in crowded districts, and see what must result from the crowding together of numbers of men, women, and children in the dens of our great cities. Surely here is a cause of crime indeed, a cause that exists in defiance of lodging-house Acts, and I think grows worse instead of better.

See what is doing night after night in the back streets of Whitechapel, Drury-lane, Southwark, and Lambeth; in the closes and wynds of Edinburgh and Glasgow—everywhere, in fact, where lodgings are very cheap, dirty, and unwholesome. You may count seven or eight upon the floor of a little room, huddled together

like cattle, grateful for the roof over their heads, thankful for the twopence which they have begged, and which has secured them a place above the workhouse at least, and given them society with its foul jests and gibes, its stories of how money can be earned quickly by a clever set of fingers, and what a fable that talk of honesty being its own reward is!

I remember in my Glasgow wanderings in search of facts connected with Jane Cameron, coming upon a room in Wallace-court, where six girls were lying together on a floor strewn with shavings, in a stifling, fever-haunted den at the top of the house; all girls under fifteen years of age, who had been street wanderers for years already, and who worked occasionally and when it pleased them. There was not one who could read or write I ascertained; two of them had been turned out of doors for misbehaviour by parents who thought it easier to cast them on the streets than seek in any way to reform them; another had run away of

her own free will; a fourth had no remembrance of a father, and her mother was then in Glasgow prison, and would be out next Saturday, whilst the fifth and sixth were at work at a cotton factory—in business for themselves, and left to choose their own amusements and their own companions after the hours of work were over for the night.

Ah! and the amusements of the poor—of the young and impressionable—the dancing skeels or schules for the Irish or Scotch girls and apprentices—the halfpenny and penny "hops" of the English cities—the singing-rooms—the heterogeneous entertainment, which is neither singing nor dancing, and contrives to evade the law—the "gaff," which is kept up till the law attacks it—the cheap judge and juries, with young thieves for judge, jury, prisoner and counsel—the marionette theatres, where the admittance is one penny, and the entertainment the vilest and most obscene that can be offered by the owners of these puppets.

The difficulties in the way of a "penny gaff" —that is, where an attempt is made to evade the license for theatrical entertainments—has led to the substitution of marionette theatres, where all the plays in favour at the minor theatres are, with hideous interpolations, performed by wooden dolls to an audience of factory boys and girls, who throng the place night after night, and render the night hideous with noise and blasphemy. After the piece—generally a sensation drama, with a brigand, smuggler, or highwayman for hero—there is a medley entertainment of singing and dancing represented by these puppets, when the audience join in chorus in all the revolting subjects which can be offered them by the wretches who drive this trade and know what pleases most!

Mary Carpenter, in her great work of "Our Convicts," has called attention to the low singing-rooms at Preston, in quoting the "Twenty-seventh Report of the Rev. John Clay;" but there are such rooms in every large city in the kingdom,

and why they are suffered to exist is not readily apparent, when their existence sets at defiance all common decency and order.

After all I am but repeating here, in my own fashion, the different causes of crime which clergymen, city missionaries, all writers on the subject have mentioned before, but which I think cannot be written about too often or dwelt upon too earnestly, whilst such things live.

We may induce the legislature to interfere some day by our constant hammering on the question; and I repeat again in this place, that whilst the children of the poor are driven to work at an age when they should be led to school—or are made to work at long hours of overtime when they should be in their beds—or are left wholly idle and in ignorance, and have "the run of the streets" all day and night—or are tempted to steal for their own subsistence, for the pleasures of the dancing-room, the concert, and the theatre, and are constantly locked up for stealing, taking their sentence after sentence

with perfect composure or bravado — whilst even the literature offered to those who can read is a bastard literature, that degrades the reader and excites his imagination with the doings of dishonest heroes — whilst the road to ruin is made easy, and the road to reform full of barriers in the way, which only the very strong of heart and faith can overleap— then we must keep studying our prison systems and building our great receptacles for convicts.

I have before alluded to the pernicious effect of "Jack Sheppard," and other works based on a criminal career; but at the present time a glance at the booksellers' shops in low neighbourhoods will show how the curse of a thieves' literature is spreading. The windows are full of penny serial tales concerning "Boy Brigands," the "Boy Detective," "Money Marks"—who, by the way, is described as the one celebrated highwayman in advance of all his illustrious predecessors— "Charley Wag," together with new romances,

called "Black Bess," "Tom King," "Blueskin," "Jonathan Wild," and other titles that suggest the old stories, and indicate that the old characters will appear in fresh scenes and commit any fresh crimes which the imagination of some wretched scribe may suggest.

These stories are all supplied at a penny per number, and each number contains a startling wood-cut, and an incident of criminal life equally as startling, wherein the thief is generally the hero, and great in highway robbery and prison breaking. In a very few, an attempt is made toward the close of the story—generally in the last number—to point a moral, with a clumsy sentence or two concerning the advantages of living honestly and away from such scenes as have been described in glowing colours for the last one hundred and three numbers; but the moral hangs fire, and is only presented when the author is sure that it cannot damage the circulation.

The circulation of these works is large also,

the newsvendors tell us, and is sustained chiefly by boys and girls—by the very classes, in fact, from which these pernicious stories should be kept away.

England is tenacious concerning the liberty of the press, but I do not think that the press would raise an outcry against the sweeping away from the field of literature such rank and loathsome weeds. No greater support to my argument can be found than something which has appeared in our newspapers since this work was commenced. A number of boys—some of them of respectable parents—are found to have organized themselves into a gang, with a captain and lieutenant at their head, to prey upon shopkeepers and general society, and each of these boys has adopted an *alias* corresponding with the hero of those identical books to which I have drawn attention.

To check the progress of crime, then, it is acknowledged that it is necessary to do something. In the richest country in the world are

the means wanting for a few experiments, or must we write and argue and entreat in vain, whilst thieves are multiplying year after year, born of our general apathy?

I think that all who have thought on the subject are agreed upon the causes which demoralize the youth of our great cities, and when the causes are pointed out, the remedies are not far off.

Cleanliness, education, religion, incessant watchfulness of the children of the poor, will effect a great deal, and it is in the hands of thousands upon thousands to do good by their personal efforts, their influence, or their money. We have no right—and Government has less right than we have—to sit down supinely, and say that "We have done our best, and there remains nothing more to be done."

Better to confess that we have miserably failed, and are now determined to do better, to attack the enemy in new directions and on his own ground, allowing him no rest.

For whilst we slacken in our strength, and believe that we are at the end in lieu of the beginning of our resources, the evil grows apace.

Ye who rest, remember that in England CRIME IS ON THE INCREASE! That is a terrible truth which should haunt the memory of every honest man, until the good time comes when he can point to "Facts and Figures," and say crime is less in England than it has ever been!

CHAPTER XXII.

AFTER PRISON.

AS a companion chapter to my last, it may be well to consider what happens to the prisoners after their term of penal servitude has expired, and what chances are before them in the way of reformation. Does the convict come out after long years of discipline and moral teaching a better man or woman? or has he or she fulfilled the sentence deaf to all good advice, and ready to return with greater vigour, and greater caution, to the past career?

They are solemn questions, and, alas! easily answered. The majority of our prisoners are unrepentant; they have been "unfortunate," they

must take greater pains in future to keep from the clutches of the police, and they turn back on their own benighted road, full of confidence in the friends whom they shall meet, and the luck that will come to them to make amends for that last "unlucky bit of business!"

They have been prolific of promises to amend to the chaplain probably; it is a way of taking their departure gracefully. It pleases one who has shown an interest in them—but they have no desire to amend, and no belief that any amendment in the world would profit them. From this class there are a few who go further, and make a little show for a while of repentance—who add hypocrisy to their sins, and laugh at the believers in their regeneration.

It is not this class which I propose to follow after prison servitude is over, and the gates are opened to admit them to the world again; but the few who are imbued with some good, but weak intentions to do better in future, and the fewer still who are resolved to turn away at any

sacrifice from the past, which has brought them to shame.

It is difficult to distinguish at first between these two subdivisions of the better class of criminals; they seem both hopeful of the future, and confident in their new exertions to live honestly, and it is only by the way in which they resist temptation that the truly penitent is ascertained.

The following narrative was detailed to a prison matron by a returned woman—one who went away with a resolution "to do better this time"—and who, to prove her determination not to mix any more with the "old gang" deposited her gratuity money with the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, as a guarantee of good faith, and was placed in a lodging by its late able secretary, Mr. Partridge—the Home for Female Convicts having ceased to exist for want of funds.

From these lodgings, after a few days waiting for a situation, the woman went again to the secretary, and received a certain sum from her

gratuity, on some plea or other, and then as she phrased it in recapitulation, "took a good long walk through the streets to see the shops."

Here she encountered one "of the old set"—one of the many whose example had brought her to ruin. A woman of good intentions this must have been to have gone to the Discharged Prisoners' Aid at all, but still a foolish woman who saw no harm in receiving the congratulations of, and entering into conversation with, an old friend who had been more fortunate than she in keeping out of gaol.

It was a male friend, too, and he suggested that they should take a glass together in remembrance of old times, and trusted to her generosity to treat him.

The rest of the story, I tell, to a certain extent, in her own words—to indicate the easy nature of the woman, and the little real repentance there was in her.

"It was a cold day, and we got drinking rum, and I stood two glasses each, because he

asked me, and was short of money himself, he said. Then we got talking of old times, and had some more rum, till I was fuddled a bit, and didn't exactly know what I was saying. He laughed a good deal at my trying to get a situation, and said that I shouldn't keep it a month whenever I got it—that I should be sick of it and run away. Then we went out together for a walk, and, as it came on to rain, we went into another public-house and had some more drink, which almost upset me. I don't think I could have been quite myself after that, for I shouldn't have done what I did all in a minute, and my gratuity not all paid off either! We went into Drury-lane, where we met an old gentleman, who seemed well to do, and had a big bunch of gold seals at his watch-chain, and I went up and spoke to him, whilst my friend came behind and "grottered" him. We took his watch and put him in a doorway; but the police were hot upon us, and caught us both before we could get away. So I came back, though I never

intended, upon my soul, to see the inside of this place again!"

The woman was not sorry for her new offence, but for the clumsy way in which it had been perpetrated, and the "little run" that she had had *after* her liberty had been granted her. As for the old gentleman, had he been killed by the "grottering," and she had been fortunate enough to effect her escape, it would have been regarded as a luckier incident in her career.

"I wasn't quite sober," she added; "but I meant to have gone back to my lodgings, and kept quite straight after that!"

And this is not an exceptional woman, but one of a class—a spasmodic, erratic class, that are "half a mind" to try an honest course of life, and keep out of harm's way for the future.

There are prisoners of this class also, who "pal in" together out of prison as well as in—whose liberty occurring about the same period enables them to add their gratuities together,

and set up in a small way for themselves. There is a novelty in this attempt at an honest life that is now and then pleasing to the professional —and two good needlewomen, or two good labour-women, will occasionally make the attempt. Here is the honest impulse which might be improved upon with friends at the right moment to support these women by their counsel and their patronage. But they are independent of the Aid, and they are trying the experiment, at all events, till they get all their money out of Government hands !*

Then comes a check to their intentions—a little " bad luck" which they cannot stand, and did not expect; or suddenly the old faces appear in their way, and then begins the old story with but minor variations. Oh ! those terrible old faces, which sweep away the good endeavours—which the discharged prisoners cannot bear to see, and yet which tempt them to see them more frequently—

* It has been explained in a former work that the money earned by a prisoner is given to her by instalments.

which they cannot refrain, even whilst resolving to keep honest, from longing to see now and then!

Then follow all the meetings at the old haunts; and "the game" that is made of the discharged prisoner's spasms of contrition or fear of the gaol; the sneers at the paltry pittance which she can earn by nearly working her life out, six days out of seven.

"They made such fun of me, that I was obliged to give it up," said a woman of this class; "and it did seem hard that I couldn't earn more than nine or ten shillings a week—honest as I was into the bargain!"

The readers of "Jane Cameron" may remember therein the story of Mary Loggie, who repented of her evil ways, and married a workman at Glasgow. By a singular coincidence a prison matron, but a very little while ago, met with a similar case, which is worth recording. It shows by what strange means, and even under what adverse circumstances, a woman's regeneration may be worked out sometimes.

It is a case of a woman who had made no effort at repentance, and therefore points no particular moral. A discharged prisoner had strayed into a music-hall in the eastern quarter of London—whether for amusement, or business, it is difficult to say—and there had met with a mechanic who had spoken to her, offered her drink, and who became, in fact, her companion during the evening. These two parted with a promise to meet again at the same place, and met there more than once, walked together on Sundays in the Victoria Park, Bethnal Green; finally, made up their minds to take each other for better, for worse; and were married one Sunday morning at a church in the neighbourhood.

The matron who had the charge of this woman at Brixton Prison, and the woman who had found a husband in so strange a manner, met face to face in the London streets a few months since. The woman was carrying her first baby, and very proud of her charge she was.

She was the first to recognize a prison face, and came up frankly to her old officer.

"You didn't think ever to see me again, Miss," she said. "I hope you remember who I am."

The matron had not forgotten her; and after a few inquiries, the woman told the story as it has been detailed above. She was very happy, she added; she had never told her husband, and he had every faith in her; she would not tell her husband for all the world what *she* had been! He thought that she had been a needlewoman all her life; and she was not going to frighten him by the truth. They had been married fifteen months at that time, and this was her first child. Her husband got plenty of work, and he was the best of fellows!

As a parallel case to Mary Loggie's, this is a singular truth that is stranger than fiction.

As an addendum to this anecdote, and as an illustration of how incidents like these are considered by prisoners, it may be added that the

matron related the story to one or two prisoners who had known the woman at Brixton.

"To think that any one should have picked her up like that," one remarked; "I'll go to a music-hall directly I'm out of this, and see what I can do!"

Apart from the wavering class, of which I have treated, there are the wholly bad and the wholly good women then. The bad march away to the old quarters at once, with a curse on the prison, and all whose task it has been to exact discipline therein. They are met outside by their "friends," who know to the day and hour the time that they will breathe free air again; and if the prisoner is a woman of any note in "the profession," there will be rare drinking and feasting — at the expense of the prisoner certainly — in commemoration of her liberty. If she is a woman who has been unlucky in her prison life, and earned no gratuity, who has broken out, and torn up her work, and been altogether defiant, there will be a raffle for

her handkerchief, apron, or cap at high prices, and the whole proceeds will be tendered to her to keep her mind easy on the score of funds until she can "get her hand in" to the old life once more.

Lastly, the really penitent women — "the examples" which one can quote in the wards, to bring the tears into the eyes of many listeners; the examples of penitence, and steady perseverance in a new and better life! There are a few women to mention—women whom prisoners have known, and therefore the moral of whose lives strikes home—who have gone from prison to the Discharged Prisoner's Aid Society — concerning which institution I have a few more words to say before my task is ended—or to the homes of friends, more honest than they have been, and in the midst of many difficulties and discouragements fought upwards, and dropped not back to the old level.

They have read their Bible, and believed in what it taught them, and they have never flinched. Sad records there are, sad records

there must be, of women who, with all these hopes at the outset, fall back after two or three years' struggle to keep true to their promises. But there remain some glorious examples of hopes that have not died out, and of lives that have remained undimmed by the breath of evil passing through their world.

Let us think now and then of those who leave the prisons, and look round piteously for help, as well as of those whom we would keep out of prison altogether. "There is more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than of ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance."

And there is one *tempter* the less, as well as one sinner, when the convict turns away from the darkness.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JULIA MOX.

IN the thirteenth chapter of the first volume of the present work, I have devoted some space to the eccentricities of one Mary Mox, a tiresome prisoner in the old Millbank days.

The woman whom I designate as Julia Mox in this place, although bearing the same surname as the woman above alluded to, was no relation, and had no anterior knowledge of her. They were together for a while at Millbank Prison—Julia Mox being at the end of a long sentence at the time that Mary of that ilk presented herself before the prison authorities.

The character of Julia Mox was not unlike

that of Mary's; for Julia was a "tiresome" prisoner at her best, and a violent and desperate at her worst—a worst which occurred with greater frequency.

She finds a place at the bottom of my list of prison notabilities more on account of her mutation of character than of being anything exceptional to the common run of female convicts. She came to Millbank twice—served her time for two offences in that prison—and presented herself a very different woman on the second occasion to that which she had done on the first.

Let me speak of her first term to begin with. She was a troublesome prisoner then—excitable to a degree, and ready to break out at any reproof or report. A bad-tempered prisoner, with a certain amount of humour in her composition that developed itself at periods awkward for the carrying out of ward-discipline, and was at times a greater source of annoyance than her fits of wrath.

An exceedingly plain girl was Julia Mox—pock-marked, wry featured, and with a cavernous mouth stocked with teeth enough for two. Vain to a degree—as are most of the ill-favoured prisoners—and inclined to resent at once any remarks from her fellow-prisoners that might be considered disparaging to her personal appearance.

She broke out, went to "the dark," came back and broke out again, went back to "the dark" as a matter of course, and occasionally varied this oscillatory progress by a term of five or six weeks' good behaviour, when she laughed, showed her teeth, and teased her fellow-prisoners—on one occasion being nearly the promoter of a general uproar in the airing-yard.

One of her "humorous" tricks was the cause of a great sensation at Millbank — at chapel-time, too, when prisoners are naturally expected to be extra decorous. The service had not begun, but the women were all in their places,

when the officers were unable to account for a universal tittering which appeared to prevail in the body of the chapel, and to prevail without any reason that could on the instant be detected.

The cause was at last found in Julia Mox, who was seated gravely in her place with a demure expression of countenance, and who bore upon her head a cap, entirely altered from the regulation shape, and transformed into a most outrageous kind of mob-cap, as it may be called —the border of which had evidently been rolled round her broom-stick before coming into chapel. In addition to this, and to still further add to her grotesque appearance, Julia Mox had borrowed or stolen a pair of spectacles from one of the old women in her ward, and placed them across her nose to increase the effect of her "make-up."

Julia Mox continued obstinate and refractory to the last day of her time, and went away in a defiant and unthankful spirit that led no one to hope that she would be very long away.

She was away a longer time than was anticipated, however—for it was close upon eighteen months when she reappeared at Millbank, a prisoner on a sentence for stealing a shawl from a shop-door. To avoid recognition, she had adopted the old trick of a change of name, and she arrived at Millbank bearing the name of a well-known literary lady—Julia Kavanagh!

The remarkable part of Mox's appearance—I will continue to call her Mox to the end of the chapter now—was the entire change that she and her character had undergone since she was last subjected to prison discipline. She had left Millbank the first time a slovenly and unruly prisoner; she took her place in prison a second time a woman who was always neat in her attire, scrupulously clean, and, above all, the meekest and quietest of prisoners!

Julia Mox, in her new estate, was obedient to orders, civil to the officers, anxious to please, to do her fair share of work at all times, and with no more idea than a baby of creating a disturb-

ance in the wards by breaking her windows or tearing up her blankets.

She protested her innocence of the second charge very indignantly—that was the only subject which appeared to disturb her equanimity. She had an odd story to tell of the cause which led to her arrest, but she expected no one to doubt her word, and to see the reflex of a doubt even on the countenance of her listener was to dissolve Julia Mox, *alias* Kavanagh, into tears.

"She had settled down quite comfortably in life"—this was the gist of her story—"she had married a soldier, and had taken to washing. She had got on very well till her husband had been ordered away with his regiment to a distant part of the world, and she was left to shift for herself for awhile. Then the bad luck came, the washing did not pay, and Julia Mox was at her wits' end. Then, too, on one unlucky night, poor Julia, tired out with a long day's tramp in search of a situation, or

work to do, or anything that would enable her to live honestly, sat down late at night to rest herself upon a door-step, went to sleep there, and woke up, to her great surprise, in the hands of the police!"

"As sure as I'm a-living," Julia Mox would asseverate, "somebody, while I was a-sleeping, took my old rug* off my shoulders, popped on a new one that had been stolen somewhere, and left me to be pulled up before the magistrates!"

It was a curious defence, and certainly had no weight with the dispensers of the law. Julia Mox was found guilty, and was sent in due course to Millbank Prison, to work out a new sentence of four years' penal servitude.

And she worked that sentence out with credit to herself as a well-behaved and orderly prisoner. She had one trouble, which became a trouble to her officers and the authorities after awhile—and that was her husband, the soldier. She was very anxious to know what had become of

* Shawl.

him, and to let him know what had become of her.

Every letter-writing day she concocted, with much labour and hard study, an epistle to one "Private Kavanagh," begging him to write a line to her, and to tell her when she might expect him back in his native country; which epistle was returned to her in due course, with "Not known in the regiment" scored across it.

Julia Mox tried almost every corps in turn, I believe, for she had become confused as to the number of the regiment, and was not quite certain whether her dear husband was in the ninth or the ninety-ninth, or a number between the two. All she knew was that his name was Kavanagh, and that ought to be sufficient for anybody to find him who took any pains in the matter at all, she thought.

But no one appeared to take any pains, in the prisoner's idea; and as her letters came back, so Julia Mox took to fretting at her constant disappointments.

For a long while the sceptical officers considered that the story was an elaborate piece of fiction evolved from the woman's fertile imagination, but her persistence in one topic, her continual inquiries, and above all, her grief, which was evidently not assumed, began to impress those thrown in contact with her with the truth, or part of the truth, of her strange narrative.

Julia Mox's husband began to arouse public indignation at his very bad treatment of his wife. He had never written to the address where he had left Mox, and in fact he had wholly vanished without leaving a trace of his whereabouts. Mox was always imbued with the belief that news had arrived at the prison, but that the glad tidings had been forgotten to be communicated to her.

She was constantly putting down her name to see the governor—who was at that time the ruling agent of the female as well as the male pentagons—and harassing that exemplary officer,

when shown into his presence, by questions concerning her husband.

"Had anything been heard of him now, please, sir? And please, sir, can't something more be done for her?—for it was very hard to know that he wasn't to be found, and that she couldn't go to him when her time was up. She was sure it was a foot regiment, and that his name was Kavanagh!"

On some days she would brighten up very much; she had remembered the name of the regiment in the night, she would say, and please put her name down to see the governor at once, for he would be glad too, *she* was certain, that there was a likelihood of settling the matter at last.

But there was no settling the matter. After a new letter had been dispatched, Mox would be not *quite* certain if that number of the regiment was right after all; and shortly afterwards be greatly excited by a new number which had suggested itself, and which she was sure

was the one that had "bothered" her so long!

The good chaplain of the prison showed an interest in this story of Mox's also, and took pains in his turn to find Kavanagh, writing private letters to friends, and seeking by every means to find a clue to the mystery. But that clue was never found, and the real private Kavanagh remains to this day enveloped in those clouds in which it pleased him to enwrap himself; unless—and the suspicion will rise to the surface—private Kavanagh was a myth identical with that famous Mrs. Harris, whom a still more famous Mrs. Gamp was in the habit of introducing into conversation. At all events, Julia Mox, *alias* Kavanagh, left prison without having elicited any information concerning her husband.

"Now she was her own mistress," she said, on departure, "she should have time to look after him for herself, and she'd lay any money that she found him!"

If the discovery has ever been made of that mysterious son of Mars, he has at least had the good sense to keep his wife from prison again.

CHAPTER XXIV.

STEPS TO SALVATION.

I CANNOT understand—I shall never be able to understand—why a generous and large-hearted English public, ready with its money for churches and chapels of all denominations, for hospitals, refuges, lodging-houses, monuments to great men, holds back, as it were, from any considerable help to the discharged convict, male or female, leaving prison for the world, and looking round for a strong arm to support the first feeble steps to salvation.

Money that is lavished in other directions is sparsely doled out in this, and sick souls seem of far less consequence to generous people than sick bodies. How is this? It is not that the

subject is distasteful, for the criminal is an object of unceasing interest to the world; it is not that the criminal is despaired of, for we at least have no right to despair; and the records of the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society tell us of more than four thousand convicts who have been assisted "in their attempts to gain an honest livelihood."

And still that institution, one of the noblest and highest of purpose in the richest city in the world, is struggling to exist against want of funds and want of sympathy!

I call the last balance-sheet that has been issued by that Society a shame to English philanthropy: here it is for Christian folk to blush at:—

STATEMENT OF LIABILITIES AND ASSETS,
at 31st May, 1865.

	£ s. d.			£ s. d.
To claims against the Society, estimated at . .	1056 19 2	By Amount invested in New Three per Cents, valued at .	£444 0 0	
		,, Bankers' Balance .	139 18 4	
		,, In hands of Secretary	21 14 6	
				605 12 10
		,, BALANCE AGAINST THE SOCIETY .		451 6 4
	£1056 19 2			£1056 19 2

For want of funds, let it be recorded here, the Society is terribly cramped in its efforts to assist those who turn away from evil, and has been obliged to CLOSE its Female Home—the home to which the female convict, who had a dream of a better life to cheer her prison thoughts, was accustomed to look forward as to the one haven where there was shelter, and to which might come help.

Still this Society attempts what it can—perhaps more than it can. The women who apply there for assistance and encouragement are placed in lodgings till a situation is found them; but there can be no fair supervision of the discharged prisoner by such means; and I think that the chances are against rather than for her redemption now—for the female convict is weak, vacillating, and turned by a word, if there be not well-wishers and true advisers at her elbow to begin with.

With the scanty funds at its disposal, the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society has assisted

during the year 1864, 516 men and 61 *women*. Of the sixty-one women, who are more to the purport of these volumes, it is worth while to see what has been done with them, worth while to remember—oh! sisters who know not what these temptations are, or how terribly the discharged prisoners are assailed by the old life when the prison belongs to the past—that without this Society they would have drifted away to the evil more natural to their lives.

Of these sixty-one women, then, "*it is known* that thirty are doing well, fifteen have emigrated, of eleven the Society has no definite knowledge, two have died, two only are known to be re-convicted, and one was going on so unsatisfactorily that the Society declined to assist her."

Surely the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society does not assert too much when it says that the committee sincerely believe that the Society is "quietly and unostentatiously conferring a great and lasting benefit not only to the unhappy

persons whom it assists, but to the public and country at large?"

Surely the public will not for ever remain a debtor to this quiet but earnest institution? Let its doors be closed, and there are thrown upon the world annually some five or six hundred extra criminals, to go their own way, seeing that there are not any helping hands extended towards them. No steps upwards to salvation, but the downward steps to the greater density, and the evil fruit after its kind ripening and multiplying day by day!

With regard to male convicts, it is not foreign to this chapter to quote the following from the Report of the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society:—

"The Society is willing, under certain circumstances, to become guarantee to a certain amount, and for a limited period, on behalf of men whose cases are undertaken; and the attention of all large employers of labour is called to this fact, that in no instance has the confidence placed in the men employed been abused."

The Society works well, for it is earnest in its work. It is less confident, evidently, in the stability of discharged female convicts; and doubtless, as the case of female convicts in prison is a more difficult and delicate task than the custody of the males, so the care of the women out of prison necessitates, or rather should necessitate, a greater study. That study cannot be made with the scanty means at the disposal of the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, and it is beyond its power to do more for discharged female convicts than is done already. I believe that eventually this portion of the Society's duties must be altogether dropped, if the public hold still aloof, and keeps its purse-strings tightened against the annual appeals of a noteworthy institution.

It will, I think, be impossible to continue the care of discharged female prisoners whilst the funds decrease, old subscribers die out, and no new ones take their place. Looking down the list of donations, I find that the public has done

next to nothing for a cause which has the public safety to study; and that its best supporters have been those gentlemen connected with it who have not only given all their time gratuitously to the Society, but also some hundreds of their money. Let it be recorded, too, that the matrons have hope of certain portions of their flock, and that one of the most liberal donations, apart from the committee of the Society, stands to the credit of the "officers of Brixton Prison." From the hard-earned salaries of the prison matrons a substantial proof of womanly interest and charity has been shown.

Will the world at large, then, do nothing? Will it leave everything to those who have a knowledge of the criminal, until that knowledge may be forced upon itself in an unpleasant manner? I hope not; I trust that a better time is coming for the Prisoners' Aid Society, and for discharged female convicts—that the bright day will come when the HOME shall be restored again, and that, side by side with the Elizabeth Fry

Refuge, it shall work for the good cause, and stand ever a noble institution, to which all who speak of the joy in heaven over a repentant sinner can proudly point and say, "We helped to build it up anew!"

For *this* HOME has no rules concerning age, or health, or strength; its doors are open to all who say, "I am weary of sin, and anxious to be at rest with my soul;" it sets no interdict on any penitent, but does its best for all.

With greater means there is no saying what greater good might be effected for the penitent—with a less sum in hand than is at present with the bankers of this Society, there is no telling what harm may ensue.

In the future, the man who attacks us on the highway, the woman who shames us in the street by her effrontery, or robs us while she pleads for charity, may be the convicts who could find no friends after they had served their time out—who would have done well had there been a

chance, and who went wrong again with that fair chance denied them!

Shall we, with power to help, confess that we might have saved them with no loss to ourselves, and that yet we let them go their way without one effort for their sake or God's?*

* Since the above was written, a prospectus has been forwarded me of a new Aid for Discharged Female Convicts, under the title of the "Carlisle Memorial Refuge for Female Convicts." I trust that funds will be found forthcoming to maintain this new endeavour. It is at least an established fact, and depends now upon public support.

CHAPTER XXV.

CONCLUSION.

THE last five years have directed more attention to our prisons and prisoners, evoked more volumes, treatises, reports, and statistics—given rise to more argument at Social Science meetings and in private circles—suggested more theories, and awakened to acting life more systems — aroused more interest in a subject which cannot fade away into nothingness again — than any twenty years before that period.

It has been my proudest thought that I have added to the interest in my own way, and that from the publication of my books a host of

friends and well-wishers to the cause I plead and to myself have arisen round me. The completion of a long task, I think, is now effected; and the necessity to write again upon the subject is not likely to occur. If I have done my work fairly, I am sure that I shall be fairly judged; and, whether wrong or right in the few theories that I have put forth in these volumes, at least those theories have been earnestly considered, and are not hastily recorded here.

Feeling convinced that the condition of the female convict may be improved—that there are better and more simple means to effect a prisoner's reformation—that the machinery of the gaol may be made to work with less irregularity—I have attempted, humbly but earnestly, to convey my own impressions as to where the reform might be attempted. I do not profess to be always in the right; but I do not think that it can be proved that I am but the propounder of wild ideas that, in the working, must infallibly go wrong.

Let me close my book with the faint hope of hearing some day that this or that idea of the Prison Matron is "under consideration."

Let me trust, also, that that interest which has been lately shown for the criminal in her cell may not grow less with time; we cannot lose our interest in the convict, in or out of prison, without doing much harm to prison service. The authorities will become more watchful—and more wise, perhaps—when aware that from the outside world there are watchers and thinkers studying their various additions to the proper workings of our gaols.

First and foremost in the ranks of those who do not forget the prisoners—who consider them objects of great interest and anxiety—who can "trace and track with pitying eyes the unseen precipice by which they fell from good," stands her Majesty the Queen. She is the first and most illustrious of prison visitors; and that is an undying record in prison annals that speaks of

her Majesty's visit to the Female Prison at Parkhurst.

I think that the newspaper press has commemorated no more noble step of Royalty than that; and I wish that it had been in my power to place before the reader the particulars of that visit, which I feel sure must have had a great and striking effect on the prisoners—an effect which will last all their lives. But Parkhurst Prison does not belong to this history, and the writer has never stepped within its walls. It is a prison ably conducted, I have heard; a prison where the better class of women obtain advantages as far above the Brixton women as Brixton women possess advantages above the "solitary" and the "refractory," who work out their ten months at Millbank.

Another prison at Woking is shortly to be opened for all female convicts. Would that a Refuge on as large and costly a scale—even a Government Refuge rather than none at all—were to be opened also, where the discharged

prisoner might rest after her time, and wait for the friends that would surely come, if she were truly penitent and patient.

Of Broadmoor Prison I know little save that the crime of the female prisoner is forgotten, and her malady only considered; where the treatment is the same as that at most lunatic asylums, and kindness replaces prison discipline. This, where the criminal is really proved to be insane, is a fair method of procedure, but it holds out many inducements for the more crafty at Brixton and Millbank to try Broadmoor for a change.

Still the institution of Broadmoor Prison is a wise step in advance of the old lunatic wards; and Broadmoor must be worth a visit to him who is interested in "our convicts." I do not know whether the "Prison Matron" would have been admitted on application—official reserve looks doubtfully at her, and questions her right to criticize, I am told—but the prison is open to all with good credentials, who do not wish to

know too much, and who have no intention of putting *everything* that crosses them into "black and white."

I know but little of its machinery, and I do not care to place on record here the few murmurings that have reached me from officials who have "resigned;" when I cannot judge for myself, it is better to be silent—and possibly it was a hasty utterance in my fourth edition of "Female Life in Prison" that led me to condemn, on first hearing, the dancing system for criminal lunatics. The madwoman no longer belongs to the rules; and anything that can bring the mind back to itself must after all be no injudicious measure.

With reference to the "prison characters" which I have sketched in this book, I need not add that they are studies from the life, and that I think they are worth considering. In many instances they offer a clue to convict life, and show where the first step at reform might be made as clearly as where the first step from right

was made long ago. Flesh and blood tell more for or against theories than any long array of statistical facts; and it is for that reason that I have so frequently attempted to "point a moral and adorn a tale" by the actions of these eccentric beings themselves. One or two more characters I might have added to my list had I not been afraid of tiring the reader with so long a procession of "prison monstrosities." Looking back at the old portrait-gallery in "Female Life in Prison," and adding my new "figure-drawings" to the list, I find that I have sketched in all about sixty female convicts.

I have done my best to sketch them fairly; and if here and there I have succeeded in presenting them to the reader as objects not wholly colourless and void, I shall be amply repaid for all the trouble that I have taken in reproducing them.

A few remain on hand, but their characters assimilate to those I have already produced, and in all cases, so far as truth would permit, I have

attempted variety of disposition, manners, and pursuits. I might have dwelt at some length on Nicholas, the treacherous prisoner who nursed her wrongs; on Maggie Douglas, who could only be checked sometimes by threats to cut her hair, and who was so untameable and defiant to the last, that when her liberty-day came round she was found in "the dark," and on bread and water diet; on Jane Broad, a very artful prisoner, with specious manners that deceived folk before their thorough knowledge of her; on Benton, Tremaine, and Anna Porter.

But phases of these minor characters have already a place in one or another of their predecessors; and he who would look into the dark side of human nature, or is desirous of a dark character for a sensation work, may find the object of his search in the women whom I have endeavoured to portray. They are at least facts themselves—not founded on them—terrible and awful facts, as they are terrible and awful proofs to what negligence and ignorance can reduce a woman.

Now and then, to give a light to these pages, Heaven be praised, we come upon the better, brighter proof of what perseverance and faith can raise these women to as well; and they stand as evidence to us, to philosophy, philanthropy, and "social science," of what might be done for our dangerous classes, were society thoroughly in earnest to work their reformation.

Of the old characters in my previous books, I have but little news to give. "Teb" is back again, and Maria Copes once more oscillates between her cell and the refractory; faces that I thought had vanished for ever from prison life are back in their old places; and women whose return it seemed one might have surely prophesied, have been never heard of since. The prison world goes round, defeating idle speculation sometimes—and still the liberty-woman is replaced by the newly-convicted, and in *greater proportion!*

I cannot lay aside my pen without thanking all good wishers, past and present, of high and

low degree, for their many kind and thoughtful letters. When it has been necessary to reply, I have done so by letter at once—whenever I have had to defend an assertion, prove that I was not in error, or admit that I had written hastily—whenever, in fact, my silence might have been misconstrued. To all my numerous correspondents of the past, let me assert here, that every missive with which I have been favoured has been carefully read, and treasured as a memento of the interest of good men and women in the great subject of our criminals—but to have answered them all would have been to chain me to my desk almost from the day my prison book was first set before the world.

To all my well-wishers these my thanks for their past praise; to all those good friends who would have allotted me other tasks, and who have been kind enough to offer me their patronage, moral support and influence, my heartfelt thanks, also—such wishes and such offers have made my labour light, and my heart thrill, and they

will be ever gratefully remembered by the author of this book. They have sustained me at my present task, which is not ended without regret, and which is here presented to my judges.

To all farewell, then.

For the men and women in prison; for the men and women on the threshold, pausing yet and looking back to where the sunshine lingers; for the men and women coming from the prison, and too dazzled by the light yet to know their proper way, I ask every reader's sympathy and consideration. Let us not condemn too hastily; let us do in this life all the good we can for them, believing with the poet that—

> "Manifold and various
> Are the ways of restoration."

THE END.