

THE
THIRD REPORT
OF
THE COMMITTEE
OF THE
SOCIETY
FOR THE
IMPROVEMENT OF PRISON DISCIPLINE
AND FOR THE
REFORMATION OF JUVENILE OFFENDERS.

1821.

WITH AN
APPENDIX.

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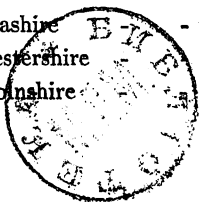
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AT a GENERAL MEETING of the Subscribers and Friends to THE SOCIETY FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF PRISON DISCIPLINE, AND FOR THE REFORMATION OF JUVENILE OFFENDERS, held at Freemasons' Hall, on Saturday, June 2, 1821,

H.R.H. The DUKE of GLOUCESTER, K.G. Patron,
In the Chair ;

The following RESOLUTIONS were unanimously agreed to :—

It was moved by Lord CALTHORPE, and seconded by Lord JOHN RUSSELL, M.P.—

1.—That a Report, founded on the abstract which has been read to the Meeting, be printed and circulated under the direction of the Committee.

It was moved by Sir JAMES MACKINTOSH, M. P. and seconded by Sir THOMAS BARING, Bart. M. P.—

2.—That it is a subject of the warmest congratulation to this Meeting, that the cause of Prison Discipline, and the principles advocated by this Society, have, during the past year, continued to obtain the increasing attention of the legislature and of the public ; and that satisfactory amendments have taken place in the construction and discipline of various prisons throughout the kingdom. That, although the number of places of confinement which are lamentably defective in inspection, classification, and labour is still great, yet the progressive advancement of improvements justifies the hope that the period is not far distant, when the prisons of this country will be uniformly regulated by a system, which shall combine the reformation with the punishment of the offender.

It was moved by SAMUEL HOARE, jun. Esq. and seconded by the Rev. THOMAS LLOYD, M. A.—

3.—That this Meeting denies an imputation which has been assiduously circulated, that the system of Prison Discipline, which it is the object of this Society to recommend, has a tendency to divest punishment of its just and salutary terrors; an opinion which is refuted by abundant evidence, and has no foundation whatever in truth: that experience demonstrates that the criminal views with indifference imprisonment which is defective in classification and employment, and where his guilty propensities are indulged by vicious habits and corrupt association: in proof of which it appears, that to such gaols the same prisoner repeatedly returns, while those prisons are regarded with dread, and the re-committals to them are comparatively rare, in which idleness, gambling, and dissipation, are superseded by abstinence, labour, and restraint.

It was moved by the Hon. HENRY GREY BENNET, M.P. and seconded by JOHN MAXWELL, Esq. M.P.—

4.—That this Meeting is deeply impressed with the lamentable condition of some thousands of boys in the metropolis, who, from their earliest years, have been trained to the commission of crime, and taught to pursue it for their daily maintenance; that the diminution of an evil fraught with consequences so injurious to society, is at once the duty and the interest of an enlightened public; and that a large proportion of crime and misery might be prevented, were the funds of the Society sufficient to enable the Committee to extend their plans for the reformation of criminal youth. That this Meeting is, therefore, of opinion, that the Society's efforts to reclaim juvenile offenders, highly merit the liberal support of the public, and especially at the present time, when many distressing cases of friendless boys present themselves at the prisons of the metropolis, who, were the means offered to them, might be induced to forsake for ever a life of wretchedness and guilt.

It was moved by **ROBERT BRANSBY COOPER, Esq. M. P.** and seconded by **EDMUND HORNBY, Esq. M. P.**—

5.—That the thanks of this Meeting be respectfully presented to the magistracy, throughout the United Kingdom, who have so ably and zealously directed their consideration to improvements in the construction and discipline of the prisons under their respective jurisdictions.

It was moved by **LORD LORTON**, and seconded by **WILLIAM EVANS, Esq. M. P.**—

6.—That this Meeting learns with great pleasure the continued exertions of the Dublin Association for the Improvement of Prison Discipline, by whose indefatigable labours, under the patronage of the Right Hon. **CHARLES GRANT**, the prisons in the sister kingdom have been closely investigated, and their condition in many instances materially improved; and that this Meeting sincerely rejoices in the prospects of the further amelioration of the prisons in Ireland, from legislative measures which have been recently introduced by His Majesty's Government.

It was moved by the Rev. **FRANCIS CUNNINGHAM, M. A.** and seconded by **EDWARD BOOTLE WILBRAHAM, Esq. M. P.**—

7.—That this Meeting cannot refrain from expressing its sincere delight, that principles of improved Prison Discipline have been fully recognised, and are obtaining increased attention in France, Russia, Italy, and Switzerland; and that Ladies' Associations have been formed, in those countries, for the reformation of female prisoners.

It was moved by the Hon. and Rev. **GERARD NOEL**, and seconded by **THOMAS FOWELL BUXTON, Esq. M. P.**—

8.—That the following gentlemen form the Committee for the year ensuing, with power to add to their number. (*See page 7.*)

It was moved by the Hon. and Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of GLOUCESTER,—

That the cordial thanks of this Meeting be presented to His Royal Highness the Duke of GLOUCESTER, Patron of the Society, for the uniform attention which he has evinced to extend its designs, and to promote its interests; and for his attendance and able conduct in the chair on the present occasion.

R E P O R T,

&c.

AT the commencement of this Society's labours—when but a slight acquaintance with the state of the gaols induced the Committee to persevere in their inquiries—they felt assured that the subject of prison discipline had not obtained that share of public attention to which it was justly entitled. The enlightened zeal of the philanthropic HOWARD had indeed laid open the secrets of the prison-house, and the disclosure had exhibited many affecting scenes of human misery; but the researches of that eminent man had been chiefly directed to the removal of disease, and the alleviation of bodily suffering: the moral evils of imprisonment—its unavoidable tendency to corrupt, and the means by which it might be rendered instrumental to reclaim—were views which had not become the subject of direct investigation, and in which public feeling had been but partially interested. The general attention, however, which subjects connected with criminal jurisprudence have of late secured in this country, is very striking. Into the causes which have produced these results it is not now necessary to inquire. The actual tendency of punishments; the true ends to which they ought alone to be directed; the most efficacious plans of salutary restraint and moral discipline; these important

branches of domestic policy have been ably examined. Facts have been collected, and opinions submitted to their test. The claims of humanity, even in her most debased and guilty forms, have been investigated and allowed. Principles, heretofore unthought of, or disputed, have been recognised and incorporated with the public institutions of the country. Erroneous systems, which time had sanctioned, and custom reconciled, have yielded to the force of discussion, and the power of truth; and few are now disposed to deny, that the reformation of the criminal is a duty dictated by humanity; enjoined by religion; and urged by every motive which regard for the public welfare can suggest.

Before the Committee proceed to relate the progress of their labours, during the past year, they would beg to state, that the objects and views of its members have been strangely mistaken and misrepresented: the efficacy of prison discipline, in reforming the offender, has been not only disputed, but the measures recommended for this purpose have been objected to, as having a tendency to render prisons habitations of comfort—and confinement an object rather of desire than of dread.

The Committee, in reply, would observe, that the practicability of reclaiming the criminal is proved, not by fanciful theories, founded, as is alleged, on mistaken notions of benevolence, but by the powerful and irresistible evidence of facts. Whether, indeed, the mind of the offender be really impressed with the turpitude of his guilt; whether he avoid the further perpetration of crime, from hatred of vice, or from dread of punishment, the Committee pretend not to

determine; but one thing is perfectly clear, and admits of demonstrative proof, that, in a great number of instances, offenders, even the most hardened, who have for a reasonable time been subjected to a well-regulated system of discipline, *do abstain from the further violation of the law, and have, in a variety of cases, been known to abandon their criminal pursuits.* To this important truth, the testimony of the most experienced magistrates affords abundant evidence. Numbers who, on entering confinement, were debased by nearly every vice that can degrade human nature, whose repeated offences had formerly occasioned their frequent committal to the same gaol, have not, since the establishment of a strict and improved discipline, been found again within its walls; and, on inquiry, it has been ascertained that they have applied themselves to habits of honest industry. That such indeed is the natural result of a beneficial system of prison management, will, upon consideration, appear obvious. A good prison is a school of moral discipline, where incentives to vicious propensity are removed—where drunkenness, gambling, and dissipation, are superseded by abstinence, order, and restraint; where, by personal seclusion and judicious classification, the evils resulting from contamination are prevented—where the refractory are subdued by punishment, and the idle compelled to labour until industry becomes a habit. These are the leading features of a salutary system of gaol management; and it seems wisely ordered, that this discipline should form at once the medium of reformation, and the instrument of punishment.

That a well-regulated system of prison discipline represses crime, is proved by the best possible evi-

dence. To what description of prison does the offender more commonly return? Is it to a gaol, where hard labour, spare diet, and vigilant restraint, are steadily enforced; or to a prison, where no effort is made to instruct, employ, or reclaim? It is absurd to suppose, because a prison no longer affords the means of vicious gratification, that therefore it is more congenial to the inclinations of the depraved. To what but to the dread of prison discipline can we justly attribute the fact, that few prisoners, after their discharge from a good gaol, return to it, while the number of re-committals to a bad prison is generally considerable? This number invariably diminishes in proportion to the good-management of the prison.

The re-committals to inferior gaols vary from fifteen to fifty per cent., while the following is the average of re-committals to prisons distinguished for their good-management:—Preston, four per cent; Wakefield, four per cent.; Bury, five per cent.; Devizes, the general average about three per cent. and for felons only one per cent.; Knutsford, two per cent.; Bodmin, three per cent.; Ipswich, three per cent.; Lewes, six per cent.; and even at Gloucester, where the prison is particularly crowded, only seven per cent. Worcester contains two prisons—the county gaol is admirably conducted, and here the return of prisoners, of all descriptions, is averaged at two per cent., of felons only one and a half per cent.; while the number re-committed to the City prison, which is extremely deficient in its system of management, is no less than twenty per cent. At Leicester, also, there are two prisons, the house of correction, and the prison belonging to the Borough. At the former, which is well-managed, the re-committals