

it is surprising that the sentiment of this era of much-talked of advancement tolerates the retention of this chief among the relics of the uncivilized past.

Countess Ella Narraikow in an article on capital punishment in the *Metaphysical Magazine* says: "The experience of other nations should have an important bearing upon this subject, since human nature is pretty much the same the world over. In 1870 the extreme penalty for murder was abolished in Holland, where for ten years previously the law had been more honored in the breach than in the observance. Punishment by death had already been done away with in Roumania, and soon after the little kingdom of Portugal took the same course. While the statute-book of Belgium still contains a law decreeing the death penalty for homicidal crime, it is virtually a dead letter, there having been no executions in that country during the past thirty years. Capital punishment has been formally abolished in most of the cantons of Switzerland. In other European countries it has also been given up, either by legislation or imperial decree, while in still others there is a growing disinclination to carry out sentences of death. By all of those nations, so far behind us in other respects, the experiment of executing criminals had been tried for many years, and, as we have seen, was finally abandoned by most of them. The practice was found to be futile as a corrective of evil, inadequate as a deterrent of crime, illogical as a law, and demoralizing in its effect on the public conscience."

The close proximity of the state penitentiary has, within the last few years, caused or enabled a considerable number of people in this city to interest themselves, in a more or less practical manner, in prison reform. To the members of the prison reform society and to the large number of people who have participated in the consideration and discussion of penology and concomitant subjects a letter from a convicted criminal in the New York city prison published recently in the *Sun*, will no doubt be of interest. This letter, an excerpt from which are given below, is especially noteworthy for its literary and philosophical qualities:

I am a young man, 28 years of age, detained in the Tombs on the charge of felony, and about to be sentenced to state prison for a long term of years. The judge, in pronouncing sentence will make the "punishment fit the crime." "An eye for an eye." In a word, retribution! I was born of criminal parents. My paternal grandfather was a defaulter and a felon. A paternal aunt was a felon. My father, to my personal knowledge, was a libertine and a criminal. By heredity I was a thief. My early environment and education also lacked the safeguards which are thrown about ordinary children. I was reared in a gambling, licentious, and a thieving atmosphere. When I became old enough to exercise the "free will" that is supposed to have been within me, the abnormal impulses and desires inherited and otherwise inculcated overcame my will and I became a criminal, i. e., broke an arbitrary rule of society. But not without the aid of society, which placed around me the means to gratify those inherited and acquired passions, desires and cravings, in the shape of race tracks, gambling halls and the like. Having fallen, society hauls up before it the "culprit" (myself) to receive at its hands what it pleases to term "just punishment." What right has society to punish me? Did I make myself? Was I consulted as to what traits I would like to inherit, what desires, what tendencies? Did I have any control of my early environment, education and bringing up? Is it not safe to assume that, had I been consulted in the matter, I should have ordered myself born as free from taint, as clean and unsullied, as the Nazarene; and further that I should have dictated my surroundings in early youth to be such as would build up within me a character that neither iron nor fire could move to crime? I am suffering under the outrage of having been born, bred and reared a criminal against my will, with the tacit permission of society at first and with its direct assistance later, and what does society propose to do in the premises? It completes the outrage by decreeing that I be associated for a long term of years with other criminals, mostly older and more habituated to crime, many incorrigible; in other words, that the germ already within me shall be fed and strengthened. Have I not a right to demand that society, having permitted me to be born, bred, and reared a criminal, shall treat me at least with as much consideration as it would a born idiot, lunatic, or syphilitic? Ought it not to consider me as a moral invalid? Instead of proportioning its sentence to my crime, as it would "measure cloth by a yard stick," should it not measure the "treatment" by my condition of mind, properly ascertained by psychological experts? Society has been a party to my making. It is, at least in a measure, responsible for my crimes. Is it not therefore its duty to attempt to eradicate my tendencies to crime? Why not erect a hospital for the care and cure of "moral invalids," where the treatment will be corrective, not retributive; where professors in psychology, criminology, criminal anthropology, and penology will take the place of wardens and keepers; where the sentences will be "to be detained until cured," instead of "an eye for an eye;" where the rule in clinics, not to mix measles

with small-pox patients, nor those afflicted with simple fever with those of typhoid fever, would be so applied and construed as to separate men young in crime from the contamination of those older in crime?

If anybody is looking for food for thought he can find it in this criminal's intelligent and thoughtful expression. Our existing institutions restrain and punish criminals; but are they of any effect in eradicating the criminal impulse? Is the number of criminals and the magnitude of crime being reduced?

The erratic gentleman who is soon to retire from the office of mayor, after a four years' service, has many ardent admirers and many enemies or detractors; there will be a variety of verdicts on his administration. Mr. Weir has in the four years of his mayoralty gone off on a good many tangents and pursued heresies without number; he has leaned in all directions, and made numerous and altogether unexpected manifestations. It is not, on the whole, an easy matter to summarize his public career fairly and adequately, and there will be plenty of people to disagree with the conclusions arrived at by THE COURIER.

Mr. Weir was assisted into office by a certain railroad corporation, or its agents in this city—some have it that the railroad people, men who are in the habit of working with republicans, are responsible for his election. The mayor's relations with the railway company at that time make it somewhat difficult to believe in his independence and freedom from "influence" that are so enthusiastically claimed for him; but it must be admitted that since the early part of his first term the mayor has seemed to stand on his own bottom and to act according to his own convictions in the city's business affairs; and he has many times stood between the city council and reckless prodigality in the expenditure of public money. The veto power has mainly been used in the interest of the city. But Mr. Weir has at all times been inconsistent, and at times his expressions and conduct have been hypocritical.

His much vaunted reform measures were not inaugurated until he was practically forced into action. His early antagonism of Sunday sacred concerts, with a tremendous show of righteous indignation, while he allowed gambling, Sunday liquor selling, Sunday frolicking at "Dutch dances" to go on undisturbed, while houses of ill fame were allowed to exist and carry on their trade with substantially no interference, impressed people with his lack of sincerity and stamped him as a hypocrite. Mr. Weir has been undignified and absurdly disputatious. He has eagerly launched into controversy and he has not hesitated to heap vituperation upon those whom he regards as opponents. His letters to the daily newspapers speedily became the laughing stock of the community. Lately he has been unprecedently radical in his warfare against moral delinquents, winning both approval and disfavor. Faking everything into consideration it is safe to say he might have done a great deal worse. His administration has been productive of some good, although it is difficult to suppress suspicion as to the motive that prompted some of his best actions.

In the *Sunday Journal* Walt Mason publishes the following "card of thanks": "I desire to extend my heartfelt thanks to those good people of Beatrice who sustained and soothed me in the black hour of my tumultuous grief consequent upon the untimely death of my Light Brahma rooster, which departed this life last Monday, in the second year of his age and at the weight of sixteen pounds." Citizens of Lincoln are addicted to the card of thanks habit, which in most intelligent communities has long since fallen into disuse, and if they would abstain from it another notch could be put in the standard of progress.

The proposition to vote bonds to the amount of \$90,000 for the erection of a new county jail is not being given the attention its importance would seem to call for. No one who has visited the little stone box that at present does duty as a jail can question the desirability of a new and much larger structure; but whether such a large debt should be incurred for this purpose at this time is a matter that should be thoroughly discussed. Of the few people who