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REFORM, NOT REVENGE.

Time was, and that time is within the memory of many still amongst us, when prison methods were cruelly revengeful, rather than sagaciously reformatory. In that bad old time, ominously was inscribed, if not in actual letters, at any rate in letters which the vivid imagination could not fail to note, the dread exhortation, "Abandon hope all ye who enter here." Abandon hope! The very suggestion is terrible in its ruthless cruelty. What, abandon the very last of the gifts of the gods, as left in the bottom of Pandora's box? But those were the days when society had not realised its duty towards the afflicted. Are offenders against the law, aye, even those who are regarded as criminals, not afflicted? Criminologists all agree that crime is a virulent species of disease, either hereditary or contracted? When, then, any member of the community exhibits symptoms of that disease, must he or she not be treated as a patient, rather than as a dangerous beast? With the advancement of civilisation, all those afflicted with criminal tendencies have been regarded as wanting special reformatory treatment rather than revengeful retribution. To this end, prison methods have been entirely reformed, and penal codes have been modified, with a view to bringing back to the service of society those who are capable of being brought back into that widespread and necessary service. Under these modifications, every first offender, whose lapse has not been deliberate, or cunningly devised, obtains a chance to prove that he or she is not a criminal in the full and awful sense of that fearful word. This amelioration of the law's exactions has proved most efficacious. No longer are civilised communities under the terrible indictment of being the manufacturers of criminality, because of their fearful codes of retributive punishment. Long has it been admitted that when the fiscal policy of the country is financially penal on the people, smuggling, and every other species of dishonesty become rampant. The great number of cases brought before the courts in regard to evasion of customs and excise duty amply prove that proposition. Also when the criminal code is cruel and sanguinary juries refuse to convict, and therefore criminals are permitted to escape the due punishment for their crimes, while petty offenders are encouraged by the sense of immunity. It is most gratifying to note that the Government have taken special steps to do everything possible to convince accidental evil-doers and even criminals, that the purpose of the law is not revengeful retribution, but

even criminals, that the purpose of the law is not revengeful retribution, but, in every case open to such humane treatment, ultimate and complete reform. As reported by the "Telegraph" the Home Secretary, in conjunction with the Comptroller-General of Prisons, has effected some splendid reforms in our prison system, the good results of which already are making themselves manifest. In fact the Home Secretary states that with regard to prison reform in connection with St. Helena prison, his officers have informed him that the whole temper of the prisoners has changed since the initiation of the new system. Great improvement in their conduct, and in the way in which they were devoting themselves to their respective prison occupations has been noted and recorded. This is the direction, running parallel with general education of the rising generation, from which alone the true millennium may be expected.