

in his argument, when we find him breaking new ground, with which to prop the old arguments. He says he defends hanging, as a humane act towards the atrocious criminal. Let the reader bear in mind that it is only the most atrocious murderer who a life Mr. Mill would take. He insists that imprisonment for life is a much more formidable punishment than hanging, and that, therefore, it is humane to strangle the most atrocious murderers. Yet, he has told us, that the awful death penalty is, by the terror it inspires, "the security of life." We follow him, and presently find that imprisonment for life is a much severer, a much more horrible, penalty than the sudden ending which the hangman puts to the days of the criminal. If the security of life be promoted, in proportion to the severity of the punishment inflicted on the criminal who destroys it, it follows that imprisonment for life—which is so much severer, according to Mr. Mill, than hanging—should be at once substituted for the lesser penalty, the less protective penalty. Mr. Mill's estimate of the terrors of perpetual imprisonment and sudden death, the hangman is utterly false as he applies it. To the might-sensitive to the cultivated man, death, with all its terrors, is less terrible than a long life of shame, and the hourly degradation of a convict prison. But such men are not prone to the commission of murder. The murderer is, as a rule, of the coarsest grain—a man for whom shame has no terror. The history of capital punishment, in every page, falsifies Mr. Mill's argument at this point. When there are extenuating circumstances in the capital crime for which a man has been convicted, his sentence is commuted from hanging to imprisonment for life; nor do we remember among the scores of criminals, whose sentences have been so commuted during the last quarter of a century, one instance in which the criminal who was threatened with a reprieve—by imprisonment for life—implored the milder punishment which Mr. Calcraft administers. Experience conclusively shows that, to the criminal population, and to the population that lives on the border-land of crime, imprisonment for life is a less severe punishment than hanging.

And yet we urge the abolition of the death penalty. Our argument is, that the awful penalty, which could not keep the thief's finger off forty bellings, does not arrest the arm of the would-be murderer. In the old days there were people who believed that murder would become as rare as bull-rump directly the hangman was removed from the sheep-stealer's neck. The farmer saw his flocks peacefully grazing in the meadows, and thanked Jack Ketch for his property. We look in vain for a reason why the same effect should not follow the abolition of the death penalty for murder, when followed its repeal.