

INTRODUCTION.

As to what is still wrong, I set down matter of fact without amplification; which would in the end rather impede than promote the object of my wishes; that is, the correction of what is really amiss.

THE journies were not undertaken for the traveller's amusement; and the collections are not published for general entertainment; but for the perusal of those who have it in their power to give redress to the sufferers.

THE writer begs his reader to excuse the frequent egotisms; which he did not know how to avoid, without using circumlocutions that might have been more disgusting.

SECTION

SECTION I.

GENERAL VIEW OF DISTRESS
IN PRISONS.

THERE are prisons, into which whoever looks will, at first sight of the people confined there, be convinced, that there is some great error in the management of them: the fallow meagre countenances declare, without words, that they are very miserable: many who went in healthy, are in a few months changed to emaciated dejected objects. Some are seen pining under diseases, "*sick and in prison*;" expiring on the floors, in loathsome cells, of pestilential fevers, and the confluent small-pox: victims, I must not say to the cruelty, but I will say to the inattention, of sheriffs, and gentlemen in the commission of the peace.

THE cause of this distress is, that many prisons are scantily supplied, and some almost totally unprovided with the necessaries of life.

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THERE are several Bridewells (to begin with them) in
 Food. which prisoners have no allowance of food at all. In
 some, the keeper farms what little is allowed them: and
 where he engages to supply each prisoner with one or
 two pennyworth of bread a day, I have known this shrunk
 to half, sometimes less than half the quantity, cut or
 broken from his own loaf.

It will perhaps be asked, does not their work maintain
 them? for every one knows that those offenders are com-
 mitted to *hard labour*. The answer to that question, though
 true, will hardly be believed. There are very few Bridewells
 in which any work is done, or can be done. The prisoners
 have neither tools, nor materials of any kind; but spend
 their time in sloth, profaneness and debauchery, to a degree
 which, in some of those houses that I have seen, is ex-
 tremely shocking.

SOME keepers of these houses, who have represented to
 the magistrates the wants of their prisoners, and desired for
 them necessary food, have been silenced with these in-
 considerate words, *Let them work or starve*. When those
 gentlemen know the former is impossible, do they not
 by that sentence, inevitably doom poor creatures to the
 latter?

I HAVE asked some keepers, since the late act for preserv-
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ing the health of prisoners, why no care is taken of their
 sick: and have been answered, that the magistrates tell
 them *the act does not extend to Bridewells* *.

IN consequence of this, at the quarter sessions you see
 prisoners, covered (hardly covered) with rags; almost fa-
 mished; and sick of diseases, which the discharged spread
 wherever they go, and with which those who are sent to
 the County-Gaols infect these prisons.

THE same complaint, *want of food*, is to be found in
 many COUNTY-GAOLS. In about half these, debtors have
 no bread; although it is granted to the highwayman, the
 house-breaker, and the murderer; and medical assistance,
 which is provided for the latter, is withheld from the
 former. In many of these Gaols, debtors who would work
 are not permitted to have any tools, lest they should furnish
 felons with them for escape or other mischief. I have often
 seen those prisoners eating their water-soup (bread boiled in
 mere water) and heard them say, "We are locked up and
 almost starved to death."

As to the relief provided for Debtors by the benevolent

* If the late act does not include Bridewells, it is required, by an act 7th James
 I. Cap. IV. that "the Masters and Governors of--Houses of Correction shall have
 "some fit allowance--for the relieving of such as shall happen to be weak and sick
 "in their custody."

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act, 32d of George II. (commonly called the lords act, because it originated in their house) I did not find in all England and Wales (except the counties of Middlesex and Surrey) TWELVE DEBTORS who had obtained from their creditors the four-pence a day, to which they had a right by that act: the means of procuring it were out of their reach. In one of my journeys I found near six hundred prisoners, whose debts were under twenty pounds each: some of them did not owe above three or four pounds: and the expence of suing for the aliment is in many places equal to those smaller debts; for which some of these prisoners had been confined several months.

AT Carlisle but one debtor of the forty-nine whom I saw there had obtained his groats: and the gaoler told me that during the time he had held that office, which was fourteen years, no more than four or five had received it; and that they were soon discharged by their creditors neglecting to pay it. No one debtor had the aliment in York Castle, Devon, Cheshire, Kent, and many other counties. The truth is, some debtors are the most pitiable objects in our gaols.

To their wanting necessary food, I must add not only the demands of gaolers, &c. for fees; but also the extortion of bailiffs. These detain in their houses (properly enough denominated *spunging-houses*) at an enormous expence, prisoners

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prisoners who have money. I know there is a legal provision against this oppression; but the mode of obtaining redress (like that of recovering the groats) is attended with difficulty: and the abuse continues. The rapine of these extortioners needs some more effectual and easy check: no bailiff should be suffered to keep a public house*; the mischiefs occasioned by their so doing, are complained of in many parts of the kingdom.

HERE I beg leave to mention the hard case of prisoners confined on exchequer processes; and those from the ecclesiastical courts: the latter are excluded from the privilege of bail; and the former from the benefit of insolvent acts.

FELONS have in some Gaols two pennyworth of bread a day; in some three halfpennyworth; in some a pennyworth; in some a shilling a week: the particulars will be seen hereafter in their proper places. I often weighed the bread in different prisons, and found the penny loaf $7\frac{1}{2}$ to $8\frac{1}{2}$ ounces, the other loaves in proportion. It is probable that when this allowance was fixed by its value, near double the quantity that the money will now purchase, might be bought for

* By the statute 32d George II. it is enacted, that "No sheriff, bailiff, &c.--- shall convey any person arrested---to any public victualling or other drinking-house---without the consent of the person so arrested." Now if the bailiff himself keeps a public house, this seems to preclude the debtor's choice; he must go to a public house, or directly to gaol.

it: yet the allowance continues unaltered: and it is not uncommon to see the whole purchase, especially of the smaller fums, eaten at breakfast: which is sometimes the case when they receive their pittance but once in two days; and then on the following day they must fast.

THIS allowance being so far short of the cravings of nature, and in some prisons lessened by farming to the gaoler, many criminals are half starved: such of them as at their commitment were in health, come out almost famished, scarce able to move, and for weeks incapable of any labour.

WATER. MANY prisons have NO WATER. This defect is frequent in Bridewells, and Town-Gaols. In the felons courts of some County-Gaols there is no water: in some places where there is water, prisoners are always locked up within doors, and have no more than the keeper or his servants think fit to bring them: in one place they are limited to three pints a day each—a scanty provision for drink and cleanliness!

AIR. AND as to AIR, which is no less necessary than either of the two preceding articles, and given us by Providence quite *gratis*, without any care or labour of our own; yet, as if the bounteous goodness of Heaven excited our envy, methods are contrived to rob prisoners of this *genuine cordial of life*, as Dr. Hales very properly calls it: I mean by preventing

ing that circulation and change of the salutiferous fluid, without which animals cannot live and thrive. It is well known that air which has performed its office in the lungs, is feculent and noxious. Writers upon the subject shew, that a hoghead of it will last a man only an hour: but those who do not choose to consult philosophers, may judge from a notorious fact. In 1756, at Calcutta in Bengal, out of 170 persons who were confined in a hole there one night, 154 were taken out dead. The few survivors ascribed the mortality to their want of fresh air, and called the place, from what they suffered there, *Hell in miniature!*

AIR which has been breathed, is made poisonous to a more intense degree by the effluvia from the sick; and what else in prisons is offensive. My reader will judge of its malignity, when I assure him, that my cloaths were in my first journeys so offensive, that in a post-chaise I could not bear the windows drawn up: and was therefore often obliged to travel on horseback. The leaves of my memorandum-book were often so tainted, that I could not use it till after spreading it an hour or two before the fire: and even my antidote, a vial of vinegar, has after using it in a few prisons, become intolerably disagreeable. I did not wonder that in those journies many gaolers made excuses; and did not go with me into the felons wards*.

FROM

* I LEARN from a Letter to Sir Robert Ladbroke, printed in 1771, page 11, that "Dr. Hales, Sir John Pringle, and others have observed, that air, corrupted
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FROM hence any one may judge of the probability there is against the health and life of prisoners, crowded in close rooms, cells, and subterraneous dungeons, for fourteen or sixteen hours out of the four and twenty. In some of those caverns the floor is very damp: in others there is sometimes an inch or two of water; and the straw, or bedding is laid on such floors, seldom on barrack bedsteads. Where prisoners are not kept in underground cells, they are often confined to their rooms, because there is no court * belonging to the prison, which is the case in most City and Town-Gaols: or because the walls round the yard are ruinous, or too low for safety: or because the gaoler has the ground for his own use. Prisoners confined in this manner, are generally unhealthy. Some Gaols have no SEWERS; and in those that have, if they be not properly attended to, they are, even to a visitant, offensive beyond expression: how noxious then to people constantly confined in those prisons!

SEWERS.

ONE cause why the rooms in some prisons are so close,

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“and putrified, is of such a subtil and powerful nature, as to rot and dissolve heart of oak; and that the walls of buildings have been impregnated with this poisonous matter for years together.” The writer quotes for his authority a letter of Sir Stephen Theodore Janssen, which I have not been able to procure.

* AN act made in Ireland the 3d year of his present Majesty, “for better preventing the feverities, &c.” has the following clause: “Whereas many infectious disorders are daily produced by the confinement of numbers in close prisons, whereunto there is no back-yard adjoining, and the lives of his Majesty’s subjects are endangered by the bringing of prisoners into public streets for air; Be it enacted—

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is perhaps the window-tax, which the gaolers have to pay: this tempts them to stop the windows, and stifle their prisoners*.

IN many Gaols, and in most Bridewells, there is no allowance of STRAW for prisoners to sleep on; and if by any means they get a little, it is not changed for months together, so that it is almost worn to dust. Some lie upon rags, others upon the bare floors. When I have complained of this to the keepers, their justification has been, “The county allows no straw; the prisoners have none but at my cost.”

BEDDING.

THE evils mentioned hitherto affect the *health* and *life* of prisoners: I have now to complain of what is pernicious to their MORALS; and that is, the confining all sorts of prisoners together: debtors and felons; men and women; the young beginner and the old offender: and with all these, in

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“enacted—That every grand jury at the assizes or quarter sessions—may be enabled, and they are hereby required and directed, to contract either by lease, or to purchase a piece of ground next adjoining the Gaol, or as near as conveniently can be had thereto, &c.”

* THIS is also the case in many work-houses and farm-houses, where the poor and the labourer are lodged in rooms that have no light, nor fresh air: which may be a cause of our peasants not having the healthy ruddy complexions one used to see so common twenty or thirty years ago. The difference has often struck me in my various journeys.

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some counties, such as are guilty of misdemeanors only; who should have been committed to Bridewell, to be corrected by diligence and labour; but for want of food, and the means of procuring it in those prisons, are in pity sent to such County-Gaols as afford these offenders prison-allowance.

Few prisons separate men and women in the day-time. In some counties the Gaol is also the Bridewell: in others those prisons are contiguous, and the yard common. There the petty offender is committed for instruction to the most profligate. In some Gaols you see (and who can see it without pain?) boys of twelve or fourteen eagerly listening to the stories told by practised and experienced criminals, of their adventures, successes, stratagems, and escapes.

I MUST here add, that in some few Gaols are confined idiots and lunatics. These serve for sport to idle visitants at assizes, and other times of general resort. The insane, where they are not kept separate, disturb and terrify other prisoners. No care is taken of them, although it is probable that by medicines, and proper regimen, some of them might be restored to their senses, and to usefulness in life.

GAOL-
FEVER.

I AM ready to think, that none who give credit to what is contained in the foregoing pages, will wonder at the havoc made by the GAOL-FEVER. From my own observations
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in 1773 and 1774, I was fully convinced that many more were destroyed by it, than were put to death by all the public executions in the kingdom*. This frequent effect of confinement in prison seems generally understood, and shews how full of emphatical meaning is the curse of a severe creditor, who pronounces his debtor's doom to ROT IN GAOL. I believe I have learned the full import of this sentence, from the vast numbers who to my certain knowledge, some of them before my eyes, have perished in our Gaols.

BUT the mischief is not confined to prisons. Not to mention now the number of *sailors*, and of *families* in America, that have been infected by transports, since this mode of punishment is by a late act suspended. Multitudes catch the distemper by going to their relatives and acquaintance in the Gaols: many others from prisoners discharged: and not a few in the courts of judicature.

IN Baker's *Chronicle*, page 353, that historian mentioning the Assize held in Oxford Castle 1577 (called from its fatal

* I HAVE a Table printed from a large copper-plate, 1772, by Sir Stephen Theodore Janssen, shewing the number of malefactors executed in London for the twenty-three preceding years; and the crimes for which they suffered. I will give an abridgement of it in two tables at the end of the book. In them it will be seen, that the total number of executions in London for those twenty-three years, was 678; the annual average is between 29 and 30. I leave to others the discussion of the question, whether those executions were too numerous, whether all the crimes

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fatal consequence the *Black Affize*) informs us, that "all who were present died within forty hours: the Lord Chief Baron, the Sheriff, and about three hundred more." Lord Chancellor Bacon ascribes this to a disease brought into court by the prisoners; and Dr. Mead is of the same opinion.

THE first of these two authors, Lord Bacon, observes, that "the most pernicious infection next the plague, is the smell of the jail; when the prisoners have been long and close and nastily kept: whereof *we have had, in our time, experience twice or thrice*; when both the judges that sat upon the jail, and numbers of those who attended the business, or were present, sickened upon it and died."*

AT the Lent Affize in Taunton, 1730, some prisoners who were brought thither from Ivelchester Gaol, infected the court; and Lord Chief Baron Pengelly; Sir James Sheppard, Serjeant; John Pigot, Esq. Sheriff, and some hundreds besides, died of the gaol-distemper. At Axminster,

for which it was inflicted (many of which will be distinctly set down) were deserving of death. And it may be left to any one to judge, whether, including debtors and petty offenders, the number of those that died in the several London prisons of the Gaol-Fever, does not exceed the number of those that were executed annually during that time.—I have not the number of executions in all the counties, but am well assured it falls still much shorter of the number that perished in prisons.

* Natural History, Exp. 914.

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a little town in Devonshire, a prisoner discharged from Exeter Gaol in 1755, infected his family with that disease: of which two of them died; and many others in that town afterwards. The numbers that were carried off by the same malady in London in 1750, two judges, the lord mayor, one alderman, and many of inferior rank, are too well known to need the mentioning further particulars.

SIR JOHN PRINGLE observes, that "jails have often been the cause of malignant fevers;" and he informs us, that in the late rebellion in Scotland, above 200 men of one regiment were infected with the jail-fever, by some deserters brought from prisons in England*.

DR. LIND, Physician to the Royal Hospital at Haslar, near Portsmouth, shewed me in one of the wards a number of sailors ill of the gaol-fever; brought on-board their ship by a man who had been discharged from a prison in London. The ship was laid up on the occasion. That gentleman, in his *Essay on the Health of Seamen*, asserts, that "The source of infection to our armies and fleets are undoubtedly the jails; we can often trace the importers of it directly from them. It often proves fatal in impressing men on the hasty equipment of a fleet†. The first

* Observations on the Diseases of the Army, p. 296, and 47.

† Page 307.

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“English fleet sent last war to America, lost by it above 2000 men.” In another place he assures us, that “the seeds of infection were carried from the guard-ships into our squadrons—and the mortality, thence occasioned, was greater than by all other diseases or means of death put together.”*

It were easy to multiply instances of this mischief; but those which have been mentioned are, I presume, sufficient to shew, even if no mercy were due to prisoners, that the Gaol-Distemper is a national concern of no small importance.

VICIOUS
EXAMPLES.

THE general prevalence and spread of wickedness in prisons, and abroad by the discharged prisoners, will now be as easily accounted for, as the propagation of disease. It is often said, “A prison pays no debts;” I am sure it may be added, that a prison mends no morals. Sir John Fielding observes, that “a criminal discharged---generally by the next sessions after the execution of his comrades, becomes “the head of a gang of his own raising.” Improved, no doubt, in skill by the company he kept in gaol: and petty offenders who are committed to Bridewell for a year or two, and spend that time, not in hard labour, but in idleness and wicked company, or are sent for that time to County-Gaols,

* Page 5.

generally

generally grow desperate, and come out fitted, for the perpetration of any villainy. How directly contrary this to the intention of our laws with regard to these offenders; which certainly is to correct and reform them! Instead of which, their confinement doth notoriously promote and increase the very vices it was designed to suppress. Multitudes of young creatures, committed for some trifling offence, are totally ruined there. I make no scruple to affirm, that if it were the wish and aim of Magistrates to effect the destruction present and future of young delinquents, they could not devise a more effectual method, than to confine them so long in our prisons, those seats and seminaries (as they have been very properly called) of idleness and every vice.

SHALL these irregularities, the sources of misery, disease, and wickedness, be endured in a nation celebrated for good sense and humanity; and who from these principles, do treat one sort of prisoners with tenderness and generosity? I mean prisoners of war. These have provision in plenty; some to spare and sell to the soldiers on guard*: we frequently saw

* THE daily allowance to six prisoners was,

9 pounds of bread,
4½ pounds of beef,
3 pints of pease,
6 quarts of beer,
Water plenty.

On Friday they had not the beef; but a pound and half of butter instead of it.

On board the men of war, indeed, they were upon short allowance.

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their stated allowance hung up for their inspection. Some prisons had large areas for them to walk in; and at night every man had a hammock to himself. It is the farthest thing in the world from my wish to deprive captives of any one of these benefits—I am only desirous of seeing the same humanity shewn to our own countrymen in distress; so that a consistent and uniform practice may prove our benevolence to be a firm and steady principle; and that those who are censorious may find no occasion for ascribing our kind usage of foreigners to a less amiable motive.

HERE it will be said, prisoners of war are not felons, nor yet debtors; and government is sometimes at the end of a war, reimbursed the expence of maintaining them. This latter I believe is fact; and the former is true without dispute: we do not look upon foreign enemies, nor they upon us*, as delinquents: we cut one another to pieces in battle,

* I MUST not be understood to mean here a compliment to the French. How they treat English prisoners of war, I knew by experience in 1756; when a Lisbon packet (the Hanover) in which I went passenger, in order to make the tour of Portugal, was taken by a French privateer. Before we reached Brest, I suffered the extremity of thirst, not having for above forty hours one drop of water; nor hardly a morsel of food. In the castle at Brest, I lay six nights upon straw: and observing how cruelly my countrymen were used there, and at Morlaix, whither I was carried next; during the two months I was at Carhaix upon parole, I corresponded with the English prisoners at Brest, Morlaix, and Dinnan: at the last of those towns were several of our ship's crew, and my servant. I had sufficient evidence of their being treated with such barbarity, that many hundreds had perished; and

tle, but when that is over we grow cool and compassionate. I grant there is a material difference in the circumstances of foreign and domestic prisoners, but there is none in their nature: debtors and felons, as well as hostile foreigners, are *men*, and by men they ought to be treated as men.

THOSE gentlemen who, when they are told of the misery which our prisoners suffer, content themselves with saying, *Let them take care to keep out*, prefaced perhaps, with an angry prayer, seem not duly sensible of the favour of Providence which distinguishes them from the sufferers: they do not remember that we are required to imitate our gracious Heavenly Parent, who is "*kind to the unthankful and the evil.*" They also forget the vicissitudes of human affairs; the unexpected changes to which all men are liable; and that those whose circumstances are affluent, may in time be reduced to indigence, and become debtors and prisoners.

and that thirty-six were buried in a hole at Dinnan in one day. When I came to England, still on parole, I made known to the Commissioners of sick and wounded seamen, the sundry particulars; which gained their attention, and thanks. Remonstrance was made to the French court: our sailors had redress: and those that were in the three prisons mentioned above, were brought home in the first cartel-ships.—A *Lady* from Ireland, who married in France, had bequeathed in trust with the magistrates of St. Malo's, sundry charities; one of which was a penny a day to every English prisoner of war in Dinnan. This was duly paid; and saved the lives of many brave and useful men. Perhaps what I suffered on this occasion, increased my sympathy with the unhappy people, whose case is the subject of this book.

BUT

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BUT it may be said, enough of the declamatory kind has been written by others. Much it is true, has been written: yet I beg leave to transcribe, a few lines from a celebrated author, which may be thought to come under that description. After representing the calamitous case of prisoners, he goes on to this purpose, "The misery of Gaols is not half their evil; they are filled with every corruption which poverty and wickedness can generate between them; with all the shameless and profligate enormities that can be produced by the impudence of ignominy, the rage of want, and the malignity of despair. In a prison the awe of the public eye is lost, and the power of the law is spent; there are few fears, there are no blushes. The lewd inflame the lewd, the audacious harden the audacious. Every one fortifies himself as he can against his own sensibility, endeavours to practise on others the arts which are practised on himself; and gains the kindness of his associates by similitude of manners."*

BESIDES the grievances already mentioned; there are several *bad customs* in Gaols, and relating to them, which aggravate the distress of prisoners. I shall enumerate these distinctly, yet concisely.

* The Idler, No. 38.

SECTION

SECTION II.

BAD CUSTOMS IN PRISONS.

A CRUEL custom obtains in most of our Gaols, which is that of the prisoners demanding of a new comer GARNISH, FOOTING, or (as it is called in some London Gaols) CHUMMAGE. GARNISH. "Pay or strip," are the fatal words. I say *fatal*, for they are so to some; who having no money, are obliged to give up part of their scanty apparel; and if they have no bedding or straw to sleep on, contract diseases, which I have known to prove mortal.

IN many Gaols, to the Garnish paid by the new comer, those who were there before make an addition; and great part of the following night is often spent in riot and drunkenness. The gaoler or tapster finding his account in this practice, generally answers questions concerning it with reluctance. Of the Garnish which I have set down to sundry
E prisons,