

gratuity was recommended, Mr. Jeffery had himself pointed out that Miss de Pledge had thirty-five more officers to superintend than formerly. One of the things he thought the new Board should do was to alter the system under which salaries were now raised, in order to do away with the pettifoggish attention paid by officials to this or that man, or this or that Committee, in order to get an increase of salary !!

ULTIMATELY, Miss de Pledge got her £25 by seven votes against five. But few gentlewomen would consider that sum an adequate compensation for the humiliating discussion to which her application gave rise.

AN article upon "The Art of Dying," which has appeared in the April number of the *Humanitarian*, by Percival Pickering, is naturally of much interest to those whose profession brings them so frequently into the presence of death, and lays upon them the duty of smoothing as much as may be, the roughness of the "valley of the shadow." It is precisely upon this point that the questions in the article to which we have referred are raised. Is it, in point of fact, a duty, when death is inevitable, and existence a burden, to postpone the severance of body and soul, which would otherwise be accomplished by nature? And secondly, is it justifiable, recovery being impossible—and life having become a burden to oneself and one's relations—to deliberately end that life by scientific means, such as a lethal chamber provided by government?

UPON the first point, we must say that we think there are limits which may with justification be placed upon the prolongation of life. For instance we very much question the virtue of lengthening the life of one who is in the "act of dying" by injections of morphia, strychnine, and such like remedies. Again, which of us, if we had our choice, would not wish to be in possession of our faculties when the severance of soul and body takes place? And yet, has one not sometimes the haunting fear that, owing to the mistaken efforts so often made to prolong life by the constant administration of stimulants, we shall, intoxicated perhaps for the first time in our lives, pass in this condition into the next world.

AN instance is cited by Mr. Pickering in which a personal friend of his own, who was dying from cancer of the face, was kept under the influence of anæsthetics, but yet was roused from sleep or insensibility every half hour, day or night, in order to have nourishment or stimulants forcibly administered. This, we must confess, appears to us almost as bad nursing as rousing a patient to

give him a sleeping draught. Again, we read, "Later I saw this same friend when she was actually dying. She was propped upright into an apparently uncomfortable position by means of three pillows. I suggested that she would be more comfortable lying down. 'She wants to lie down,' the nurse informed me, 'but if I were to take one pillow away the action of the heart would fail.'" It certainly appears to be a refinement of cruelty not to allow a dying person to die in the way most comfortable to himself. Good treatment and nursing surely consists in alleviating suffering, not in inflicting it.

WITH regard to the second proposition, we are not prepared to say that in cases of extreme agony, where death is only a question of time, it may never be justifiable to adopt the merciful course of allowing life to lapse. At times of exceptional danger to the mother it is held justifiable to destroy foetal life. But this we do say, that so long as reason remains there can surely be no question that life should be maintained. This being so the patient who is able to express a desire for his own destruction is not in a condition which would justify that destruction; and, secondly, such destruction, if it is ever allowable—and this is a question which we would leave others to further thresh out—would surely never be performed by a medical prescription; certainly not upon the desire of the patient, who in times of pain might express a wish which would be far from his desire in better balanced moments.

A LETTER, signed "The Author of the Ballad of Reading Gaol," on the subject of the "Prison Reform Bill," has appeared in the *Daily Chronicle*, and has excited much interest. The letter, written as it is by one who has undergone the prison discipline, of which it treats, is a powerful indictment of existing abuses, and unless the statements made in it can be contradicted by the authorities, they appear to us to call for immediate remedy. We are, as a nation, slowly recognizing the fact that a sick man, whatever may be his history, or granted that his condition is produced by his own error, is, by reason of his illness, entitled to efficient medical attendance and skilled nursing. Time was when sick paupers were not considered to need any more attention than could be bestowed by those of their number who were able bodied. But our views on this subject have been metamorphosed, and our "state hospitals" are one by one becoming as well equipped and officered as any in the kingdom.

WHY then should a sick prisoner not receive like considerations? Why should a prisoner be compelled to live under conditions which tend to produce ill health? The point of view of the prisoner

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