

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE QUARTERLY
REVIEW ON A MISSTATEMENT CONTAINED
IN THE 42D VOLUME OF
THAT WORK, PAGE 155, RELATIVE TO THE
SUPPOSED ILL-SUCCESS OF THE GENERAL
PENITENTIARY AT MILLBANK**

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Letter to the editor of the Quarterly review on a misstatement contained in the 42d volume of that work, page 155, relative to the supposed ill-success of the general penitentiary at millbank by George Holford

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GEORGE HOLFORD

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S.F. 1830.

LETTER

TO THE

EDITOR OF THE QUARTERLY REVIEW,

ON

A MISSTATEMENT

Contained in the 42d Volume of that Work, page 155,

RELATIVE TO THE

SUPPOSED ILL-SUCCESS

OF THE

General Penitentiary

AT MILLBANK,

By **GEORGE HOLFORD, Esq.**

A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE FOR SUPERINTENDING THAT
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LONDON:

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1830.

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LETTER, &c.

SIR,

It is particularly incumbent on the Editors of those Periodical Publications, which from the form in which they issue from the press are supposed to be deliberately written, and are likely from their extensive circulation to have a considerable influence upon the public mind, not only to abstain from wilful misrepresentation, but to furnish themselves with such information in regard to the subjects, upon which they profess to instruct or amuse their readers, as shall prevent them from misdirecting the sentiments and feelings of the country; and if at any time the accuracy of any material facts or opinions stated by them in derogation of individuals,

or of existing institutions, shall be called in question, they are bound in duty to the public, as well as in justice to the parties affected by their censure, to examine carefully and candidly such suggestions as may be offered to them respecting the imputed error, and to take the earliest opportunity of correcting it, if they shall discover that they have been mistaken. Nor will it be denied, that the obligation to take this course is most imperative, when the error complained of involves no less than the condemnation of an Establishment formed with much care and at great expence, and depending in a great measure for its success, and indeed for its continuance, on the opinion which shall be entertained concerning it by the public.

The above remarks are called forth by a passage in page 155 of the Quarterly Review, published in January, 1830. Having stated, that "a few years ago great exertions were

“ made by a body of active philanthropic
“ individuals to mitigate the severity of our
“ criminal code, build Penitentiaries, and
“ multiply and enlarge Gaols and Houses of
“ Correction, in order to classify prisoners,”
the Review goes on as follows: “ These are
“ admirable objects when pursued with dis-
“ crimination, but the mitigation of punish-
“ ment degenerated into a fashion, and many
“ of its partisans were actuated by no other
“ motive than misguided sensibility, and a
“ love of popularity. Parliament yielded to
“ the clamour, and although the extravagance
“ into which it first ran, has been since
“ moderated, persons accused and convicted
“ of criminal offences are even now so well
“ lodged, fed, and treated, that imprison-
“ ment is almost wholly stripped of the
“ terrors with which it used to be surrounded,
“ and the Penitentiary at Millbank, raised and
“ maintained at such enormous cost, has,
“ by the confession of its own officers, turned
“ out a total failure.”

The assertion here made respecting the Penitentiary is not founded in fact ; it would be hazardous to say, that an institution, which exacts a strict adherence to discipline from its officers, as well as from the prisoners under their charge, and the conductors of which have consequently had occasion to make frequent changes in the inferior departments of its establishment, may not have been misrepresented and abused by some of those who have left its service, or have been dismissed from it ; but I will pledge myself, that the general statement in the passage just cited, will turn out upon investigation, to be substantially incorrect. I do not know, that any officer belonging to the Penitentiary has confessed it to be a failure ; but I do know that those of its officers who from their station, intelligence, and experience, are most competent to speak to its effects, have formed a very different conclusion, and the writer of that article in the Review, must be very ill informed upon the subject on which

he is professing to give instruction to the public, if he does not know, that if the question of the failure or success of the system pursued at Millbank, is to be decided by a reference to the sentiments of those concerned in the management of the prison, there are recorded statements and opinions on that head of the Committee of Superintendence in their official Reports to the Privy Council, and the two Houses of Parliament, which ought not in fairness to be overlooked.

The Members of this Committee are, from their situation in life, among the persons most competent to form a sound opinion in respect to the advantages to result from an establishment of this description, as well as of the degree of success with which it has actually been attended; and being most of them engaged in other arduous duties and concerns, they cannot be thought likely to bestow on the Penitentiary at Millbank the time and attention which they give to it,