



Penal Philosophy

Gabriel Tarde

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This historic book may have numerous typos and missing text. Purchasers can usually download a free scanned copy of the original book (without typos) from the publisher. Not indexed. Not illustrated. 1912 edition. Excerpt: ...writers that poverty is the social cause which has driven the Sicilian peasant to turn brigand? Alongi begins by admitting it, but afterwards he finds himself greatly embarrassed to account for the rapid progress made by the mafia under a refined and urban form, it is true, in Palermo and its surroundings, in that golden "conch-shell," a marvelously rich and fertile region, where property is very much split up and the farmer is very comfortably off. It is because, rich or poor, the Sicilian peasant is vain to the highest degree; if he be rich he hastens to ruin himself in luxurious extravagances, in festivities and in fine clothing,¹ in order that he may rival the upper classes; and when he has been ruined he is compelled to become a "maffioso"; if he is poor he spontaneously becomes a "maffioso," in order to raise himself above his station.² One fine day, without any reason, "disgusted with his tiresome existence," he puts on the costume of the brigands; and, after a solemn initiation, surrounded by a great assembly of relatives and friends, he goes armed and with his baggage into the camp of the vagabonds. Moreover, he has learned at an early hour to arm himself. "At Palermo and at Bagheria and in the Southern districts the peasant invariably leaves the fields with his mattock under his arm and his gun slung over his shoulder; and his knife has no difficulty in finding victims." "A man lends neither his gun nor his wife," says a Sicilian proverb. Still another analogy with Corsica. Under the brigand the peasant always survives. A Sicilian brigand never dies outside of his own canton; homesickness, in spite of the greatest dangers, will bring him back to his birthplace. 1 And...

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