

Firstly and immediately—by protecting society from the deprecations of the criminals shut up within their walls; and,

Secondly and principally, though indirectly—by the moral influence they exert in deterring evil-disposed persons from the commission of crime.

So far as the first point is concerned, all gaols and all other places of confinement for prisoners are equally useful. It is not a question of discipline but of construction—a question simply of walls, locks and bolts. On the other hand, the usefulness of a gaol under the second aspect, that of deterring from crime, will depend almost altogether on the discipline enforced in it.

To deter from crime may, therefore, be said to be the proper function of a gaol. I should be happy were it in my power to state that I regard the common gaols of Canada as aiding in the repression of crime, by the reformatory influences which they exert on the minds of the prisoners passing through them. Few common gaols indeed in any country have any true claim to be classed as reformatory institutions, and, unfortunately, the gaols in Canada form no exception to the general rule.\* Indeed, the shortness of the sentences, and the absence of any attempt to impart either secular or religious instruction to the prisoners during their imprisonment, would preclude the hope that any important moral improvement could be effected in the prisoners while confined in our common gaols. The reformation of our criminals, if it is to be effected at all, must be effected by means of our reformatories and penitentiaries, or by our central prisons, should they hereafter be established.

It being admitted, then, that the especial function of our common gaols is to deter from crime, our primary aim should be so to order their discipline as to inspire evil-doers with a wholesome dread of them; that when they leave them they may do so with a firm resolution to avoid them for the future.

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\*Among the list of questions put to every convict about to be liberated from the penitentiary, is one as to whether the imprisonment in the common gaol, which he underwent before coming to the penitentiary, had exerted a beneficial effect on him or not. There is not probably one convict out of every hundred who answers that he was benefitted by his imprisonment in gaol. The answer almost invariably given is that the convict left the gaol decidedly worse than when he entered it!