

County Paupers and County Houses of Industry.

Prepared for Free Distribution by the Secretary of the Prisoners' Aid Association of Canada.

Introductory.

The Prisoners' Aid Association in prosecuting its work amongst the jails of the Province of Ontario, have found very many distressing cases in which unfortunate men and women, whose only crime is their poverty, have been branded as felons and herded amongst the prisoners of our land.

Not only is this an outrage committed upon those who have already a very considerable burden of sorrow and trouble to bear, but it is also a wrong to the prisoner, as the room taken up by those confined to jail solely because of old age, physical inability to earn a livelihood, or the like, takes up so much of the jail accommodation that it prevents that classification which is so absolutely necessary in every well regulated prison.

The Prisoners' Aid Association, therefore, finds it to be a legitimate part of their work to promote the establishment of county poorhouses or houses of industry in this Province.

We have been assured on good authority that many county councillors who now vote against the county poorhouse system would, nevertheless, be glad to have these established. These councillors consider that, instead of the matter being left optional with the councils, the various county municipalities should, by Act of Parliament, be compelled to erect proper buildings, and thus the odium which, in some cases, would be cast upon a councillor voting in favor of the needed expenditure would be removed, and by a general Act of the Legislature, that which Christianity, patriotism and humanity demand would be introduced throughout our land.

The Ontario Prison Reform Commissioners, whose report was presented

to the Lieutenant-Governor in 1891, were so strongly impressed with the great need of county poorhouses, that they recommended that it be made obligatory on the part of every county council to either establish an independent poorhouse, or to unite with an adjoining county in establishing a poorhouse, or house of industry.

We are glad to be able to report that since the publication of the first edition of this pamphlet, two and a half years ago, three of the Counties

formation bearing upon the question in addition to that already published and distributed by our Association, and more especially with reference to those county houses of industry already established.

The counties in which houses of industry are already established, including the three established recently, are as follows, viz.: York, Waterloo, Wellington, Middlesex, Elgin, Oxford, Brant, Norfolk, Lincoln, Welland, Leeds & Grenville, Huron and Perth.

Of these York and Waterloo have been longest established, namely, about 27 years, while the institutions in Brant and Oxford have been in existence about four years. The three houses of industry recently established, are considered the best of their kind, while the one in Elgin Co. more nearly approaches the cottage system.

We advocate the county poorhouse system, and we advocate it strongly; we advocate it because it is the most economical system; and we advocate it because the general adoption of this system will very materially reduce the amount of pauperism and crime in the community. We

also favor county poorhouses because their establishment would cause vagrants to be removed from the county jails, (where they should never be sent) and in removing vagrants from the county jails room would be made for a better grading and a better classification of the remaining prisoners.

While the following pages were prepared for the information of county authorities more especially, the question of the proper care of the destitute poor is commended to the thoughtful consideration of all who are interested in the diminution of pauperism and crime in the community.



of Ontario have established Houses of Industry for the destitute poor of their respective counties, namely: United Counties of Leeds and Grenville, Huron and Perth. We are also pleased to learn that the Counties of Simcoe, Bruce and Peel are moving in the same direction. The poorhouse in Leeds and Grenville is situated at Athens, that in Huron at Clinton, and that in Perth at Stratford.

In view of this move on the part of the counties in the direction of establishing poorhouses or houses of industry, we have thought the time opportune for collecting and distributing in-