

II. Papers relating to the Prevention of Crime.

1. EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORT AND SUB-REPORTS RELATING TO PRISONS & ASYLUMS IN CANADA.

MALDEN LUNATIC ASYLUM.

His Excellency in Council, on the recommendation of your Board, was pleased to authorize the expenditure of \$100 in books and pictures during the year; and I accordingly procured from the Department of Public Instruction for Upper Canada a select library of 176 volumes, 82 scripture object lessons, 9 maps, and a phantasmagoria magic lantern, with a complete set of astronomical diagrams, and a number of other interesting slides, as views, natural history, objects, &c. These have afforded an immense amount of amusement and instructive reading matter to the patients. Our library has latterly been augmented by a valuable donation of 63 volumes, from the humane and talented Superintendent of the Asylum at Toronto.

Among our Republican neighbours, if the Republic can still be said to exist, the public purse is seldom called into requisition to establish libraries, or furnish amusements for the denizens of public charities. Munificent private donations supply such wants; and extensive libraries, with independent library buildings, built and furnished in this manner, exist in connection with many of the American Asylums. How long will the wealthy citizens of my native Canada remain in the background? In our young country, the millionaire thinks the government should do every thing, and provide every thing.

THE PROVINCIAL PENITENTIARY.

An accident which might have been attended with lamentable consequences happened in the course of the year. This was a fire which broke out in the wood-drying house belonging to the Agricultural Implement shop.

This accident was, however, attended with a consolatory moral display; the good conduct namely of the prisoners, who not only took no advantage of the occasion to give trouble to their officers and keepers, but, being trusted to assist in extinguishing the fire, worked with a degree of spirit and praiseworthy energy to subdue the destructive element, which was at length mastered by them and by the firemen of the city, who had come to assist.

The Inspectors acknowledged the services of the prisoners, in an order of the day, and made a point of recording the facts in their Report, as a proof of what can be done with convicts, justly punished, it is true, by society, but regarded by too many as therefore incorrigible beings, any attempts to reform whom would be utterly futile.

A little experience of life, and a short study of penal institutions, convince the mind that all within the walls of a prison is not evil, neither is all without its limits good.

Repentance is a new birth of innocence, of which all men are capable.

The Inspectors are convinced that the penitentiary accomplishes two great objects of all penal institutions, namely: to punish and to deter. The third object to be had in view in establishing and managing such institutions: namely, reformation, is of much more difficult attainment.

The ministrations of the two Chaplains have been defined by more exact rules, and a system inaugurated for the fuller religious instruction of the convicts. As subsidiary to their religious training, and to increase the means of extending it, by a process at once easy and speedy in its operation, the Inspectors have also provided more efficient instruction in reading and writing, for those of the prisoners who have not these qualifications. Even this amount of knowledge, well applied, may greatly aid the Chaplains in the fulfilment of the noble object of their mission.

On this single basis of religion only can any system of Prison Reform be founded, and it is to the consolidation of that, that the Inspectors have mainly addressed themselves.

As to discipline, properly so called, it appears to be as perfect in the Provincial Penitentiary as it is possible to be made in a great Institution of this kind.

The productiveness of the labour of the prisoners should never be made in a penal Institution a question of primary interest. In order to make it so, we should, of necessity, sacrifice many things of infinitely greater importance to society.

During the year 1860, not fewer than 100 prisoners were constantly employed in various branches of labour, connected with the building of a Lunatic Asylum at Rockwood, a superb edifice, now nearly completed, the exclusive work of convicts.

The Library.—There is a general library in circulation among convicts of all origins and creeds, containing about seven hundred volumes. These are all highly interesting and useful works, and it is

to be regretted that many of them are so worn as to be nearly useless.

The usual practice here is to distribute these books once a month, taking from each convict the book he had before and giving him another. In this way, each convict would read a volume on the average of about four hundred pages per month, twelve volumes, or four thousand eight hundred pages in a year. Taking all the convicts capable of reading, seven hundred volumes, or two hundred and eighty thousand pages per month, or eight thousand four hundred volumes, equivalent to eleven hundred and twenty thousand pages per year. There is no record, as there ought to be, of the monthly distribution of books, a fact which leaves the above statement open to question, but it is believed not to deviate materially from the facts. Such an amount of reading, under any circumstances, could not fail of having highly useful results.

But here it has been most beneficial in making hours and days tolerable, if not pleasant, which otherwise would have passed painfully; in communicating a large amount of useful information and moral instruction; in quickening the taste for reading, and generally, in the improvement of the mental faculties.

Each convict woman has been supplied with books from the library, and the returns shew, as will be noticed further on, that they had improved the opportunity of reading good books to a very large extent.

The Religious Library.—If a man were a mere physical being, he would only need supplies for his animal wants; if he were a creature of mere intellect, all he would require would be knowledge, or mere secular instruction; but as man is a moral and spiritual being, having a religious nature, "for his soul to be without instruction is not good." That man has a spiritual nature is evident from the fact that intellect manifests itself no more distinctly in the power of thought, than the soul does in the power of conscience. It has been the misfortune of these prisoners that their moral and religious feelings were not cultivated when they were young. They were not taught or impressed with religious truth; they had no home-training in religion—in fact their souls were left in their infant state without proper food and treatment, and did not, in fair proportion to the body and intellect, "grow with their growth, and strengthen with their strength." The object here is to supply this want, to remedy this defect, and when necessary, to cultivate the mind with this end in view. To exalt the affections, to repress the passions, to strengthen conscience, to call out into life, from the grave of sin, the spiritual nature of man. Therefore they are taught prayers that they may offer them up, night and morning, privately in their cells, to God. Therefore they are encouraged to read their Bibles daily, to meditate thereon day and night; therefore are they thrice a week trained in religious worship; and, therefore, more especially are religious books supplied, "that their souls might not perish through lack of knowledge."

This year the Inspectors made a liberal appropriation of money for books, which has been applied for that purpose, partly in procuring Bibles, but chiefly in procuring other religious works.

Not a month passes in which several religious tracts and a religious book, are not given to every Protestant convict. Though there are not so many books as are required, still, during the greater portion of the year, if not the whole, the amount of reading has been equivalent to one volume, or about four hundred pages per month, among an average of five hundred persons. This is a large amount. Five hundred volumes of four hundred pages a month, is six thousand volumes, or twenty-four hundred thousand pages a year; or an average, for each convict, of fifteen pages per day, of religious reading. But besides this, many convicts have read the Bible several times through; others once; and others only portions of the Bible. Some have learned by heart whole chapters, others whole books of the Bible. Some can repeat many of the psalms. Some have learned by heart the whole Litany, most of the morning prayers, and scores of them have learned the whole catechism.

Some, that cannot read, have learned by heart the Creed, the Lord's prayer, and the commandments, by hearing them read in the Sunday service. And there is one who cannot read a word, and yet, when he came here, he knew every word of the catechism; it had been taught him orally by his mother. The mother's influence follows many an erring son into these walls, and is among the most potent instruments in reclaiming him from sin and crime.

The Society for promoting Christian knowledge in England, made the liberal grant, last May, of books to the amount of eighty dollars, to the Chaplain. These books have been of great use, especially to convicts adhering to the Church of England. During the year books to the value of one hundred dollars have been procured, free of cost, to the Institution. It is by this means, and this means only, that a fair proportion of religious reading has been supplied to the Protestant convicts. The Christian Knowledge Society merits great praise for its liberality, and the aged and venerable