

OUR CRIMINAL CLASSES.

THE trial of Thomas Buckley for killing his mistress adds new force to recent remarks of THE WEEK on the manner of dealing with violators of Canadian law. The fact that an able and experienced judge—but not properly instructed in the circumstances of the case—sentenced a murderer in fact, though possibly not in intent, to only a short term of imprisonment, shows a necessity for thoroughly revising the system of punishing criminals. Even the longer term afterwards imposed does not meet the necessities of the case. The cheer which in court greeted the delivery of the first sentence shows with what kind of people the law is called upon to deal. There is a class amongst us so degraded as to rejoice that a brutal ruffian, a criminal from boyhood and a murderer at last, was about to escape the punishment due to his crimes. They were glad that the brute would in five years be able to resume his infamous career. This is the natural result of the too great clemency shown to habitual offenders, and points the moral which THE WEEK has already drawn. After one sentence has been incurred and the criminal has returned to his evil ways, there should be root and branch work with him. Reform is so improbable as to be unworthy of consideration. Suppression is the only effective remedy.

It is questionable whether discretion should be left to the judge of measuring the sentence, whether parliament should not provide a more exact sliding scale of punishment in proportion to the number and enormity of offences than now exists. The judge is apt to be swayed by his feelings and fails to do his duty. But beyond this a better method of punishment should be adopted than imprisonment in gaols and penitentiaries—unhealthy, expensive and offering little hope either of intimidating or reforming the culprit. The Kingston *Whig* intelligently discusses the proposition of THE WEEK that criminals be transported to penal settlements in the far North west, but, while agreeing with us in the need for a change of system, proposes a different method: "They must adopt some heroic method of reforming man. Prison life is too luxurious. It is too easy. It is not humiliating enough. The habitually criminal are the habitually lazy. They must be made to work. They must be taken out on the by-ways and high-ways and made, by hard, persistent labour, to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brows. They must be made to feel that prison life and discipline is irksome, disgraceful, and disheartening. The people who support the rascals should get some return for their money, and this return can only be fairly made through local and public improvements."

One objection to this system comes from labouring men who dislike to be deprived of employment. Another is, the danger of escape in cities and the cost of providing numerous guards. The *Whig* contends that it would be an injury to settled parts of the North-West to make them the home of a criminal class, and that it would be cruel to send convicts to the colder regions of the north. As to the latter argument it may be said that if people desire to keep away from Hudson Bay or the Mackenzie River they can accomplish their purpose by keeping their hands from crime. Imprisonment in gaols does not act as a deterrent—why not try another remedy? No one would advocate the creation of penal settlements in parts of the North-West likely to be otherwise occupied at an early date. Instead of objecting it seems probable that North-Westerners would hail as a boon the establishment by the Government of a colony which would open up the far Northern regions in the most speedy and effective way. Every one knows the difficulty of procuring labourers in territories far from civilization. The trader, the miner, the lumberman, form the advance guard. They find it difficult to induce the labourer to follow. The man who works for daily wages prefers the city, where he enjoys the comforts and pleasures of civilization, and secures fair wages by combination with his fellows. In the far North, fishing, mining, and timber cutting will speedily be commenced—why should not the labour of convicts be used in their development? Roads will be needed and the removal of interruptions to navigation—what better could the Government do than employ, in these works, labour which is now in great part wasted. The experience of Australia does not show that the presence of a criminal class in the early settlement of a country injures the surrounding population. At first it could harm no one, and as population increased new penal settlements might be opened up or the system abandoned after it had served its immediate purpose. While the criminal would unquestionably dread banishment for a long period and might lead an honest life rather than encounter it, there can be little doubt that manly labour in a new country far from old associates would have a beneficial effect upon him. If he showed signs of reform he might be suffered—and even be provided with means—to establish himself as a free man in the new territory into which liquor, the parent of crime, should not be allowed to penetrate.

THE LAMBETH CONFERENCE: CARE OF EMIGRANTS.

IN some respects the subject of the care of emigrants might seem the most interesting to ourselves of all those discussed at the Lambeth Conference. It will be found, however, that the Committee appointed for the consideration of the subject, consisting largely of Colonial and American bishops, of necessity limited their consideration to what we might call the more clerical or ecclesiastical aspect of the question. The wider subject of encouraging and assisting emigration, they remark, is outside the scope of their deliberations, and even were this not the case, they say, it is too large a question to be adequately dealt with in the time at their disposal.

There is one department of the question, and that by no means the least important, which might have been usefully considered at greater length. We refer to the care which might be taken to encourage the right class of people to emigrate, and, as far as possible, to discourage the wrong kind. Two facts stare us in the face here in Canada, first, that there is more work ready to be done than there are hands ready to do it, and secondly, that there are a good many hands unemployed and unable to find work. The simple reason is that these people cannot do the work which is waiting to be done. It is very desirable that some committee or board should draw up information on the colonies and the kind of immigrants that they want and are ready to welcome, and send it to the English clergy and ministers of other denominations, who are not only most closely connected with all classes of the community, but who are very generally consulted by intending emigrants. We are not forgetting that handbooks, etc., exist, and these are referred to by the Committee, but too frequently these are put forth by persons and companies which are not wholly disinterested.

The want of the kind of knowledge to which we refer is attended by two evils. Many unsuitable persons are continually arriving in the colonies, meeting failure and disappointment, while many who might make successful emigrants are deterred from leaving England by hearing of the bad success of others. A thorough knowledge of the circumstances and needs of the country would do much to avert those evils. Men are wanted here, and will be wanted for many a year to come. It may be that we cannot promise them sudden wealth, or the means of living without hard working, but there can be no doubt that large classes of men can make a better living here than they can in the Old Country.

The Lambeth Committee have collected a good deal of useful information with respect to the number of emigrants who have left the United Kingdom since the battle of Waterloo in 1815. They amount to nearly twelve millions. But even this gives no true idea of the present rate of emigration, since we find that, of the whole number who have left Great Britain and Ireland during that period of more than seventy years, about one-fourth have left during the last ten years, and the ratio goes on increasing year by year. It should be added that a very considerable proportion of the emigrants from Great Britain are foreigners. Thus, of the 396,494 persons who left British ports in 1887, only 281,487 were English, Scotch or Irish. There may be some slight consolation in this fact for those Englishmen who are lamenting over the influx of foreigners into London.

Another interesting fact has been brought out by the Committee. By far the largest proportion of emigrants go to the United States. The percentage, in 1887, to the three chief fields of emigration was as follows:—To the United States, 72 per cent.; to British North America, 11 per cent.; to the Australasian Colonies, 12 per cent.; to all other parts, 5 per cent. Another interesting fact comes out, that the proportion of foreign emigrants who leave British ports for the United States is larger than the proportion of British subjects. Thus, taking the 396,494 emigrants in 1887, we find that of those who went to the United States about one-third were foreigners, of those who came to Canada about one-fifth, while the percentage of foreigners who emigrated to Australia is hardly appreciable.

The Committee have taken great care to ascertain the dangers and difficulties which lie before emigrants in so far as these may be obviated by philanthropic and Christian effort. Among these dangers they refer particularly to the mingling of all classes of characters who are carried in one vessel, so that the better disposed are liable to be contaminated by the careless and the vicious into whose company they are cast. So, again, they refer to the no less great dangers to which young persons, and especially young women, are exposed at the port of arrival; and they truly add that "perhaps the greatest danger of all arises from the temptation to intemperance and other vices to which the emigrants are exposed on arrival at their new settlement."