

CRIME AND ITS REAL CAUSE.

BY CHARLES ELLIS, STRATFORD.

In the April issue of the DOMINION REVIEW there appeared an article by H. Washington, of Ottawa, on what he is pleased to term "Protection and Crime," a title between the two terms of which there is about as much analogy as there would be between Protection and Marriage, Protection and Grasshoppers, Protection and Mortality, and so on, any one of which would be as sensible as Mr. Washington's title. In France, where a bonus is given for the procreation of legitimate children, does any sane man pretend to believe that Protection has anything to do with the lack of conjugal love or the steady increase of illegitimacy? In the United States, we might as well say that Protection is the cause of the plagues of Colorado beetles and grasshoppers; for, according to this authority, the same conditions are at work in the latter country as in the former.

In the United States, from 1857 to the autumn of 1861 (a free trade period) was one of the darkest periods ever seen by the laboring people of America. Not one out of five skilled workmen of the country was steadily employed. In Philadelphia, the builders of a street railway advertised for 250 hands at 50 cts. a day, and there were over 5,000 applicants, a majority of them being skilled artisans out of work. A rolling mill, to save its skilled workmen from pauperism, built a turnpike, and their expert hands broke stone on it for 50 cts. a day, and many of them could not be employed even in this way.

Let us look at this argument of Mr. Washington's:

"The well-known tendency of protection to force the accumulating wealth of the community into the hands of an ever-decreasing percentage of the people, which necessarily involves an increasing percentage of poor, no matter how great the aggregate increase of wealth, accounts for the increase of crime under the system of taxation; for the poor and crime increase and decrease together in all countries and times."

According to this logic, the poor are the direct cause of crime in all countries and times. Now, from personal knowledge, I am prepared to say that, though very large numbers of our workmen are poor, there are fewer criminals recruited from this class in Canada than in any country I know of. It is an uncalled-for insult to the great body of the poor working men in this country to insinuate that "the poor and crime increase and decrease together." As in the heading to his article, so in reference to the antithesis of poverty and crime, there is no analogy. Take the greatest criminals the world has seen—Lucrezia Borgia, Hare and Burke, Birchall, Holmes, and hundreds of others—and what are their records? Do we find penury and want from their cradle up in a majority of cases? Do we not find these criminals mostly in good circumstances?