

THE PRISON SYSTEM OF ONTARIO.

It is often said, and doubtless with a good deal of truth, that "one-half the world does not know how the other half lives." However this may be in a general way, we venture to say that neither one-half nor yet one-quarter of our people know what is going on within prison walls. How many readers of the magazines, I wonder, know anything of the number or the condition of the prisoners now confined either in the penal or in the reformatory institutions of this fair province of Ontario, or what is being attempted for their reformation.

In view of the prison reform movement inaugurated in Ontario recently, possibly a short sketch of the present position of our penal and reformatory institutions will be read with interest. We are indebted for the facts here presented to the industrious Secretary of the Prisoners' Aid Association.

In accordance with the British North American Act and the subsequent enactment of the Dominion Government, all prisoners sentenced for two years and upwards are sent to the penitentiaries and are maintained by the Dominion Government, while all prisoners sentenced for a less time than two years are sent either to gaol or to the Central Prison, in the case of male prisoners, and in the case of female prisoners either to gaol or to the Reformatory for Women. Prisoners in the gaols are maintained at the expense of the counties where they are convicted, while prisoners in the Central Prison are maintained by the Ontario Government.

There is a penitentiary located in each province. The penitentiary for the Province of Ontario is located at Kingston.

The Ontario penal and reformatory institutions are as follows: One Central Prison for men, one Reformatory for women, one Reformatory

for boys, one Refuge for girls, one Industrial School for boys, one Industrial School for girls, and thirty-seven County Gaols.

THE CENTRAL PRISON.

The Central Prison is located at Toronto, and has an average of 300 prisoners. The length of the sentences varies from two months to two years (less one day). Prisoners may be either sent to the Central Prison by sentence of the Court, or they may be transferred from the county gaols.

The men of the "Central" are engaged at a number of industries, including making bricks, blankets, bed mattresses, and binder twine. All able-bodied men are compelled to work. The rule is "No work, no bread." Although the discipline is strict—in fact, military in exactness—the men have good food, and are humanely treated. There is a night-school four nights a week where the men are taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. The teachers are selected by the Prisoners' Aid Association, and while imparting secular instruction they do not neglect to impart moral and religious instruction as well. Every Sunday morning there is a Sunday-school from 9 to 10.30, and at 3 in the afternoon there is a preaching service by some member of the Toronto Ministerial Association. The Roman Catholics have a Sunday service also, namely, at 8 a.m.

In addition to this, the agent of the Prisoners' Aid Association visits the men in their cells every Sunday, giving special attention to the men who are to be discharged during the week. The prison is about two miles west of the centre of the city, and the teachers of the Sunday-school voluntarily walk that distance every Sunday morning. When the men are discharged, a helping hand is extended by the Prisoners' Aid Association.