

THE PROPER TREATMENT OF CRIMINALS.

Some time ago THE CHRONICLE demonstrated the failure of the ticket-of-leave system in England, and deprecated its introduction into Canada, where its first trial was an admitted disappointment even to its strongest advocates. It is, therefore, with some surprise that we notice that the Minister of Justice, the Hon. David Mills, has introduced a bill, the object of which is so to amend the present Act of Parliament as to extend the system to prisons and reformatories. The objections raised against the application of the system to penitentiaries lose none of their force when directed against its extension to prisons and reformatories. Some persons would contend that they are even more apposite in the latter case.

The expedient of the ticket-of-leave is but an attempt to grapple with a larger question which is occupying the attention of social philosophers and social reformers both in England and in the United States; and it is, as we have on a previous occasion shown, a clumsy and an injurious expedient. That question is the rational and proper treatment of criminals in the light of modern knowledge. Those who have studied the matter are all agreed upon one point—namely: that existing methods of dealing with criminals are all wrong, as a general rule. It is held by some authorities that first offenders should be arrested, tried in public, but not punished; the end in view being to teach him that the law can readily lay hold upon him and punish him if it wishes; and that society, of which the law is the agent, is less desirous of inflicting vindictive punishment upon him than of protecting itself from his misdeeds, and of promoting his well-being in the future. Where this treatment is successful, it is a clear gain to society and to the individual. Others advocate short sentences for first offenders, on similar grounds.

But if mercy or leniency does not act as a deterrent from the repeated commission of crime, what should be done with the criminal? At present the habitual criminal is condemned to long terms of imprisonment over and over again. This is beginning to be recognized as a wrong system of treatment. It is founded upon the erroneous supposition that the cause of all crime is voluntary viciousness, which can be overcome by punishing and terrorizing the law-breaker into living a good life. If governments would recognize a fact which has been pretty well established in this connection—that a large part of the crime committed is the outcome of inherited vicious temperament, beyond the influence of the will, or of an uncontrollable proneness to do evil—they would not be dilatory in establishing a new and up-to-date prison system which would be as economical and beneficial to society as it would be humane to the unfortunate criminal. They would have institutions where those who are criminals by instinct would be permanently locked up like any other incurable lunatic irresponsible for his actions, and a constant danger to

society; with this difference, however, that he would be obliged to earn his own living by performing some remunerative work which he would be able and fit to perform. Even if work could not be provided for him, and he were housed, fed and clothed in idleness, it is a question whether he would not cost less than he does at present to the state by his frequent apprehensions, convictions and detentions in prison, not to mention the loss sustained by society through his depredations when free. Not only would continued incarceration of the incorrigible criminal effectively protect society against him, but it would protect him against himself; protect those whom he lures from honesty and trains in the ways of crime during his brief periods of freedom; and, above all, it would limit to a great extent the propagation of his kind, which is as well defined an abnormal variety of civilized humanity as could be named.

Canada is abreast of most other nations in all that concerns the higher and complex forms of civilization; and it is time that she began to pay practical attention to this problem of hereditary or instinctive criminality.

BRITISH ELECTRIC LIGHTING COMPANIES.

Reports to hand of the leading electric light companies operating in London, the metropolis, for last year, show them to be making fair profits. It is, however, evident that far more competition has arisen than was anticipated a few years ago. The extension of electric lighting has, so far, made hardly any impression of the gas companies, as the more the electric lights are used the greater seems to be the use of gas for the purpose of rivalry in illuminating effects. This has not been calculated upon by gas companies, but it is compensating them to some extent for their services being exchanged for electric lights. Thousands of street lamps, public and private, in the metropolis, which at one time had one burner, have been fitted with several of much larger lighting power as the proximity of an electric light made the old, simple-burner light look dim. The seven leading electric light companies of London show returns as follows for last year:—

	Net Profits		Dividends	
	1899.	1898.	1899.	1898.
	\$	\$	per cent.	per cent.
City of London.....	436,000	489,000	4	6
Metropolitan.....	331,860	267,700	5	5
Westminster.....	298,500	249,800	13	12
Charing Cross & Strand..	138,260	706,786	9	8
St. James & Pall Mall..	176,650	106,800	14½	14½
Chelsea.....	100,560	83,750	6	6
Notting Hill.....	51,700	36,250	7	6
Totals.....	\$1,463,530	\$1,340,080		

Considering that the population within the area served by the metropolitan companies is equal to that of all Canada, these returns indicate a less general use of electric lights, but it must be remembered that our unrivalled water powers give Canada an enormous advantage over London, or indeed any great city in the old land, and in Great Britain coal gas is pro-