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Reforming Criminals

An interesting discussion occurred in the House of Commons in connection with the consideration of estimate for penitentiaries. Hon. Mr. Fitzpatrick, Minister of Justice, gave a most encouraging report of the extension of the ticket of leave system. There are now 122 men on parole in the Dominion, and the percentage of those who have relapsed into the ways of crime after being given a chance to return to the paths of rectitude is only seven per cent. of the total. The Minister of Justice thought this a very good record. He stated that there are employed in one institution in Toronto twelve men who are on parole, and he has received offers recently from a number of employers who were willing to take one or two of these ticket-of-leave men and give them a chance. In this connection Mr. Fitzpatrick criticized with severity and some degree of contempt police officers, who to his knowledge had been far too zealous and had gone around and made trouble for paroled men by informing their employers of the former career of men who were striving to lead honest lives. He had in his mind especially one case where a paroled man informed him that he was getting along well until a police officer went to his employer and told him that he was employing an ex convict, with the result that he was thrown out of employment. The Minister of Justice described this as an act of wanton cruelty, and he expressed his gratification at the opportunity afforded him of publicly expressing his disapproval of the tendency to hound men who were seeking to return to honest citizenship. The Minister explained the practice with regard to the release of convicts on parole. The report of the convicting Magistrate or Judge is invariably obtained, together with that of the Warden of the prison, before parole is granted. Any convict or his friends may apply for parole, and each case is considered on its merits. The Minister of Justice confessed to a decided leaning towards leniency in the case of first offenders, and said that the reports of the convicting Magistrate and the Warden would have to be strongly antagonistic to cause him to decline the request for parole in the case of a young man when he saw an opportunity to get employment. Men on parole are required to report monthly to the police officers.

Hon. Mr. Foster regarded the record submitted by the Minister of Justice as eminently satisfactory. He expressed satisfaction at the safeguards thrown around the granting of parole to convicts. At the same time he warned the Minister of Justice against a class of legal men who seemed to be particularly devoted to taking up the cases of men convicted of crime, with a view to obtaining a pardon or parole. These men made capital, and maybe money, for themselves out of their efforts in that direction. It sometimes occurred that it was not so much the justice of the cause or the merits of the particular case as the fact that the person taking it up has what he thinks is a large influence in the department which induced him to take it up. In reply to a number of questions Mr. Fitzpatrick spoke of the value of the work of Mr. Archibald who is connected with the Salvation Army in the way of encouraging men who had come out from the penitentiaries and assisting them to secure honorable employment. He was so well pleased with the results of Mr. Archibald's efforts that he had asked him to devote his whole time to the work, and Mr. Archibald had asked General Booth to relieve him from his connection with the Salvation Army for that purpose. When that was done the minister expected that no man would go back to the penitentiary for the second time.

The North Sea Incident

It is reported from Paris that the close of the testimony before the International Committee enquiring into the North Sea incident has been followed by a rather noticeable diminution of confidence in British circles concerned with the case and a corresponding elation on the part of the Russians. The French press, which is strong pro-Russian, gives marked prominence to statements that the Russians have virtually won their case, the usually conservative 'Temps' and 'Journal' asserting positively that the majority of the court now favors the Russian theory that torpedo boats attacked Vice Admiral Rojestvensky's squadron. Enquiry in well informed quarters does not show any real basis for these reports. On the contrary intimations are made that the tendency within the court is rather in the opposite direction. The reports favorable to the Russian

view appear to result mainly from the positiveness of the testimony of Captain Clado, and other Russian officers that they saw torpedo boats attack the squadron, whereas the strongest British witnesses did not swear that no torpedo boats were there, but merely that they did not see them. Impressions seemed to prevail among the audience in the courtroom that the commissioners were likely to accept the directness of the Russian witnesses rather than the qualified negative given by the British fishermen. However, those intimately familiar with the commissioners say this impression is not warranted, as the commissioners being skilled naval technicians are disposed to differ from Capt. Clado in a number of technical points. These pertain chiefly to the ability to see a torpedo boat at night two miles away, and his statements concerning the effects of searchlights. It is known that some of the commissioners consider Capt. Clado's statements to be at variance with the accepted principles of naval science. How far this will influence their ultimate verdict is not yet clear, but it appears to show that the commissioners do not share the prevailing idea to accept Capt. Clado's testimony as decisive.

At Helsingfors, on February 6, Assassinated.

Soisalon Soininen, Procurator-General of Finland, who before he was enrolled, was known by the name of Johnson, was assassinated by a young man who under the guise and name of an officer in the Russian service obtained entrance to the Procurator's apartments and shot him with immediately fatal results. Soininen's son, seventeen years of age, fired upon the assassin and disabled him, receiving also a slight wound himself. The assassin whose identity has not been determined was apprehended. Though seriously wounded, he is expected to recover. The murdered official as Procurator-General was the advisor of the Finnish Senate, which incurred the enmity of the anti-Russian parties on account of its alleged subservency to the process of Russification, and Soininen undoubtedly was selected as the representative and responsible victim. Laws in Finland have no validity without the assent of the Senate; and that body when it was ratified by the manifesto of the Emperor on Feb. 15, 1899, and by subsequent edicts applying to Finland, took the position on legal grounds that it was bound to assent to whatever was promulgated by the Emperor, uttering at the same time protests against the measures. This was felt by Finnish Nationalists to be a subterfuge; and the subsequent reorganization of the Senate, making it even more pro-Russian, increased its unpopularity. The present Finnish Diet, on the other hand, which was summoned by the Emperor Nicholas, after the death of Governor-General Bobrikoff, and upon his advice, stood firmly in opposition to the position of the Senate. Its first step was to adopt by the unanimous voice of all the Four Estates, a petition asking the Emperor to restore the liberties and constitution of Finland.

A Canadian Mint

The Dominion Government has decided on the establishment of a Canadian Mint, and Parliament has voted an appropriation of \$200,000 for that purpose. The mint however is expected to cost not less than \$375,000 and may cost considerably more. Some of the Opposition members in the House questioned the wisdom of the undertaking. The Premier defended it on commercial and political grounds. He pointed out that at present our mines are turning out about twenty million dollars' worth of gold per annum, every ounce of which finds its way to the United States because there is no market for it in our own country. The Yukon was turning out on an average ten million dollars' worth of gold yearly, and the fact that miners formerly had to take this to the American coast had resulted in the diversion of an enormous trade, which might have helped to build up Vancouver and Victoria, had there been any sale for the gold in these latter places. The government was not unmindful either of the fact that Canada, with a population larger than Belgium or Norway, Sweden, or several other of the world's nations, is still without a mint of her own. For fifty years we have been using the gold currency of the United States for our bank reserves. But are we to continue forever without a gold currency of our own. Possibly the minting of our own currency will not add much to the country's revenue. At the same time the

proposed mint in Ottawa will be able to turn out the sterling currency for the Home Government, and on this there will be a small margin of profit. Mr. Foster admitted that upon sentimental grounds there might be some warrant for the erection of a Canadian mint. At the same time he warned the government that from a financial point of view they would find it a very poor investment.

What

Stoessel Says.

General Stoessel has been heard from in reference to certain criticisms of his action in surrendering Port Arthur and the statement that the surrender was not necessitated or justified by the conditions existing in the fortress. The ship which is conveying General Stoessel and other Russian officers homeward called at Colombo, Ceylon, on February 4, and in an interview with a correspondent of the Associated Press the General denied the correctness of the statement, which had been made in reference to his premature surrender of Port Arthur and was especially indignant at the statement, made by a London newspaper in a despatch from Peking, that there were at the time of the surrender twenty five thousand able-bodied men capable of making a sortie, hundreds of officers all well nourished, plenty of ammunition, the largest magazine being untouched and full to the roof, and that there was an ample supply of food for three months even if no fresh supplies were received. The General characterized these statements as unjustified and not supported by facts. Col. Reiss, who was among the negotiators of the surrender of the fortress, said: "The garrison could not have held out a moment longer. It would have been murder." Only fifteen roubles (\$750) remained in the military treasury, out of a million and a half (\$750,000), at the commencement of the siege. Four hundred men were dying daily in the hospitals, principally from wounds and scurvy. General Kondratenko was the hero of the siege. Col. Reiss further declared that the Japanese were admirable soldiers, but poor in the use of the bayonet compared with the Russians and the French."

Mr. Borden

Returns.

Mr. R. L. Borden has returned to the Dominion House of Commons as member for Carleton, Ontario. This was made possible by the resignation of Mr. G. N. Kidd, the member for Carleton. The Government was apparently willing to facilitate in every way Mr. Borden's return to Parliament, and accordingly no opposition was offered him. The election was by acclamation on Feb. 4, and on the 7th Mr. Borden was introduced to Parliament and resumed his duties in the House as leader of "His Majesty's loyal Opposition." The Premier cordially welcomed Mr. Borden, saying that in anticipation of his early return he had reserved places on two committees, the only ones on which the Opposition leader last year consented to serve. Mr. Borden expressed his obligations to Sir Wilfrid. He said (amid laughter) that he had arrived a little later than he had intended, and in this he claimed that he was entitled to the sympathy of his right hon. friend, the Premier, who, he believed, had once had a similar experience. In our legislative system the function performed by the Opposition is in a high degree important, provided it is keen and intelligent, and not merely factious and obstructive. Able and honorable leaders of an Opposition, though without the honors and emoluments of office, may be giving to the country a service quite as valuable as that rendered by the Ministers of the Crown.

The New Government in Ontario.

There has been a change of Government in Ontario. The Ross Government having resigned as a result of the general election held on January 25. Mr. J. P. Whitney, formerly the leader of the Conservative Opposition has formed an Administration the members of which took their oaths of office on Wednesday last. The personnel of the New Government is as follows: Hon. J. P. Whitney, Premier and Attorney-General; Hon. J. J. Foy, Commissioner of Crown Lands; Hon. A. J. Matheson, Treasurer; Hon. R. A. Pyne, Minister of Education; Hon. Nelson Monteith, Minister of Agriculture; Hon. J. O. Reaume, Commissioner of Public Works; Hon. W. J. Hanna, Provincial Secretary; Hon. W. A. Willoughby, Minister without portfolio; Hon. Adam Beck, Minister without portfolio; Hon. J. S. Hendrie, Minister without portfolio. A new department of Mines is to be created, but the prospective Minister for the department has not been named. Mr. Whitney has intimated that Mr. Foy who for the present is in charge of the Crown Lands department will in a few months become Attorney-General. Mr. St. John is named as the Premier's choice for speaker in the New House. The elections necessary for the confirmation of the members of the Government in their several departments will be held at an early day.