

A NEEDED PRISON REFORM.

WHEN a crime has been committed, it awakens in the hearts of those immediately injured by it a feeling of indignant resentment, and the first desire is the capture and adequate punishment of the criminal. If he fails to evade the police and justice is meted out to him, he is consigned to prison and his existence forgotten by the outside world. He has ceased to be an object of interest to almost every one, with the exception of relatives whom he has distressed and shamed, or perchance some stray philanthropist, the gaol chaplain or visitor. Does anybody practically care what becomes of him, or how he shall demean himself when his term of imprisonment expires? Has the juvenile offender enlisted permanently in the increasing army of criminals whose warfare is against law and order, against civilization itself?

For what object does every civilized nation maintain a most expensive system of justice and a well-organized prison system? Such are regarded as necessities for the protection of life and property. This is the primary reason for their existence. Other important reasons are also generally recognized. The repression of crime is an absolute necessity, and the reason why crime is punished is that it may have a deterrent effect, and at the same time that the offender may be reclaimed if possible. All enlightened prison discipline has this twofold object in view. The harsh and inhuman severities of a bygone age would not now be tolerated. Human hearts were touched by the revelations made by John Howard when that disinterested philanthropist explored the loathsome prison-houses of Europe, and fell a victim to the disease they generated. Novelists have rendered effective service to humanity by depicting the miseries of prison life as they disclosed themselves to such writers as Charles Dickens and Victor Hugo. A return to the barbarities they depict is no longer possible; but those conversant with our prison arrangement and discipline are far from being satisfied with them as they now are. Care is taken that the prisoners shall be well-fed, kept clean and comfortably housed, with sufficient air and exercise to maintain them in good health. When they are sick they are taken to a well-appointed hospital where they have efficient medical attendance and nursing. Canadian gaols and country prisons are models of cleanliness and good management.

There are those, however, thoroughly competent to form an opinion on the subject, who state without hesitation that though physically gaols have been purified they are still as morally pestiferous as they were in Howard's time. The promiscuous confinement of persons of all ages accused or convicted of crime, is regarded by all who think rightly as a crying abuse and a standing disgrace wherever it is suffered to continue. It renders the reformation of the criminal well nigh impossible, and it is certainly most corrupting to youthful offenders. These are thrown into the society of adepts in vice and crime. They are associated with confirmed gaol-birds all day long, and as the time in country prisons is spent in idleness, opportunity is constantly afforded for the veterans in vice to pollute and corrupt the minds of those on the threshold of a criminal career.

Again and again our judges and grand juries have called attention to the necessity of reform in this matter; but as yet no steps have been taken to prevent the indiscriminate crowding of city and country prisons. At present imprisonment has no terrors for the criminally inclined beyond the curtailment of their freedom. When the winter season begins, that unpicturesque nomad, the tramp, gravitates to the city or country town, sure of comfortable winter quarters in the gaol, where he will have for companions of his seclusion a succession of unsophisticated novices to whom he can narrate his thrilling experiences. Even the indigent plead pathetically with the magistrate to be sent to prison for the winter months. Is it to be wondered at that our prisons as instruments for the repression of crime and the reformation of evil doers, are miserable failures? Instead of punitive and reformatory institutions, they become seminaries where professional criminals graduate. They have ample means for the study of criminology. They possess a few staff of expert lecturers, and a steady succession of students. There is no need to solicit voluntary subscriptions for their endowment. They are State supported, and they are well maintained. In these halls of evil, learning the students have no board to pay, and

no troublesome examinations to pass. Alas! too many of them emerge proficient adepts in the mysteries of crime.

Why is it that the repeated declarations from the judicial bench, the earnest remonstrances of grand juries and the appeals of those whose position has made them keen observers of the culpable neglect of providing for the proper separation of prisoners are heard with deference and then quietly pigeon-holed? The only reasons that can be assigned are the apathy of the people generally and the parsimony of the municipal authorities. Even on the lowest ground, that of cost, the separate system would soon justify its adoption by lessening the expenses for the administration of justice. Wherever it has been tried, as in England, one or two of the United States, in Germany and in Belgium, it has had the most beneficial effects, and has been the means of perceptibly lessening crime. Then, those who engage in the Christ-like work of caring for the spiritual welfare of prisoners, would be better able to teach them the truths of Redemption, because there would be less temptation and fewer opportunities to turn such teaching into ridicule. The separation in prisons of the viciously and criminally inclined from incorrigible offenders, is a practicable reform and one that is urgently needed.

Books and Magazines.

THE LIBRARY MAGAZINE. (New York: John B. Alden.)—This monthly miscellany has two most commendable points—the uniform excellence of its articles and its cheapness. The August number has a most attractive selection of papers, one on "The Saskatchewan Scare," by the Marquis of Lorne.

THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN. (Chicago: F. H. Revell.) This magazine, devoted to antiquarian research, contains a number of papers bearing specially on important branches of this curious and interesting field of investigation. A noteworthy paper on "Native American Symbolism," is by the editor, Rev. Stephen D. Peet.

ELECTRA. Edited by Annie E. Wilson and Isabella M. Leyburn. (St. Louis: Courier-Journal Building.) Among a number of attractive short papers in the August number of this excellent family magazine readers will find the first part of a genial and well-written account of a Canadian tour. *Electra* keeps up its well won reputation.

THE CANADA EDUCATIONAL MONTHLY. (Toronto: The Canada Educational Monthly Publishing Co.)—The July August issue of this magazine is in all respects a good one. Its contents are varied, timely and useful to teachers and all interested in the work of education. David Boyle writes a short paper on a practical subject which every teacher should read. An excellent feature, recently adopted, is "Scripture Lessons for School and Home." The editor pays a genial and graceful tribute to the memory of the late Principal Buchan.

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls; Toronto: William Briggs.)—This valuable monthly appears to grow in attractiveness and adaptation to the wants of its readers. This month there are Symposia in which Pulpit Power, Prohibition and Ministerial Education are discussed by no less distinguished writers than Dr. Herrick Johnson, Dr. Daniel Curry, and Dr. John Hall. The Sermonic Section is rich in thoughtful and suggestive discourses, and Dr. Arthur T. Pierson writes with unction on "The Missionary Field." The Summaries of Religious Thought of Continental Europe, and Current Literature in Great Britain and the United States will be read with interest.

THE CANADIAN NORTH-WEST. By G. Mercer Adam. (Toronto: Rose Publishing Co.; Whitby: J. S. Robertson & Bros.)—This addition to the literature of the North-West gives a very lucid historical summary of events in what was all but an unknown land a quarter of a century ago. The story begins with the times of the Hudson Bay Company and ends with the collapse of the Riel Rebellion of 1885. The work is most interestingly written. Much care has been bestowed on the study of the subject and in the examination of the sources at the author's disposal. It is needless to add that Mr. Adam has written with his accustomed ease and gracefulness of style. Portraits of several of the heroes of the war appear in the book.

THE THEOLOGICAL AND HOMILETIC MAGAZINE. (Toronto: S. R. Briggs.)—Arrangements have been concluded for the simultaneous publication in Canada and England, of this well known and highly valued Homiletic magazine. It is undenominational and several of the most eminent living theologians and preachers of the Church Catholic contribute to its pages. The July number, just received, opens with a sermon by Dr. Eugene Bersier, of Paris, and is followed by a number of suggestive outline sermons. The subjects discussed in the clerical Symposium are: "Is Salvation Possible after Death?" and "The Argument from Prophecy in the Light of Modern Criticism." This magazine is valuable, in that it enables the reader to comprehend the current religious thought of Great Britain.

THE PROBATIONER PROBLEM.

MR. EDITOR, The probationer problem, which seems to have puzzled the wisest heads in the Presbyterian Church in Canada, that is, how best to dispose of the probationers and of the vacancies in the best interests of the Church, is, it seems to me, not a difficult one to solve.

I take it for granted that the services of the probationers only who show capacity to hold and control a congregation are desiderated by the Church. It would, indeed be little short of a miracle if occasional "cranks" and "dolts" did not get church licensure as well as medical licensure of whom Alexander, paraphrast of "The Ship of Fools" and Chaplain of the College of Bishop Grandison, Devonshire, England, sang in Elizabethan verse as follows:

The greatest root of all misgovernance,
That now is used among the commonaltie,
Proceedeth of foolish priestes ignorance,
Which have no wisdom, way nor facultie
To heal such shepe as they playne scabbed see."

The sooner the better the Church will "fire out" as we call it, in the North West, such men as clerical dead-beats.

Then as to the probationers who are men of sense, piety and culture, I would beg to offer the following suggestions:

Can the Church compel probationers to settle down as inducted pastors, or vacancies to undertake the responsibility of maintaining their ministers? I reply that approximately this can be done.

The next consideration is as to the *modus operandi*. Grant supplementary aid to probationers and vacancies only for a very limited time. A probationer, I would allow him \$8 a week, for say a year; after that I would let him take his chances for remuneration. This would bring his thoughts to a focus. He would then either have settled down as a pastor, or as a respectable farmer and church supporter and then the vacancy, I would supplement or aid pecuniarily, just twelve months and not a day longer, rare instances excepted, and that would bring the pockets of the people to a focus too. They would have to support a minister with or without church supplements or they would be compelled to call in the clerical crank or oddity, who perchance might be pleased to live on their crumbs. This would put a stop to a system adopted by some congregations to save their own pockets when they contribute only a small part of the \$8 per Sabbath—perhaps about \$200 a year when they should and could give four times that sum if they chose. There is a certain "queer fish" class of men of whom Miss Congregation might truthfully sing:

Duncan Gray came home to woo,
Ha! ha! the wome' o' it, etc.,

who would make excellent farmers on our western prairies where they could be useful as church elders and members, but the difficulty is to get them to comprehend that they are "sticket ministers." The above suggestion might aid their thoughts on that delicate subject.

PETER GRAY.

THE Industrial Fair annually held at Toronto, is now beyond question the most complete and attractive of its kind held in the Dominion. Arrangements for the coming exhibition, opening on the 9th and closing on the 19th of September, are in a forward state, and it may confidently be anticipated that this year's display will surpass any of those yet held. The management is in most competent hands, and every facility will be provided for the satisfaction of exhibitors and the gratification of the many thousands who will visit Toronto during Fair week.