

The question of reforming criminals is of great importance and should not be lost sight of by the Government, by benevolent associations or by the individual who has the means or the opportunity to give it support. From the press, especially, earnest sympathy and advocacy might be expected, in combating an opposition to remunerative prison labour, so unjust and unreasonable, as one of its prominent characteristics ought to be the promotion of whatever tends to the public good.

In view of the completion of the prison for isolation, at no distant day, the time has arrived when it is indispensably necessary to devise a system of management and frame suitable rules and regulations for the guidance of the convicts, who will be placed in separate confinement, as well as for the officers who will be appointed to take charge of the discipline and the industries to be carried into operation. The plan proposed is new, in Canada, and has been recommended on account of the great benefit, in the direction of reform, which is said to have resulted from it, mainly in Belgium, and with the expectation that the means to work it with success would be allowed. As no one connected with the administration of our penitentiary system has had an opportunity of gaining any practical knowledge or experience regarding the working of a prison, solely used for separation and the proper employment of convicts in isolation, it would be no easy matter to draw up a code of rules for the government of such an institution. The person or persons charged with this duty will be placed at a great disadvantage, having no precedents for guidance, no similar establishment, on this continent, after which to copy. It will be, literally, groping in the dark. Under the circumstances, it may not be amiss—as it certainly appears necessary—to appoint some one properly qualified, or a commission to visit and examine the prisons in Belgium and Ireland, especially, where the separate plan is in vogue, and such other countries, on the continent, as would supply such information and experience as would prove useful and advantageous in improving our own rather defective system. In England the efforts and results of the preventive and reformatory institutions could be seen and noted. The Crofton system, now so well known throughout the civilized world, may be inquired into in Ireland. As described by the late lamented Dr. Wines, it is “An adult reformatory, in which the will of the prison inmate is brought into accord with the will of the prison keeper, and held there so long as that virtue becomes a habit. Its fundamental principle is that of progressive classification, whereby hope is implanted in the breast of the convict in the first hour of his imprisonment and kept there through the whole term of his detention as a living force. It consists of three stages: “1. A penal stage of cellular separation, continuing six months, at least, and more, if the length of sentence requires it.” This is for newly received convicts. “2. A reformatory stage,” in which the system of progressive classification has play; “3. A testing stage,” which is intended to verify the effect of the reformatory action of the preceding discipline.

It is very evident that a thorough acquaintance with those various modes of treatment, and their adaptation to our own system would be most advantageous. In France the system improved by the lessons and experience of M. M. Michaux, de Marsangy, Guillaume, of Switzerland, de Fleury, of Brazil, and others would, doubtless, present many striking and valuable features for copying. The penitentiary system, in Switzerland, especially in the canton of Berne, as organized by the distinguished Dr. Guillaume, and which embodies the Crofton, has its attractions and lessons for the penological enquirer. The Belgian prison system, which is simply that of absolute and