

# THE WEEK.

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## THE WEEK:

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THE recent revolt at the Toronto gaol, though but a small incident in itself, is one of many indications that the prison system of the Dominion is seriously defective and illogical. Can it be wondered at that human beings, so long as they retain the attribute of rationality, should recoil from such an objectless and degrading task as that of wheeling sand from one portion of the prison yard to another, only to wheel it back again. If the aim of the prison authorities were to intensify the hatred of work which is the curse of most of the convicts sent up, they could hardly adopt a better means of effecting their purpose. It is now generally conceded by those who have given attention to the question that, viewed solely in the interests of the State, apart altogether from religious or humanitarian considerations, the chief end, or at least one of the chief ends of prison discipline should be the improvement of the character of the convict. One of the most effective means of reaching that end is undoubtedly the formation of the habit of industry under conditions as nearly as possible akin to those which relieve the daily toil of honest citizens of its irksomeness, and make it not only tolerable but enjoyable. To those who know anything of human nature it is evident that the elements of skill, utility and hope are indispensable factors of this result. The proposed meeting of the gaolers of Ontario for mutual conference, at an early day, is of good omen. Such statements as that the 4,000 prisoners in the Toronto gaol during the past year have scarcely earned a cent of the more than \$21,000 their maintenance and oversight have cost; that there is absolutely no classification by which the youth, in for a first offence, can be separated from the company of the most hardened criminals; and that the number of recommitments is constantly increasing, are so many distinct reproaches to our intelligence and humanity. It is surely time the people's representatives should take up the problem courageously, and call in all the resources of science and philanthropy to aid them in effecting radical reforms in prison management.

SOME of the recommendations embodied in Inspector Moylan's review of our penitentiary system, which appears in the Report of the Minister of Justice recently issued, show that Mr. Moylan is fully alive to the defects of the present methods, and the need of important reforms. In favouring the indeterminate sentence system, Mr. Moylan is in line with the most advanced thinking of the day. Such a system puts the powerful motive of hope to its proper and effective use. As we have on a former occasion and in another connection pointed out, the length of the term of imprisonment has now, in most cases, to be arbitrarily fixed in advance by the judgment of an individual. It is surely no more objectionable theoretically that it should be fixed by the judgment of one whose opportunities for studying the character of the individual convict extend through months or years of close observation. Still better, perhaps, to prevent danger of favouritism, or other abuses, the determination of the period of release might be entrusted to a commission or court of judges sitting periodically to take the evidence of wardens, guards, chaplains, etc. One great gain would be that no incorrigible or morally insane person could be sent forth into society, as must frequently happen under the present methods, with a practical certainty that he will immediately renew his career of crime. Mr. Moylan, we observe, fully commits himself to the opinion that in order to the accomplishment of the chief purposes for which penal institutions exist, prison labour is indispensable, and that such labour, in order to effect the results aimed at, must be systematic and productive. Possibly Mr. Moylan's assertion that the idea that productive prison labour under proper management injures free labour "is sheer delusion" may be too strong a statement, but it must not be forgotten that the convicts in question have not, in the judgment of the courts, forfeited the right to live, and that the right to live implies the right, even for a convict, to earn the means of livelihood by "honest labour."

THE debate on Sir Richard Cartwright's resolution, claiming for Canada the right to negotiate her own commercial treaties, came to an unexpected and abrupt termination. Whether this was due mainly to design on the part of the Government, or to the faulty tactics of the Opposition leaders, is not quite clear at the date of this writing. Probably both causes concurred, as, in accordance with the ordinary customs of debate the Government speakers had the floor at the time the vote was taken, and the failure of an opponent of the motion to arise is said to have been preceded by a hasty consultation amongst members of the Government, while, on the other hand, had the Opposition been readier in device and action they could not thus have been taken by surprise. In any case the fact is rather to be regretted, inasmuch as the question is certainly an important and debateable one, such as it is one of the chief functions of Parliament as a deliberative body to discuss. It may, of course, be said, and is, in fact, often said, that lengthy debates on such topics are a waste of time, since the minds of all are made up beforehand, and it very rarely occurs that the opinion or vote of a single representative is changed by any arguments adduced in the speeches. It is none the less true, however, that full discussion on the floor of the House of Commons of the larger issues of the time, especially those which relate to the present state and future prospects of the Confederation, is, or should be, one of the most effective means of political education for the people at large. Comparatively few of the electors of the Dominion have either the time or the means for studying such questions for themselves, and they have a right to look to those whose special duty it is to know the facts, for ample information and discussion. It would be unfortunate should a long lease of power and full confidence in their majority vote betray the Government into even the appearance of impatience with argument, and a disposition—of which there have during late sessions been some indications—to appeal too readily to the party vote.

IT is a pity that the effect of all the speeches on Sir Richard's motion should have been marred by a certain partisan bitterness, which seemed out of place in the serious discussion of such a question. It is unfortunately the fact that the obvious anxiety on the part of most speech-makers

on both sides in the Commons to make party capital out of the matter in hand, no matter what its nature may be, weakens the effect of many an otherwise excellent address. With regard to the subject-matter of the debate it is somewhat surprising, on analysis, to find how nearly the combatants were, after all, to agreeing on the main point. While the supporters of the motion argued in favour of an immediate, formal demand for the right of Canada to conduct its own trade negotiations and conclude its own commercial treaties with foreign countries, the Minister of Finance sought to discount their arguments by showing, in effect, that the Dominion is and has been for years past rapidly gaining the essence of the very powers asked for, with full consent of the Imperial Government. The obvious rejoinder is that this but proves that the British Government recognizes the substantial justice and reasonableness of the position taken in Sir Richard's resolution, though she can hardly be expected to thrust upon us concessions that she might readily make if requested. That is not the statesman's habit. It is not easy to find any support in fact or history for Mr. Foster's contention that the carrying out of the policy proposed in the resolutions would lead to the separation of Canada from the Empire. The bond of union, which has not only not broken but has actually grown stronger since responsible government and absolute fiscal independence were granted, would hardly snap asunder under the slight strain involved in having our own Government, which now taxes both British and foreign goods at will, conclude its own trade arrangements with those nations with which it is to our interest to do business. To ask, "How would Canada be able to enforce treaties without Great Britain at her back with her standing army and the greatest navy in the world?" may serve to help out an argument, but as a matter of fact the idea of Great Britain putting her army and navy to any such use, under existing circumstances, is, as Mr. Foster must admit, inconceivable, if not absurd. Commercial treaties are not enforced by cannon at this stage of the nineteenth century. Their only basis is mutual commercial advantage. When that fails, in the opinion of either party, to result, the treaty necessarily fails.

THE Ministers of Customs and Finance are surely to be pitied. The deluge of depositions, memorials and petitions asking for changes in the tariff must be overwhelming. How they will ever manage to make their way to the light through the labyrinth of arguments and counter-arguments, representations and counter-representations, in which they are just now involved, is a mystery to the uninitiated. To increase their perplexities, in addition to all the complications which are the product of conflicting Canadian views and interests, they are continually confronted from across the border with the spectre of retaliation in return for any tariff legislation supposed to be unfriendly to our neighbours. Nor can it be doubted that this spectre may at any moment materialize in a very disagreeable and vexatious form. In one quarter at least the light appears to be breaking so clearly that the Government can hardly hesitate. All indications seem to point to the wisdom of removing the extra export duty which was, a short time since, imposed by order in Council upon saw-logs. The impolicy of this impost, both on grounds of political economy and in view of its exasperating effect in the United States, is too obvious to be ignored. Fruit-loving Canadians, as well as fruit-selling Americans, will also be pretty much of one mind in regard to the unwisdom of challenging retaliation by removing from the free-list, at the demand of Canadian fruit-growers, the articles so hastily placed upon that list last session. There is no real humiliation, but simply a wise consideration of circumstances, and a proper regard to the obligations of neighbourly relations, in considering the effect of tariff changes upon neighbourly relations, as well as upon local interests.

EVIDENTLY a formidable array of interests will combine to defeat Mr. Clarke Wallace's Combines Bill. It is now urged, not without force, that not only the manufacturer, but the merchant and the banker likewise have strong reasons for throwing their influence against such legislation. The one, it is alleged, furnishes the material, the other the money, to the manufacturer with small capital, who is striving to establish a new "indus-