

BLAKE SH

## OUR FAULTY GAOL SYSTEM.

MEMORANDUM OF AN ADDRESS DELIVERED ON BEHALF OF THE PRISONERS' AID ASSOCIATION, AT THE METROPOLITAN CHURCH, TORONTO.

BY THE HON. S. H. BLAKE, Q.C.

NO doubt much of the harm that is done and of the good that is left undone in connection with prisoners is owing to want of thought. The Prophet Isaiah, in dealing with the people of Israel, remonstrates with them in these words (Isa. i. 3): "My people doth not consider." A strong denunciation is presented in Proverbs xxiv. 11, 12: "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it; and he that keepeth thy soul, doth he not know it, and shall he not render to every man according to his works?"

How much of the harm wrought is by want of thought! Is it not startling to consider the way in which our Lord and Master presents this? At the last supreme moment, as they are gathered on the right and on the left (Matt. xxv. 34, 46)—"The King shall say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them,—Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand,—Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the

devil and his angels; for I was in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying,—Lord, when saw we thee in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying,—Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

How many are entitled to God's blessing under this test given by our Saviour of those now in this church? How many are subject to the condemnation, not for any active sin or wrong, but simply for the omitting the duty of looking after, tending, and visiting the prisoner? This is a command to be observed by us,—(a) because it is required by the law of God; (b) because it is in the interest of the State. How painful it is to look back to the old plan, where men and women were huddled together like beasts. At times chained down in filth and misery, their food thrown to them as if they were dogs, and nothing for them mentally to feed upon but the fierce spirit of vengeance, which incited them to acts of violence and to the life of a criminal the moment the prison doors were opened for their release. There was no kindly reformatory principle; there was nothing presented to deter from crime.

That the question of the best method of dealing with our prisoners is one of large interest to us is shown at once by the fact that last year in Ontario there were 9,500 commitments for crime and 6,000