

PROTECTION AND CRIME.

BY H. WASHINGTON.

THE following suggestive letter appeared in the *Montreal Witness* of January 23, 1896:

Editor WITNESS.

SIR,—The following figures and facts culled from various authorities seem to point to one condition over which, in a free country, the community have control, the presence or absence of which would seem to be contemporaneous with the increase and decrease of crime in all countries. The increase of crime, so painfully apparent of late years in Canada, the United States, France, and other countries, and which is popularly attributed to increased drunkenness, particular forms of education, the presence or absence of certain religious beliefs, would seem in addition to these aggravating or ameliorating conditions to be affected by circumstances more immediately under our control, and for which we as citizens of Canada are directly responsible.

A comparison of the criminal statistics of the above named and other countries, where protection prevails as their fiscal system, with the criminal statistics of England and Japan, where free trade obtains, shows that crime increased rapidly after the increase of protection in the first named countries and decreased in England and Japan after they abrogated protection.

The criminal statistics of France are very significant in this connection, as she had ten years' comparative free trade under the "Cobden Treaty" (signed in 1860, abrogated in 1870 or 1871), preceded and followed by periods of high protection. The following figures give the number of convictions in France for the years named:

1850	..	..	..	736,600, or 21.0 for every 1,000 population.
1860	..	..	..	894,000, or 24.2 for every 1,000 population.
1870	..	..	..	549,000, or 14.4 for every 1,000 population.
1880	..	..	..	995,000, or 26.5 for every 1,000 population.
1885	..	..	..	1,111,000, or 29.5 for every 1,000 population. (a)

From these figures it appears that a decrease of crime, equal to 40 per cent. followed the abrogation of protection, and its re-imposition was followed by a serious increase of crime of over 100 per cent. in 15 years. It will be noticed also that the increase between 1870 and 1885 was over 300 per cent more rapid than between 1850 and 1860. These figures are very significant, when we consider that the protective duties were much higher between 1870 and 1885 than between 1850 and 1860.

A glance over the criminal statistics of the various protected countries