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until it be forced upon the so called "popular mind"—which a distinguished author has aptly named "the disjointed thinking of the day"—by the Howards and Wilberforces of the hour. There is every prospect of this being accomplished in Canada through the instrumentality of a committee of gentlemen which has been organized, for some time past, in Toronto, for the purpose of dealing with this all-important subject. In the face of many obstacles, springing mainly from public apathy and neglect, the promoters of the Prisoners' Aid Association, by their energy and perseverance, are succeeding in securing for the good work which they have in hand, no small share of public attention and support. They deserve the highest encouragement, as the object which they have in view is most laudable and charitable; in every way worthy the best efforts of the philanthropist—the reform and improvement of the criminal classes. How strange that this subject is almost new, considering how old crime is, and how large a part prisons and jails have occupied in the history of society for the last four centuries! It is really amazing to realize the fact that hardly one hundred years have passed by since the subject found its place among the proper sciences and arts of life and government, and it might almost be said that it is not fifty years since it received anything like public discussion, or had been able to attract to itself the attention of leading minds, not brought by circumstances into the immediate necessity of contemplating it. A little while ago, the only interest society seemed to have in the prisoner was to get rid of him, if possible, as an offence to its nostrils. How to terrify him and take his life was the only object contemplated, it might almost seem, by penal law, and no less by the administration of penitentiary discipline; but at last society has found by terrible experience, that her jail, or prison, or penitentiary system has too often turned out to be the largest factor and the most successful machine in the fabrication of the evil it was seeking to destroy.

Our jails and our prisons for centuries were high universities in crime, and those who passed through them acquired only a dark stain of sin, a deeper devotion to those very things which they were sent there to expiate; and society kindly and carelessly looked on, not knowing that she was allowing her prisoners to be more injurious to her, confined and segregated, than even if she had kept them in her own bosom. Slowly we have come to see what was seen plainly enough by those who devoted themselves to the subject, that convicts are all men having one common human nature; and, in prison, if they are to be edified, restored or kept under conditions that form any safety to society, they are to be treated upon the universal principles of human nature and by methods as nearly as possible assimilated to those methods of education, influence and restoration, which are used towards those who are out of prison. A prisoner is a criminal, indeed, but he is more of a man, even, than he is a criminal, and the largest parts of the methods and measures to be applied to his restoration are strictly human, and have little reference to his criminal condition. Following up this view of the important subject under notice,