

their adoption. It will hardly be disputed that it were much more profitable to see any system, whether penal or educational, military or financial, in actual operation, or to hear its merits and character discussed in relation to other similar systems, than to read the dry details of it, however interestingly presented. In the one case the information gained is tangible and substantial; in the other it is, so to speak, impalpable, evanescent. In a word, it is practice *versus* theory.

From what has been already said, the prospect of establishing a system of exchange with some, at least, of the penal institutions of the United States and Europe, appears to be favorable. It may not be, therefore, amiss to describe briefly, for the information of those who may feel an interest in the matter, the salient features of the Penitentiary system in operation in Canada.

It may be described as the mixed system, congregate and cellular combined. The convicts are employed in associated labour, during the day, and are confined in separate cells at night.

They are not classified into distinct divisions, as in Russia, Belgium, Denmark and other countries of Europe. They are definitely classed on the books of the institution according to their conduct and industry.

An exact mark system is carried out in all the Penitentiaries.

It was contemplated some years ago to erect a penal prison contiguous to the Kingston Penitentiary, where convicts convicted more than once, and incorrigible characters would be isolated under a cellular or solitary system from the better behaved class. The idea was abandoned. Why, I cannot say. Very likely the conviction was felt that the experiment would be attended with the results which it produced wherever tried, namely, the weakening of the will and mental powers of the prisoners, upon which their reformation mainly depends.

There cannot be a second opinion as to the benefit that would be produced from a strict classification of convicts. If the construction and arrangements of the Penitentiaries permitted the isolation of those who have been confined more than one term in the Penitentiary, or whose conduct and character are bad, from the well-inclined prisoner, the work of reformation would be much advanced. Experience shows that a large number is committed to the Penitentiaries, upon conviction of a first offence. Their previous reputation had been good; they were, perhaps, betrayed into the commission of crime unwarily. They sincerely repent their fault, and they are firmly resolved to prevent its repetition. Such prisoners, as well as those who have given proof, while in the Penitentiary, of radical reformation and good dispositions, must, under existing arrangements, consort with the murderer, the burglar, and the habitual criminal. There is no help for it. They meet together, the good and the bad, the penitent and the callous, in the chapel, the school, the refectory and at work. There is no means of keeping them apart. This, manifestly, has a demoralizing tendency, and is calculated to lower the self-respect and to produce discontent among the better disposed class of convicts.

The question arises, what is to be done? Where lies the remedy? It may be possible to make provision for such isolation as would answer, at St. Vincent de Paul, in making the permanent extensions, as also in the new Penitentiary for the Maritime Provinces. The separation can doubtless be effected in Manitoba and British Columbia, where the number of convicts is comparatively so small. I cannot see it could be done at Kingston, unless by constructing the penal prison before mentioned. The outlay would be repaid by the good to be effected.

The means used to stimulate the convict to good conduct and industry are the hope of Executive clemency, and certain privileges during his sentence. Among these may be mentioned the remission of one-sixth of his term of imprisonment, while a well-behaved and industrious convict can obtain, by securing the maximum number of good marks—75 per month; a distinctive mark on his clothing which indicates the class to which he belongs; and an increased money gratuity on discharge, paid out of a fund appropriated by Parliament for the purpose. He is, moreover, allowed certain other favours, which are much appreciated, such as a small ration of tobacco, weekly; permission to see and correspond with friends more