

Appendix.

The Destitute Poor in County Gaols.

Excerpts from the Annual Reports of T. F. Chamberlain, M.D., Inspector of Prisons for Ontario.

OLD PEOPLE AS VAGRANTS.

"The greatest difficulty in the proper management of our gaols and the classification of prisoners, and maintaining cleanliness and discipline is caused by the judges, police magistrates and justices of the peace committing to the gaols, under the Vagrancy Act, old people (men and women) who are guilty of no crime, but who, on account of poverty and inability to earn for themselves a livelihood, and having no friends to undertake the responsibility of their care, have no other shelter. These people are committed from year to year, and in some cases I have found them to have been continuously in our gaols for five or six years, thus practically making our gaols serve as county poor-houses. Unless outside accommodation is provided soon I shall be compelled to require the county authorities to build additions to the gaols for the special care and comfort of these indigent people, as they cannot be allowed to occupy the cells, day-rooms and corridors which are required for the criminal classes.

"I am pleased to be able to report that during the past year some of the counties in the west have provided industrial homes, and many other counties throughout the Province are moving in that direction. . . . All the county officers and others with whom I conversed, assured me that since the establishment of county poor-houses there had been a feeling of satisfaction among the people from the knowledge that the aged and poor people were more comfortably and respectfully cared for, and at no greater cost than under the old system of farming them out or committing them to gaols."—*Report of 1892.*

"It is to be regretted that the practice still continues of placing in the gaols old people unable to work, and who have no home, or friends that are willing to care for and look after them.

"In some of the gaols it is a common thing to find old people who have been inmates for many years. This state of things should not exist longer. If the liberal provision made in past years by the Government to induce counties to establish Industrial Homes for this class has failed in its purpose, more stringent legislation should be

adopted to compel counties to provide such houses. I am led to believe that in many cases these old people are placed in gaol, and on prisoners diet and provided with criminal clothing, simply because it is cheaper for the counties thus to maintain them than to provide a respectable place for their care and comfort where many of them could to a greater or less extent contribute to their support on farm or garden."—*Report of 1893.*

"I have again to call attention to the large number of old people who are committed to the gaols, under the Vagrancy Act, simply because they have no home and are without friends to provide for them.

"The result is the crowding of the gaols, rendering them unsanitary and unfit for the purpose for which they were erected, namely, the safe keeping of prisoners and their proper classification. This condition of things has a tendency to make the officials of the gaol less careful in the surveillance of prisoners under their charge and escapes occur in consequence. In many of the gaols there is not sufficient cell accommodation for the old people, and they have to lie upon the floor or "shake-downs." It is on account of this class of habitues of the gaols during the past two or three years that the statistics show a larger criminal proportion than actually exist. They are not incarcerated for crime but to keep them from perishing outside, and while they are to some extent made more comfortable as to food and clothing, the fact of their being kept in gaols is a disgrace to our civilization and the Christianity of this province.

"Owing to the general depression in business and consequent hard times during the past year the number of paupers has greatly increased in the county gaols.

"The only remedy for this state of affairs is the erection of suitable industrial county homes where this class can be cared for more comfortably and less expensively. This would relieve the pressure upon the gaols, and leave sufficient room for the proper classification of criminals which would add to their safe-keeping."—*Report for 1894.*

CAVUGA GAOL.

"When old people are hereafter committed to the gaol as vagrants they are not to be clothed in prison garb, but are to be supplied with suitable civilians' clothing if they have not sufficient of their own."—*1892.*

COBOURG GAOL.

"I again inspected the Cobourg gaol on the 3rd October. On that

day there were 10 prisoners in custody, viz., 9 men and one woman. The latter was serving one month in gaol for being drunk and disorderly. Of the male prisoners, 2 were sentenced for larceny, 1 for assault, 1 for being drunk and disorderly, and 2 for vagrancy; 1 was awaiting trial for rape, 1 for forgery, and 1 was insane. The latter had been duly certified and reported.

"The general condition of the building is not good. It is very old and much in need of repairs.

"From the number of indigent persons who are committed as vagrants from time to time, I consider it advisable that this gaol should be converted into a county poor house and that a new gaol be erected, more convenient to the town, at an early date."—*1892.*

"I inspected this gaol on the 30th January. There were fourteen prisoners in custody on that day, namely, nine men and five women. Of the former, one was sentenced to three months in gaol for bigamy; one for fighting, three months in gaol; two for larceny, three months in gaol; three for vagrancy; one for drunkenness; one insane. The women were all old, and had been committed for vagrancy.

"I inspected this gaol on the 11th September when there were fourteen prisoners in custody—eleven men and three women. One of the men was certified insane, and the others were all under sentence—one for indecent assault, two months in gaol; one for stabbing, six months in Central Prison; two for drunkenness, thirty days each in gaol; one for larceny, three and a half months in gaol; and four for vagrancy. Two of the women were vagrants and the other a prostitute.

"The third flat of the building is now being fitted up to accommodate the poor people who are sent to gaol under the Vagrancy Act. I am entirely opposed, however, to taking up room in the gaol for the purposes of a county poorhouse; and if the county authorities persist in doing so they will be required to furnish such accommodation as is afforded in an industrial home, and not compel the inmates to be treated as criminal prisoners."—*Report of 1894.*

KINGSTON GAOL.

"This gaol was visited by me on the 22nd February. There were twelve prisoners—eleven males and one female in custody. Of the former, two were under sentence for larceny, one for assault, and the others for drunkenness and vagrancy. The female was under sentence for vagrancy."—*1894.*