

THE PRISON CONGRESS.

DURING the past week a Congress of officials engaged in the penal administration of law and of others who take an interest in the problems arising out of criminal life, was held at Toronto. A large number of Prison Wardens, Chaplains and Philanthropists attended from the States, among them being ex President Hayes. A sermon was preached before the Congress by the Bishop of Huron.

The discussions showed that prison officials hold diverse and irreconcilable views in regard to the causes of crime and influences of prison life. The one point upon which they seemed able to agree was that mere fear of punishment was a very slight deterrent from crime. The varied experiences of Wardens were confusing, pointing to some defect in their manner of observing those under their charge, or of such differing conditions as to render their testimony of little value. That crime is chiefly caused by drink was laughed at by the most experienced officials. The Warden of the Philadelphia penitentiary said "far too much influence was attributed to drink in reference to the making of criminals. This was erroneous. Temperance people gave figures which were not correct! This was not challenged, as the fact is notorious to those who know more than can be learned by reading tracts and speeches. It appears that in some prisons in the States tobacco is allowed the prisoners. Strange to say one official attributed the most immoral effects to "the weed," and another said that tobacco was even more demoralising than drink! To this the Warden of Sing-Sing answered:—"The talk about the injury of tobacco is rubbish." Another Warden regarded the privilege of using tobacco as an element in the moral reformation of prisoners. If tobacco has an immoral power over prisoners, said another, it has no such influence over the innocent and free. We are inclined to think there were cranks at the Congress who regard as immoral all indulgences not to their taste, a form of crankiness which is very general.

One of the wisest sayings uttered at the Congress was that idleness is the parent of crime and habits of industry its surest preventative and cure. It was stated that there was only about 4 per cent, of skilled mechanics in prison—surely a striking and instructive fact. But even this rule has exceptions. At the trial of a burglar we heard his employer testify that the prisoner was a gifted silver smith, very sober, and the most industrious mechanic in his large factory. The rascal avowed that he loved crime as a sport!

We have seen thousands of prisoners in all kinds of goals and our belief is that the more of these guilty ones are seen, and the more closely are the phenomena of crime studied, the stronger becomes the conviction that this class are of a very debased order of humanity—intellectually and physically. They are pre-destined by their natural constitutions and surroundings to failure in the battle of life. They are weak in will and weak in learning power. Such unhappy creatures when jostled in the struggle for existence with stronger natures are depressed and crushed by a sense of their deficiencies. Men in their own rank are cruel, bitter, devilish in their scorn and contempt of such weaklings, whose shortcomings they develop by ridicule and temptations.

In this class there is often an unconquerable aversion to the only labor they can perform. Too often they are physically unequal to a continuance

of industry in unskilled work. Hence the resort to stimulants, for the sake of company, for blunting the sense of misery, and for a restorative when worn out by toil beyond their strength. The hearts of this class become hard as a millstone towards persons better off in life, they care nothing for character or for the rights of ownership, they have an indefinable feeling that they are suffering under some wrong, of which society at large has to bear the blame. We do not present these views as a complete theory of the cause of crime and of criminals. But we are satisfied that the commonly received notion that drink is a main cause of crime, or any other outward influence of that character, as the Warden of Sing-Sing said of the charge against tobacco, "is rubbish," being utterly unphilosophical, and contrary to Scripture, to common sense and to the record of evil since the first murder.

Taking this view we earnestly approve of much that was said by Chaplains and Wardens at the Congress as to the value of all influences tending to engender or develop self-respect in criminals. We are satisfied that society as now ruled by the conventionalities built upon old prejudices and ignorances has much to answer for touching its criminal members by allowing the young to be so untended, and the weaker ones to be made the sport and victims of the strong, instead of their care and the objects of sympathetic solicitude and wisely directed help in meeting the temptations and trials of humble life.

Some strong words were used in condemnation of sentimentalism in the treatment of criminals. Sentimentalism comes into play too late by many years, its place is not when a criminal has begun his career, but when life commences, for, in the vast majority of cases, criminals when infants were ushered into a crime producing atmosphere. Society is much too sentimental in its indulgence towards brutish property-owners and civic officials who provide and tolerate beastly hovels where decency cannot be maintained, where self-respect is impossible, where vice grows rank as in a cultivated soil.

Criminal reformation begins too late—if society will breed vice it must suffer from crime. "Ye that are strong are to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please yourselves." When society obeys that command, crime will be reduced materially.

PRESBYTERIANISM.

IN the former paper upon Presbyterianism, we granted for the moment the contention that the evidence of Scripture is not decisive, that it may be plausibly cited in favor of the Presbyterian theory. But now we withdraw that concession, and will proceed to show that it does not admit of proof; rather there is ample disproof of it. The Presbyterian argument, as already said, is chiefly made up of these two factors: that the words "Bishop" and "Elder" are used interchangeably in the New Testament, and must therefore denote the same persons, holding the same office; and that the presbytery is alleged to be the source of ordination, in the text, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." (1 Timothy, iv. 14).

In the first place, it is not by any means a settled point that the New Testament Bishop and Elder do stand for the same office, and the very latest German criticism denies it, alleging that a difference of function underlies the difference of name, though agreement has not yet been reached as to the precise nature of that difference. But waving that reply, and allowing that they actually do stand for the same office, the real point is not in the least touched. For the question at issue is not as to names, but as to things; not what this or that minister is called, but what different kinds and grades of ministers are discernible in the New Testament. That there is a different mode of using the words implying ministerial office visible in the New Testament from that now employed is unquestionable, but a rigid adherence to it as exhaustive would lead to some curious results. This, our Lord Himself is spoken of as an Apostle (Heb., iii. 1), as a Bishop (1 St. Peter, ii. 25), and as a deacon (Rom., xv. 8). The Apostolic office is called a diaconate (Acts, i. 17, 25), and a bishopric (Acts, i. 20), and the Apostles themselves are called Apostles (St. Luke, vi. 13), and Presbyters or Elders (1 St. Peter, v. 1; 2 St. John, i.; 3 St. John 1). Hence, as has been shrewdly pointed out, not only are deacons, on this plea, equal to Apostles, but superior to presbyters or elders, because Christ, Who is called a deacon, is never called a presbyter. It is further urged from the Presbyterian side, that the mention of Bishops and deacons only in the salutation of St. Paul in the first verse of the Epistle to the Philippians clearly denotes that no other office existed in that Church, and therefore no other was instituted by the Apostles; while the same deduction may be drawn from his silence, in his address to the Ephesian elders, (Acts, xx. 17-35), as to any superior to whom they owed obedience. But this is a mere evasion of the facts; for it is amply evident that there were three grades of the ministry then, the Apostles constituting the first and highest; and exercising direct authority and jurisdiction over all others. The elders in each place are not independent of external authority, they are obliged to obey the orders of the Apostles, and cannot settle the most trifling details without reference to that superior jurisdiction. How far the presbyters or elders exercised in turn authority over the deacons we have no means of learning from the New Testament, but as the fact of the deacons belonging to an inferior grade, with narrower powers, is not seriously disputed, it can be stated at once that there are three clearly marked grades visible at this point, Apostles, Presbyters or Elders, and Deacons.

The question that arises hereupon is this: Did this first grade disappear entirely as the Apostles died out, leaving only the elders or presbyters as the chief officers of the Church? Yes, reply the Presbyterians, it is beyond all question that the Apostolic college left no successor as it died out, and even the Pope of Rome, who claims a special Apostolic inheritance from St. Peter, cannot, and does not